

**For:** State and County Offices

**Preparing for CRP General Signup 26**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

The next general signup, 26, is being developed to continue acceptance of offers of environmentally-sensitive acreage for new 10-year to 15-year contracts to cost effectively enroll acreage for program years 2004 and 2005.

Continuous signup provisions will be offered for FY 2003. CRP-PIP and CRP-SIP provisions will continue to be implemented consistent with current procedure.

For signup 26, FSA will determine the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) used to rank offers for selection. Access General Signup Software (AGSS) has been created for EBI.

**B Setting Priorities**

State and County Offices shall set workload priorities and plan office activities accordingly to ensure timely program implementation.

**C Purpose**

This notice provides information about:

- reviewing established cost share (C/S) rates
- determining total county cropland for general signup and continuous signup
- other general information.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
December 1, 2003	State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices

2 C/S Rates

A General Guidance

2-CRP, Part 19, provides guidance to State and County Offices for establishing CRP C/S rates. Practice requirements and either flat rates or percent of actual cost levels, **not** to exceed a dollar limitation per unit measure, shall be established according to 2-CRP, Part 19. Since signup 20, there may have been significant changes in seed and material prices. The most current market prices must be used when establishing C/S rates for the next general signup. See subparagraph 4 B.

B Rate Review

C/S rates shall be reviewed and, if necessary, updated to reflect current prices. The cost of eligible items for C/S may also have changed since the rates were established before CRP signup 20. If **not** already completed, State and County Offices must:

- review current C/S rates to ascertain their accuracy
- base flat rates or limitations on documented average costs
- use percent of cost levels only if there is limited data or there is considerable variation in actual costs across a State or county.

In States where the County Offices are delegated the authority to establish C/S rates, the State FSA Office:

- or designee, shall review all C/S rates to ensure that the C/S rates are consistent across county boundaries
- shall review all C/S rates to ensure that the C/S rates are consistent across district and State boundaries.

**Important:** State Offices are **not** authorized to delegate the authority to review C/S rates across district and State boundaries, including delegation to DD's.

Reviews shall be completed and rates updated according to 1-CONSV, where appropriate, as soon as possible.

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### 2 C/S Rates (Continued)

#### C Rate Consistency

When establishing C/S rates, average costs for the same practice components should be the same regardless of the C/S program. Rates for similar practices should be similar. State and County FSA Offices, NRCS Offices, conservation districts, and the State Forestry Agency are encouraged to coordinate C/S rate determinations to ensure consistency.

**Note:** Use existing FSA and NRCS average cost lists as supporting flat C/S rates. Rates similar to EQIP C/S, but **not** EQIP incentive, rates may be used. Not all components that are eligible for EQIP may be eligible for CRP.

### 3 Distribution of Natural Resource Data Required for Land Eligibility and EBI Determinations

#### A HUC/County Maps and CPA/Zone Determinations

Conservation Priority Areas (CPA's) and zones established through CRP-409 are based on either USGS watersheds recorded by Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC's) or by whole county. HUC's are also used in general signup offer processing to determine EBI ranking factors.

To help County Offices determine whether an offer is in an approved CPA and/or zone and which HUC code applies to each offer, CEPD will provide a website containing an application that allows viewing and printing of detailed county level maps. These maps will indicate:

- 8-digit HUC boundaries
- county boundaries
- approved National/State CPA boundaries by HUC and/or County
- approved zone boundaries by HUC and/or County

County Offices will be able to select specific counties using the zoom function that will be of sufficient scale to determine the appropriate location of the offered acreage. In cases where 10, 11, 12, 13, or 14 digit HUC's were used for CPA and/or zone establishment, the HUC map will be provided using the same scale. The maps will also contain roads and ZIP Codes to assist in identifying the location of the offered acreage.

**Note:** The CRP Geographic Information System (GIS) Tool will also determine the applicable 8-digit HUC for an offer scenario area if the HUC shape file is loaded with the Tool. CPA's are used for land eligibility and zones are used for EBI ranking factor scoring.

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### 3 Distribution of Natural Resource Data Required for Land Eligibility and EBI Determinations (Continued)

#### B RUSLE Rainfall (R) and Climatic (C) Data Maps

To support the calculation of Erodibility Index (EI) and related factors for land eligibility and EBI ranking factor scoring, County Offices must determine the correct Rainfall (R) and Climatic (C) factors that apply to all general signup offers. To support AGSS and GIS software processing, county-level default values for R and C were assembled through CRP-409. For many counties, these default values may need to be overwritten depending on the location of offered acreage.

