UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice CRP-354

For: State Offices and Service Centers

Signup 20 EBI Changes and Reminders

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs

1 Overview

A Background

EBI has been used by USDA to prioritize and rank CRP offers since signup 10. The National EBI includes 6 environmental ranking factors and 1 cost factor that provide a relative ranking of estimated environmental benefits and cost for land offered for CRP.

Note: For signup 20, State ranking plans are not authorized. See Notice CRP-345.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- an overview of the significant changes to EBI for signup 20
- reminders of certain important components of EBI.

Several changes have been made to EBI for signup 20. This notice provides only an overview and reminder of certain parts of the signup 20 EBI.

Important: This notice does **not** provide the signup 20 EBI. The signup 20 EBI will be provided in a future 2-CRP amendment.

Disposal Date	Distribution
March 1, 2000	State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices; FS, 80; CSREES, 5

2 EBI Subfactor N1a

A Subfactor N1a Changes

Based on recommendations from an interagency group of State and local level representatives and a National level interagency working group, changes have been made to subfactor N1a as follows:

- the native prairie restoration mix of 5 or more species has been removed from CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP4B, Permanent Wildlife Habitat (Corridors), Noneasement, and CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Noneasement, have been modified to provide a 40 and 50 point score with specific minimum seeding mixtures for each point score.

  Important: Introduced grasses are **not** authorized for and shall **not** be included in the approved cover mixes for the 50 point score for CP4B or CP4D. A wildlife conservation plan must be developed with the participants if they elect to offer CP4B, CP4D, or both. See Notice CRP-345.

Further, because CP20, Alternative Perennials, is no longer an eligible practice, it has been removed from EBI.

B Subfactor N1a Reminders

Offers are scored under subfactor N1a based on the cover that the producer **intends to establish** without regard to the cover that may exist at the time of the offer.

Subfactor N1a is the aspect of EBI under the producer's control that has the greatest impact on the EBI score. State Offices should develop examples that show producers how subfactor N1a impacts the total N1 score.

Subfactor N1a points are awarded based on the points associated with the acreage offered at the threshold level. The threshold level is:

- the minimum percent of offered acres that must be devoted to a practice or practices to be awarded the associated point score
- obtained by listing all practices offered by point score in descending order
- determined by the type of land and cover offered.

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2 EBI Subfactor N1a (Continued)

B
Subfactor N1a Reminders (Continued)

All acreage (100 percent) devoted to trees, existing (CP11) or new (CP3 or CP3A), must be thinned (CP11) or planted (CP3 and CP3A) to be awarded the applicable higher point score. The threshold level is determined for:

- **acreage currently enrolled in CRP that is in a cover approved for signup 20 or acreage that expired September 30, 1999, September 30, 1998, or September 30, 1997, that is still in a cover approved for signup 20,** by multiplying the total acreage offered times 51 percent

  Important: **Acreage devoted to trees that expired September 30, 1997, or September 30, 1998, is not eligible for enrollment in signup 20.** See Notice CRP-353.

  Note: If the offer also includes, but is not entirely, eligible existing trees, the threshold level shall still be determined by multiplying the total acreage offered times 51 percent.

- **a combination of acreage currently enrolled in CRP that is in a cover approved for signup 20, including acreage that expired September 30, 1999, September 30, 1998, or September 30, 1997, that is still in a cover approved for signup 20, and new acreage (acreage not previously enrolled in CRP, acreage currently enrolled in CRP that is not in a cover approved for signup 20, or acreage that expired September 30, 1999, September 30, 1998, or September 30, 1997, that is not in a cover approved for signup 20),** by multiplying the total offered acreage times 70 percent

  Important: **Acreage devoted to trees that expired September 30, 1997, or September 30, 1998, is not eligible for enrollment in signup 20.** See Notice CRP-353.

  Note: If the offer also includes, but is not entirely, new or eligible existing trees, the threshold level shall still be determined by multiplying the total acreage offered times 70 percent.

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2 EBI Subfactor N1a (Continued)

B
Subfactor N1a Reminders (Continued)

- **new acreage (acreage not previously enrolled in CRP, acreage currently enrolled in CRP that is not in a cover approved for signup 20, or acreage that expired September 30, 1999, September 30, 1998, or September 30, 1997, that is not in a cover approved for signup 20)**, by multiplying the total offered acreage times 90 percent.

  Important: **Acreage previously enrolled in CRP that expired or was terminated, withdrawn, or otherwise released anytime before September 30, 1997, that is otherwise eligible, shall be considered new acreage.**

  Note: If the offer also includes, but is not entirely, new trees, the threshold level shall still be determined by multiplying the total acreage offered times 90 percent.

