

For: State and County Offices

Preparing for CRP General Signup 29

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

The next general signup, 29, is being developed to continue acceptance of offers of environmentally sensitive acreage for new 10- to 15-year contracts to cost effectively enroll acreage for program year 2005.

For signup 29, FSA will determine the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) used to rank offers for selection. General Signup Offer Processing (GSOP) is a web-based EBI determination tool being developed for the next signup. This tool will use the similar databases (soils, Conservation Priority Areas, zones, etc.) that were used for signup 26.

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
- reviewing State Conservation Priority Areas and wildlife, water quality and air quality zones
- determining total county cropland for general signup and continuous signup
- other general information.

<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>June 1, 2004</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices</p>
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2 C/S Rates

A General Guidance

2-CRP, Part 20, 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 20. Since signup 26, there may have been some 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 26. 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 Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC's), County Maps, and CPA/Zone Determinations

To help County Offices determine whether an offer is in an approved CPA and/or Zone, and the HUC code that applies to each offer, CEPD will supply a website.

Note: The website will be available prior to start of the next signup. Additional information will be provided later.

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

B State Conservation Priority Area (CPA's) Review

STC's shall consult with the State Conservationist to review and, if necessary, modify existing State CPA's or add a new State CPA. State CPA's are used only for land eligibility.

All State CPA's must be identified by:

- primary purpose of CPA (wildlife, water quality, or air quality)
- Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) code for whole counties
- FIPS code **and** an 8- to 14-digit HUC for partial counties.

Note: 8-digit HUC's were not allowed in Signup 26, but now may be used to identify partial counties.

The cumulative total for all State CPA's shall not exceed 33 percent of the available cropland within the State. Any modification, new State CPA or change to a boundary such as an addition of a 14-digit HUC, must meet the 33 percent size limitation.

The deadline for completing changes to State CPA's is **December 15, 2003**.

C State Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Review

STC's shall consult with the State Conservationist to review and, if necessary, modify the established zones. This includes changes to the zone boundaries and, in the case of wildlife zones, the applicable CRP conservation practices. Zones are used for EBI ranking factor scoring.

Zones must be identified by:

- primary purpose of zone (wildlife, water quality, or air quality)
- FIPS code for whole counties
- FIPS code **and** an 8- to 14-digit HUC for partial counties
- designated CRP practices consistent with achieving desired wildlife objectives (wildlife zones **only**).

In addition, all zones must be located within the boundaries of either a National CPA or a State CPA. Eligible acreage located within the zone will be awarded EBI points. In the case of wildlife zones, points will only be awarded if the offer is located within the zone and the applicable conservation practices that restore desired habitat are offered.

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

C State Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Review (Continued)

States may designate one or more zones. Zones with different purposes such water quality and wildlife may overlap the same geographic area.

The deadline for completing changes to zones is **December 15, 2003**.

D RUSLE Rainfall (R) and Climatic (C) Data Maps and Review

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 R and 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 for Signup 26. The State Office should review with the NRCS Agronomist, the current R and C values and, if necessary, make any modifications.

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. For many counties, these default values may need to be overwritten depending on the location of offered acreage. The R and C factor maps must be of sufficient scale to determine the location of the offered acreage in relation to the applicable R and C factor value. RUSLE2-based maps shall **not** be used.

The deadline for completing changes to R and C factors is **December 15, 2003**.

E Data Review and Transmission

A website has been developed with a link to an Access database of existing State CPA's, zones, and R and C Factors. State Offices shall download the database and follow instructions for reviewing and reporting any changes to State CPA's, zones and R and C factors. To locate the database go to: <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/dafp/cepdsto.htm>. Take option 12, "Signup 29 EBI Database Review and Verification."

Note: Negative reports are required.

F Soil Surveys

State Offices shall obtain from NRCS, the current FOTG soil survey maps consistent with the CRP soils database established through Notice 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.

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

F Soil Surveys (Continued)

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.

G Look Up Tables

Look up tables for:

- N2b, "soil leachability"
- N2c, factor used to determine potential sediment and erosion
- N5a, "air quality"

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
- 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.

4 Required Practice Information (Continued)

A Job Sheets (Continued)

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 personnel 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. County Offices 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.

B Cost Estimates for Practices

For new 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.

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5 Continuous Signup Provisions

A Continuous Signup 28

2-CRP, subparagraph 111 B, provides that CRP continuous signup numbers shall change at the beginning of each FY. For FY 2004, continuous signup 28 began on October 1, 2003.

B PIP and SIP Payments

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

C Concurrent Signups

General signup 29 will be held concurrently with continuous signup 28. County Offices shall process offers of acreage under the continuous signup provisions during the general signup period.

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 AS400/ADV36 Farm Summary File.

County Offices must update the total county cropland acreage in the CRP software using the AS400/ADV36 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, 2004, 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.