State Offices shall work with the NRCS State CRP Program Manager to obtain appropriate R and C factor maps and provide copies to all County Offices.

The R factor maps must be of sufficient scale to determine the location of the offered acreage in relation to the applicable R factor value and must be RUSLE-based maps. RUSLE2-based maps shall **not** be used.

The climatic factor map is needed to calculate the wind erosion equation. State Offices shall ensure that these maps are of sufficient scale to determine the location of the offered acreage in relation to the applicable climatic value.

#### C Soil Surveys

State Offices shall obtain from NRCS the current FOTG soil survey maps consistent with the CRP soils database established through CRP-425. The Soil Map Unit Symbols published with the soil survey maps must be consistent with what is recorded in CRP Soils Database. FSA must obtain from NRCS the current soils survey maps. It is vital that County Offices do **not** use a photocopy of an original map. Photocopies of original maps could distort the scale of the maps.

For those county locations that plan to use the CRP GIS Tool to make soils and related determinations, State Offices must provide copies of the FOTG soils surveys that are consistent with the digitized soil survey layers used with the CRP GIS Tool, usually SSURGO II.

For county locations with land in multiple soil surveys, copies of all applicable surveys must be provided to each county.

#### D Look Up Tables

Look up tables for N2b, soil leachability, N2c-factor used to determine potential sediment and erosion, and N5a, air quality look up table will be provided on a web site in the near future.

## 4 Required Practice Information

### A Job Sheets

State conservation program specialists shall work with the NRCS State CRP Program Manager, State Fish and Game officials, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop job sheets, by practice to provide to County Offices, on seeding practice requirements for all applicable practices.

**Note:** It is possible that multiple job sheets could be needed if there is a variance due to soil properties, moisture regimes, etc., that would impact planting requirements.

As part of these job sheets, State Offices shall request soil limitations for suitable vegetation by practice pertaining to the following that includes, but is not limited to:

- grasses
- legumes
- forbs
- shrubs
- trees.

These tables must list the factors (salinity, water table, depth to bedrock, etc.) that would limit planting decisions or practice options for CRP.

**Example:** Depth to bedrock may limit potential to plant CP3A, hardwood trees, on a site. County Office staff must have soil limitation data to ensure that all practices listed with CRP offers have suitable soil types.

**Note:** Longleaf pine suitability index information is recorded in the CRP Soil Database and is automatically applied by the AGSS offer system. Counties may also apply these suitability indexes manually before processing Longleaf CPA offers in AGSS.

These job sheets should include a minimum of the following:

- seed bed and site preparation
- timing of seeding or planting
- fertilization requirements
- weed control
- varieties of seed or planting materials
- amount of seeding or planting
- maintenance requirements for the practice
- soil limitations
- management measures by practice.

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### 4 Required Practice Information (Continued)

#### B Cost Estimates for Practices

For AGSS offer system loading process, FSA will establish a cost for each practice to be used for the total estimated practice cost for each offer. County Offices shall establish an estimated total C/S amount using flat C/S rates for components that accurately reflect the average per acre cost of installing the whole practice. Do **not** use "not to exceed" rates when establishing this cost. This cost data will be used in the software.

### 5 Continuous Signup Provisions

#### A Continuous Signup 25 and Signup 27 Period

2-CRP, subparagraph 98 B, provides that CRP continuous signup numbers shall change at the beginning of each FY. For FY 2003, continuous signup 25 will be used until the day signup 26 begins. Continuous signup 27 will begin the day general signup 26 begins and end on September 30, 2003.

**Note:** The program year is the FY in which the first payment is earned.

**Example:** Producer submitted an offer for CP21 on July 30, 2002. COC approved CRP-1 on August 26, 2003. Producer defers the effective date of CRP-1 to November 1, 2003. The program year for the contract is 2004.

#### B PIP and SIP Payments

PIP and SIP payments will continue to be made in accordance with established procedure.

#### C Concurrent Signups

General signup 26 will be held concurrently with continuous signup 27. County Offices shall process offers of acreage under the continuous signup provisions during the general signup period.

Continuous signup 25 began before general signup 26. State and County Offices shall ensure that CRP-1's and CRP-2's provide the correct signup number.

**6 County Cropland Limitation**

**A Background**

For general and continuous signups, the total county cropland used to determine the 25 percent cropland limitation will be determined by the cropland total maintained in the System/36 Farm Summary File.