Existing grass cover on acreage offered may be enhanced to improve the wildlife benefits and the EBI score. If the existing grass cover is an approved cover for signup 20 and is not enhanced, the acreage must be offered as CP10. If the producer elects to enhance any of the existing cover, the acres enhanced must be offered as a practice other than CP10. The practice for the acres enhanced will depend on the type of cover offered. **The enhanced acres must be offered as a practice other than CP10.**

If the existing grass is **not** a signup 20 approved grass cover, the acreage offered must be offered as a practice **other than** CP10 and the acreage offered must be planted to a cover approved for signup 20.

Eligible existing tree cover on acreage offered for re-enrollment may be enhanced to improve wildlife benefits and the EBI score for the offer. Producers may enhance eligible existing tree cover by agreeing to thin trees and/or create open areas for wildlife.

Important: **Acreage devoted to trees that expired September 30, 1997, or September 30, 1998, is not eligible for enrollment in signup 20.** See Notice CRP-353.

Regardless of whether producers agree to thin trees and/or create open areas, all acreage of existing eligible tree cover that are offered as trees must be offered as CP11. **The open areas shall not be considered a separate practice. All acres of existing eligible trees, including the open areas created for wildlife, must be offered as CP11.**

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2 EBI Subfactor N1a (Continued)

B
Subfactor N1a Reminders (Continued)

Example: Producer has 92 acres of eligible existing softwood trees planted at 600 trees per acre under CRP-1 scheduled to expire September 30, 2000. The producer may offer to re-enroll the 92 acres with no enhancement (no thinning and/or open areas) as CP11. If the producer offers to thin and/or create open areas on all or a portion of the 92 acres, all 92 acres must be offered as CP11.

For CP23, Wetland Restoration, to be assigned 50 points, **all** cropped wetlands and **all** prior converted wetlands on the acreage offered must be devoted to CP23 with the wetland hydrology restored, as determined technically feasible, and recommended vegetative cover established.

If at least 1 **but not all** cropped wetlands **and all** prior converted wetlands on the acreage offered are devoted to CP23 with the wetland hydrology restored, as determined technically feasible, and recommended vegetative cover established, CP23 will be assigned 30 points.

Example: Producer offers 50 acres for enrollment in CRP. There are 3 cropped wetlands on the 50 acres offered. The producer offers to restore the hydrology and establish the recommended vegetation for 1 of the cropped wetlands. Because only 1 of the cropped wetlands is being restored and recommended vegetation established, CP23 would be assigned 30 points.

3 EBI Subfactor N1b

A
Subfactor N1b Changes

Cross-geopolitical boundary inconsistencies regarding subfactor N1b were discovered during signup 18. Based on recommendations from a National level interagency working group, the 5-point category for Federal- and State-listed T&E migratory species has been removed. See Notice CRP-345.

The only available point scores for nonaquatic Federal- or State-listed T&E species under subfactor N1b are 0 or 15 points. To be awarded 15 points for nonaquatic Federal- or State-listed T&E species, the cover to be established must provide **either** of the following:

- habitat best suited and beneficial for Federal- or State-listed T&E resident (nonmigratory) plant or animal species

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3 EBI Subfactor N1b (Continued)

A
Subfactor N1b Changes (Continued)

- suitable and beneficial cover **within 1 mile** of the nesting site or **within 1 mile** of the wintering site of a Federal- or State listed T&E migratory species.

Important: Candidate species, proposed species, peripheral species, or species of special concern are **not** eligible to receive points under subfactor N1b.

4 EBI Subfactor N1c

A
Subfactor N1c Reminders

Subfactor N1c evaluates the proximity of the acreage offered to **permanent** water. Permanent water is defined as a source of **year-round** water beneficial to wildlife. Semi-permanent wetlands do **not** provide a permanent water source for wildlife and shall be awarded 0 points for subfactor N1c. **Animal waste lagoons may provide a permanent water source; however, they are not beneficial to wildlife and shall be awarded 0 points.**

Distance is measured from the closest edge of the acreage offered to the nearest permanent water source.

5 EBI Subfactor N1d

A
Subfactor N1d Reminders

Subfactor N1d evaluates the proximity of the acreage offered to protected areas managed for wildlife. To be awarded points under subfactor N1d, **all** of the following must be met:

- the protected area must provide wildlife habitat that is compatible with the cover being offered and be beneficial to wildlife in the area for at least the term of CRP-1

- any agreement or easement providing the protected area must be signed by all applicable persons before the points are awarded

- the producer must agree in writing to fulfill any agreement or easement to establish and/or maintain the protected area regardless of whether the CRP offer is accepted

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5 EBI Subfactor N1d (Continued)

A
Subfactor N1d Reminders (Continued)

- the protected area must be of sufficient size to provide wildlife habitat independent of the acreage offered for CRP.