Step	Action
1	Immediately upon receipt of this notice, County Offices shall request the number of cropland acres enrolled in WRP from NRCS. Note: Do not obtain Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) data.
2	After all WRP data is obtained, as soon as possible , County Offices shall access Conservation Main Menu EEA000 according to 1-CRP, paragraph 266.
3	On Menu EEA000, ENTER "3", "CRP Contract File Menu", and PRESS "Enter". CRP Contract File Menu EPCA00 will be displayed.
4	On Menu EPCA00, ENTER "10", "Available Cropland and Easement Data", and PRESS "Enter". Cropland and Easements Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.
5	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "1", "Number of Active Contracts and Available Cropland Data", and PRESS "Enter". Active Contracts/Avail. Cropland EPCC1001 will be displayed.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

C Determining Total County Cropland for General Signup (Continued)

Step	Action
6	<p>On Screen EPCC1001:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter the WRP cropland data received from NRCS (Step 1) in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field <p>Note: Land other than cropland may be enrolled in WRP. County Offices shall only enter the cropland enrolled in WRP in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place cursor in the "Enter percentage if waiver is authorized" field and remove the amount displayed (if applicable) by PRESSING "Field Exit" key <p>Notes: County Offices approved for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation for previous CRP signups shall not enter the previous waiver amount in this field.</p> <p>If the FSA National Office 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. Only FSA National Office approved waivers may be entered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter the total county cropland which shall be the same as the farm summary cropland. <p>Note: The farm summary cropland total is displayed on the same screen.</p> <p>Important: After the new total county cropland from the Farm Summary File has been entered, County Offices shall not change the cropland total on Screen EPCC1001, unless authorized by FSA National Office.</p>
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>Important: If "Enter" is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will not 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>

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

C Determining Total County Cropland for General Signup (Continued)

Step	Action
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>Important: If “Enter” is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will not 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 "2004" 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 & WRP Data Report" and PRESS "Enter". Screen EPCC0505, CRP-Select Expiration Year, will be displayed. ENTER "2004" 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 signups. 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.**

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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 4, 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 69.

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 69 are met and STC recommends approval	send request to the FSA National Office CRP Program Manager, by December 15, 2003, with recommendation and all supporting documentation. Note: Failure to submit complete requests with STC or designee recommendation will delay FSA National Office response.
all requirements of 2-CRP, paragraph 69 are not met, or STC does not 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>.

Note: AS400/ADV36 25 percent cropland reports are obsolete.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

G Record Clean Up of Expired CRP-1's

There are about 100,000 acres under CRP contracts that are listed as active but have expiration dates of 2002 or earlier. In order to determine how payment dollars need to be allocated, counties need to resolve the status of these contracts and remove expired contracts from the expired contracts file.

Counties can identify contracts with expired dates that remain in the active contract file by running report EPCE99-R001. Active contracts will be indicated with two asterisks (**) to the left of the contract number. Contracts so identified need to be placed in expired status or canceled, revised, modified, or updated as needed. Counties should run this report for each of the expiration years 1995 and later.

Step	Action	Result
1	Select option 5 "Conservation" on the Application Selection Menu	Displays Conservation Main Menu EEA000
2	Select option 3, "CRP Contract File Menu".	Displays Conservation CRP Contract File Menu EPCA00
3	Select option 5, "Reports/Letters".	Displays Report Selection Menu EPCE00.
4	Select option 14, "Other Reports".	Displays Other Reports Selection Menu EPCE01.
5	Select option 10, "List of Contracts That Expired".	Displays Print Screen FAX46501.
6	Check to accept or modify default values and PRESS "Enter".	Displays Report EPCE9901 Screen.
7	Enter the expiration year for the report you need.	Report EPCE99-R001 will print.

Note: Repeat these instructions for each applicable year; 1995 through 2003.

Example of report EPCE99-R001:

1	ANY STATE	U.S. Department of Agriculture						Prepared: 11-17-20		
	ANY COUNTY	Farm Service Agency						Page:		
	Report ID: EPCE99-R001	Conservation Reserve Program								
		List of Contracts That Expired on September 30, 1997								
CONTRACT NUMBER	FARM NUMBER	PROGRAM YEAR	SIGNUP NUMBER	RENTAL RATE	ACRES EXPIRED	ANNUAL PAYMENT	NUMBER OF PRODUCERS	EASEMENT LENGTH	EASEMENT FILED DATE	EASEMENT ENDS
1A	754	1986	02	44.50	19.2	854.00	3			
** 2	1848	1987	04	42.50	126.0	5,355.00	1			
	Total CRP Contracts Expired:				2					
	Total CRP Acres Expired:				145.2					
	Total Annual Payments:				6,209.00					
	Total Number of Producers:				4					
** = Needs to be expired. Use opt 8, "Special Corrections", then opt 5, "Update Contract with Expired Status".										

Note: ** Denotes contracts needing further action

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7 Action

A County Office Action

County Offices shall take action according to the following table.

Step	Action
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 4, 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, not 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.

Step	Action
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, by December 15, 2003 , according to paragraph 6.