County Offices must update the total county cropland acreage in the CRP software using the System/36 Farm Summary File according to this notice. The CRP software will compare the acreage enrolled in CRP and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), excluding CRP acreage that is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2003, to the total cropland acreage administratively located in the county.

**B Waiver Limitations for General Signup**

Waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation previously approved for any other general signup are **not** effective for the next general signup.

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**6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)**

**C Determining Total County Cropland for General Signup**

County Offices shall use the following table to determine the total county cropland and other data to be used for general signup.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	<p>Immediately upon receipt of this notice, County Offices shall request the number of cropland acres enrolled in WRP from NRCS.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Do <b>not</b> obtain Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) data.</p>
2	<p>After all WRP data is obtained, <b>as soon as possible</b>, County Offices shall access Conservation Main Menu EEA000 according to 1-CRP, paragraph 266.</p>
3	<p>On Menu EEA000, ENTER "3", "CRP Contract File Menu", and PRESS "Enter". CRP Contract File Menu EPCA00 will be displayed.</p>
4	<p>On Menu EPCA00, ENTER "10", "Available Cropland and Easement Data", and PRESS "Enter". Cropland and Easements Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.</p>
5	<p>On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "1", "Number of Active Contracts and Available Cropland Data", and PRESS "Enter". Active Contracts/Avail. Cropland EPCC1001 will be displayed.</p>
6	<p>On Screen EPCC1001:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enter the WRP cropland data received from NRCS (step 1) in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Land other than cropland may be enrolled in WRP. County Offices shall only enter the <b>cropland</b> enrolled in WRP in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• place cursor in the "Enter percentage if waiver is authorized" field and remove the amount displayed (if applicable) by PRESSING "Field Exit" key</li> </ul> <p><b>Notes:</b> County Offices approved for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation for previous CRP signups shall <b>not</b> enter the previous waiver amount in this field.</p> <p>If the <b>FSA National Office</b> approves a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation for the next general signup, County Offices must enter the percent waived in the "Enter percentage if waiver is authorized" field. <b>Only FSA National Office approved waivers may be entered.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enter the total county cropland which shall be the same as the farm summary cropland.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The farm summary cropland total is displayed on the same screen.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> After the new total county cropland from the Farm Summary File has been entered, County Offices shall <b>not</b> change the cropland total on Screen EPCC1001, unless authorized by <b>FSA National Office</b>.</p>

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**6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)**

**C Determining Total County Cropland for General Signup (Continued)**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
7	<p>After entering the current WRP cropland data and county cropland total, PRESS “Enter” twice. Data entered will be updated and Cropland and Easements Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> If “Enter” is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will <b>not</b> be updated in the CRP software.</p>
8	<p>On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER “2”, “Easement Data”, and PRESS “Enter”. Easement/Cropland Data Screen EPCC1002 will be displayed.</p>
9	<p>On Screen EPCC1002, verify that the “WRP Accepted Acres” and “Total County Cropland” fields are updated with the data entered on Screen EPCC1001. After verifying that the data is correct, PRESS “Enter”. Data entered will be updated and Cropland and Easements Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> If “Enter” is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will <b>not</b> be updated in the CRP software.</p>
10	<p>On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER, "7", "Available Cropland Minus September 30 Expirations" and PRESS "Enter". Screen EPCC0505, CRP-Select Expiration Year, will be displayed. ENTER "2003" and PRESS "Enter". Warning message will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Cropland Minus Expiring Screen EPCC1007 will be displayed.</p>
11	<p>On Screen EPCC1007, verify the "WRP Accepted Acres" and "Total County Cropland" fields are updated with the data entered on Screen EPCC1001. After verifying that the data is correct, PRESS "Enter". Cropland and Easements Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.</p>
12	<p>On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "5", "Summary of County Cropland, CRP, Easement &amp; WRP Data Report" and PRESS "Enter". Screen EPCC0505, CRP-Select Expiration Year, will be displayed. ENTER "2003" and PRESS "Enter". Warning message will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Screen FAX46501 will be displayed to change printer ID. "Press Enter to print Report EPCC10-R003" will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.</p>
13	<p>Review Report EPCC10-R003 to ensure that the data entered on Screen EPCC1001 is listed on the report. Screen EPCC0501 will be redisplayed. County Offices shall file the printed report under file code CRP-2, "Reports and Statistics", according to 25-AS, Exhibit 32.</p>

**Note:** The total county cropland amount entered on Screen EPCC1001 will be used to determine acceptability of offers submitted for general, continuous, including CREP and FWP, and WRP signup. County Offices shall **not** change, without FSA National Office authorization, the total county cropland total entered on Screen EPCC1001 after Report EPCC10-R004 is transmitted. **Any changes to the amount entered may result in incorrect ranking of offers and termination of CRP-1’s.**