Important: CRP-1 shall be terminated with refund of all payments, plus interest, and liquidated damages, if the agreement or easement is canceled, terminated, or otherwise withdrawn before the scheduled expiration date of CRP-1.

Distance is measured from the closest edge of the acreage offered to the closest edge of the nearest eligible protected area.

6 EBI Subfactor N1e

A
Subfactor N1e Changes

Subfactor N1e points are awarded to offers with eligible wildlife food plots or certain restored drained or degraded wetlands. Offers that include wildlife food plots that meet **all** of the following shall be awarded 5 points for subfactor N1e:

- the wildlife food plot meets NRCS FOTG and CP12 standards
- the total acreage to be devoted to CP12 does **not** exceed the lesser of either of the following:
  - the FOTG size requirement
  - 5 percent of the acreage offered
- individual food plots shall not exceed 5 acres in size.

Note: The CP12 standards in 2-CRP, Exhibit 9 have been changed and will be provided in a future 2-CRP amendment.

Food plots must meet NRCS FOTG and CP12 standards. Producers may offer food plots that are larger than 5 percent of the acreage offered if FOTG standards allow for these food plots. However, offers with these food plots shall be awarded 0 points for subfactor N1e.

If the total acreage offered to be devoted to CP12 exceeds 5 acres, the food plots must be separated by a sufficient distance to maximize wildlife benefits and accessability. Individual food plots shall not exceed 5 acres in size and shall **not** be immediately adjacent. To provide the most benefit to wildlife, food plots must be disbursed over a wide area and not concentrated in 1 location.

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6 EBI Subfactor N1e (Continued)

B
Subfactor N1e Reminders

Offers in which at least 1 acre of drained or degraded eligible wetland is restored to NRCS FOTG standard 657 and devoted to CP23 shall be awarded 5 points for subfactor N1e.

The maximum point score for subfactor N1e is 5 points. The 2 categories are **not** additive.

Example: An offer that includes an eligible degraded cropped wetland to be restored to CP23 and an eligible wildlife food plot would be awarded 5 points for subfactor N1e.

7 EBI Subfactor N1f

A
Subfactor N1f Changes

Beginning with signup 20, subfactor N1f is no longer based on the restored cropped wetland to upland percentage.

Subfactor N1f is based on restored cropped wetlands on the acreage offered that will be devoted to CP23 with the appropriate number of adjacent upland acres with the appropriate cover.

Offers are awarded either 0 or 10 points. Point scores of 1 or 5 are no longer authorized for subfactor N1f.

Only cropped wetlands that will be devoted to CP23 where **all** of the following restoration measures are met shall be awarded 10 points:

- the hydrology is restored and natural wetland vegetation is restored or allowed to return to its native condition
- at least the minimum number of adjacent upland acres needed to protect the cropped wetland, as determined by NRCS, is offered for enrollment

  Important: For CP23, the adjacent upland acreage shall not exceed 6 times the area of the cropped wetland. See 2-CRP, paragraph 82.

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7 EBI Subfactor N1f (Continued)

A
Subfactor N1f Changes (Continued)

- uplands are established to an approved cover determined best suited for nesting waterfowl and other wildlife. The adjacent upland acreage not to exceed 6 times the area of the cropped wetland must be devoted to a 50-point cover according to subfactor N1a.

  Important: Offers in which all of these requirements are not met shall be awarded 0 points for subfactor N1f.

B
Subfactor N1f Reminders

Producers may offer more acreage than the **minimum** required to protect the cropped wetland. However, any acreage offered in excess of the minimum number required to protect the cropped wetland, not to exceed the 6 to 1 ratio, must meet **1 of the other eligibility criteria to be enrolled and be devoted to a practice other than CP23**. See 2-CRP, paragraph 82.

8 EBI Subfactor N2a

A
Subfactor N2a Reminders

Water quality areas recommended by the State Technical Committee and approved by STC as high priority water resources for subfactor N2a may not be the same areas as approved CPA's for water quality. Offers for land located in a State-approved CPA for water quality are **not** automatically eligible to be awarded 30 points under subfactor N1a.

Water quality areas approved for subfactor N2a and CPA's for water quality are 2 separate designations. Establishment of water quality areas for subfactor N2a does **not** establish a basic eligibility criteria.

Water quality areas shall not exceed 33 percent of the total cropland in the State without DAFP approval.

A minimum of at least 51 percent of the acreage offered must be located within the approved water quality area to be awarded points for subfactor N2a.