6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

**D Requesting Waivers Before General Signup**

County Offices that meet the requirements for requesting waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation provided in 2-CRP, Part 12, must request a waiver from the FSA National Office through STC, if COC determines it wants acreage physically located within the county to be eligible to be offered in general signup. **Requests must be submitted to the FSA National Office as soon as possible.**

**Notes:** Land physically located in a county that has reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation is **not** eligible to be enrolled in general signup or continuous signup unless a waiver of the cropland limitation is approved **by the FSA National Office before** general signup begins.

COC's may submit requests for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation to STC's according to 2-CRP, paragraph 255.

STC's shall review all requests for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation and process requests according to the following table.

IF...	THEN...
all requirements of 2-CRP, paragraph 255 are met <b>and</b> STC recommends approval	send request to the FSA National Office CRP Program Manager, <b>as soon as possible</b> , with recommendation and all supporting documentation.  <b>Note:</b> Failure to submit complete requests with STC or designee recommendation will delay FSA National Office response.
all requirements of 2-CRP, paragraph 255 are <b>not</b> met, <b>or</b> STC does <b>not</b> recommend approval	STC must deny the waiver request.

**Important:** STC's have no authority to approve a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation.

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### 6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

#### E Counties Exceeding Maximum Acreage

The cropland limitation shall continue to be determined by the total cropland administratively located in the county. However, County Offices shall process offers from eligible producers **only** if the acreage being offered is **physically** located in a county that has **not** reached or exceeded the 25 percent county cropland limitation.

**Notes:** Unless a waiver is approved by the FSA National Office before signup begins, COC's shall immediately notify producers that submit an offer for land physically located in a county that has reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation that the offer is rejected using CRP-26. See 2-CRP, Exhibit 12.

County Offices shall process the rejected offers for land in counties in excess of the 25 percent cropland limitation through the AGSS system to develop an electronic offer record and print CRP-1 and CRP-2. However, County Offices shall indicate "N" on the last screen of the AGSS for the question, "The Data is Correct and the Producer Accepts the Terms and Conditions of the Offer?". The offers will **not** be ranked and accepted or rejected by the National CRP Ranking Process.

The administering County Office shall verify **both** of the following before processing an offer:

- physical location of the land being offered
- that the county where the land being offered is physically located has **not** reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation or the county was approved **the FSA National Office** for a waiver **before** the signup period began.

#### F State Intranet Reports for 25 Percent Cropland Limitation

CRP intranet reports are being developed for the 25 percent cropland limitation to provide State Offices with weekly CRP enrollment information. For this reason, transmissions of the 25 percent county cropland limitation information from County Offices to State Office is no longer necessary. State Offices shall allow 10 workdays after receiving this notice to review these reports and provide County Offices adequate time to update the Total Cropland and WRP source data.

These reports will be posted at CEPD's State Office Information Center site:  
**<http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/DAFP/cepdsto.htm>**.

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**7 Action**

**A County Office Action**

County Offices shall take action according to the following table.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Make preparation for CRP general signup a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities.
2	Ensure that CRP-1's and CRP-2's are completed with the correct signup number according to paragraph 5.
3	Review C/S rates before signup begins.
4	Record the WRP easement acreage data in the system according to 1-CRP and paragraph 6 of this notice as soon as possible.
5	Ensure that all applicable files are updated with the correct total county cropland according to paragraph 6 of this notice.
6	Determine whether a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation will be required according to 2-CRP, Part 12 and paragraph 6 of this notice.
7	Request waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation as soon as possible, from the FSA National Office through STC, according to this notice.
8	Obtain current FOTG soil survey maps from NRCS. County Offices must ensure that these maps are the most current maps available.
9	Obtain RUSLE, <b>not</b> RUSLE2, rainfall factor maps for water EI determinations from NRCS.
10	Obtain climatic factor C maps for wind EI determinations from NRCS.
11	Obtain job sheets that include management and maintenance items.

**B State FSA Office Action**

State Offices shall take action according to the following table.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Make preparation for CRP general signup a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities.
2	Immediately begin reviewing C/S rates according to this notice.
3	Ensure that County Offices obtain and enter total WRP cropland acreage into the automated CRP contract system.
4	Submit requests for a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation for general signup to the FSA National Office, <b>as soon as possible</b> , according to paragraph 6.