9 EBI Subfactor N2c

A
Subfactor N2c Changes

Subfactor N2c evaluates the:

- potential amount of sediment that is delivered to water courses
- population within the watershed that would benefit most directly from improved surface water quality.

To award points, determine the distance to lakes (defined as permanent water body with a normal surface area equal to or greater than 5 acres), rivers, streams with perennial flow, intermittent streams, or wetlands (as defined in NFSAM for which the hydrology or functions and values have not been altered or cropped wetlands for which the hydrology and functions and values will be restored under CRP (CP23)) from the nearest portion of the acreage offered. The acreage offered must be in the contributing watershed to the water body being evaluated.

Important: The offered acreage must be **upstream** of the water body to be eligible to be awarded these points.

10 EBI Subfactor N2d

A
Subfactor N2d Reminders

Subfactor N2d evaluates water quality improvements associated with cropped wetlands. An offer is awarded 10 points if at least 10 percent of the **total land offered** is enrolled under the cropped wetland eligibility criterion. If less than 10 percent of the total land offered is cropped wetlands, the offer is awarded 0 points for subfactor N2d.

Important: Do **not** include the adjacent associated upland acreage when calculating the 10 percent. Only use the cropped wetland acreage in the calculation to determine whether 10 percent of the total land offered is cropped wetlands.

11 EBI Subfactor N4a

A
Subfactor N4a Reminders

The score for subfactor N4a is determined by:

- multiplying the number of acres offered per practice times the associated point score for the applicable practice
- adding all the scores for **all** practices offered
- dividing the total score by the total acres offered.

The chart in 2-CRP, Exhibit 19 will provide the appropriate value for all practices. The point score and acres for all practices offered, including practices offered that are awarded 0 points, must be included in the calculation for subfactor N4a.

Important: Wildlife food plots are awarded 0 points.

12 EBI Subfactor N4b

A
Subfactor N4b Reminders

The score for subfactor N4b is determined based on the practice or condition present on the acreage offered with the highest applicable point score according to the chart in 2-CRP, Exhibit 19.

Subfactor N4b is not based on a weighted average of the applicable practices or scores. If more than 1 condition exists on an offer, such as Cultural Resources are present on the acreage offered and the acreage offered is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the offer would be awarded the higher point score of the 2 conditions.

For subfactor N4b, the point scores are **not** additive.

To be awarded points for shrub plantings under subfactor N4b, an aggregate of at least 5 percent of the offered acreage must be devoted to shrubs. At least 5 percent of the total acreage offered must be devoted to shrubs.

13 EBI Subfactor N5b

A
Subfactor N5b Reminders

Only offers in which at least 51 percent of the acreage offered is comprised of soils on WESL may be awarded 5 points for subfactor N5b.

Note: The State Technical Committee, in consultation with the NRCS State soil scientist, will develop WESL.

14 EBI Subfactor N5c

A
Subfactor N5c Changes

To be awarded 5 points for subfactor N5c, both of the following conditions must be met:

- at least 51 percent of the acreage offered must be in a designated agricultural zone that contributes to the nonattainment of air quality standards
- the weighted wind EI must be equal to or greater than 4.0.

B
Subfactor N5c Reminders

All CPA's for air quality shall be considered to be within designated agricultural zones that contribute to the nonattainment of air quality standards.

Not all designated agricultural zones that contribute to the nonattainment of air quality standards are CPA's.

15 EBI Factor N6

A
Factor N6 Changes

Offers within the National Longleaf Pine CPA may include CP12, Wildlife Food Plot, used in combination with longleaf pine plantings of 500 trees or less per acre and be awarded points for factor N6. However, the changes to CP12 standards shall apply to the wildlife food plots.

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15 EBI Factor N6 (Continued)

A
Factor N6 Changes (Continued)

Producers may offer a CP12 in combination with longleaf pine plantings of 500 trees or less per acre and be awarded 25 points for factor N6 provided the food plots meet **all** of the following:

- meet NRCS FOTG and CP12 standards
- the total acreage to be devoted to CP12 does **not** exceed the lesser of either of the following:
  - the FOTG size requirement
  - 5 percent of the acreage offered
- individual food plots shall not exceed 5 acres in size.

16 Action

A
State Office Action

State Offices shall take action according to this table.

Step	Action
1	Provide a copy and review this notice with the NRCS State Office.
2	Provide Service Centers a copy of this notice after review with the NRCS State Office.
3	Ensure that all Service Centers understand EBI and how to score all factors and subfactors.

B
County FSA Office Action

County FSA Offices shall provide a copy and review this notice with the NRCS Field Office.

C
NRCS National Office Concurrence

NRCS has concurred with this notice.