

For: State and County Offices

CRP Joint Statement

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Guidance in Joint Statement

A Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) have a long history of working with FSA to develop recommendations to enhance wildlife habitat on CRP. USFWS and IAFWA have been essential in developing:

- sound science-based habitat requirements on CRP
- recommendations on primary nesting seasons and managed haying and grazing options.

Wildlife and its habitat are important goals of CRP. Activities and actions on CRP should enhance wildlife habitat, protect soil quality, improve water quality, and protect other natural resources. USFWS and IAFWA have an important role in providing wildlife habitat recommendations.

B Purpose

This notice provides a copy of FSA’s jointly-signed statement with USFWS and IAFWA about CRP and wildlife. See Exhibit 1.

C State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- review and follow the guidance in the statement
- ensure County Offices review the statement.

D County Office Action

County Office staff shall review and follow the guidance in the statement.

Disposal Date	Distribution
August 1, 2005	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

Joint Statement Between FSA, USFWS, and IAFWA



**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FARM SERVICE AGENCY
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is the Federal Government's single largest environmental improvement program on private lands, accomplished through local voluntary partnerships between individuals and government. Environmental benefits provided by CRP are estimated to be between \$2.1 billion to \$2.7 billion per year. Of these, \$1.1 billion to \$1.7 billion are from improved wildlife habitat for hunting and wildlife viewing.

This joint document reinforces the commitment by the Commodity Credit Corporation working through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), to work collaboratively towards our common goal of protecting wildlife and our natural resources.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171, provided the opportunity to further assist wildlife through the implementation of managed haying and grazing of CRP acreage. The Act specifies that haying and grazing of CRP shall not be used as a practice that would defeat the purposes of the CRP contract, and shall be consistent with the conservation of soil, water quality, and wildlife habitat (including habitat during the nesting season for birds in the area). Managed haying and grazing is intended to improve the ecological benefits of the CRP. Managed haying and grazing of CRP acreage should be authorized consistent with enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, reducing soil erosion, and protecting and enhancing water, air, and cover quality. Haying and grazing of CRP land not furthering these conservation objectives should not be undertaken.

Managed haying and grazing can be beneficial wildlife management tools if conducted outside the primary nesting and broodrearing season for grassland-dependent wildlife species and implemented in a manner that considers the need for disturbance based on climate, growing season length, and other environmental variables. Under these circumstances, managed haying and grazing can increase the diversity and quality of vegetative covers to wildlife by enhancing plant vigor, reducing invasion by non-native species and woody vegetation, and preventing unbalanced grazing. Managed grazing if timed properly, can improve habitat for grassland birds such as upland sandpiper, bobolink, dickcissel, and bobwhite quail, since periodic reductions in plant biomass can temporally and spatially provide open grassy areas similar to that which often occurs in native prairie habitats.

Managed grazing can also help remove excessive organic matter accumulation and increase soil surface disturbance allowing for improved seed/soil contact and improved germination of native species. Managed grazing can improve air and water quality by reducing release of volatile organic compounds and particulate matter during controlled burns, as well as increase organic

Joint Statement Between FSA, USFWS, and IAFWA (Continued)

source fertility through animal manure, and stimulate plant growth, which reduces leaching of excess nutrients into groundwater.

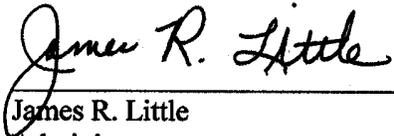
With the Congressional authority to implement managed haying and grazing, FSA delegated authority to its State FSA committees to review the beginning and ending dates of the nesting and broodrearing season in consultation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee to determine if these dates are the best dates for wildlife within their State. FSA delegated this authority, in part, because FSA received complaints from the fish and wildlife community and others that the earlier "one-size-fits-all" dates did not reflect local concerns. For example, managed haying and grazing disturbance at 1-in-3 year cycles may achieve the desired objectives in temperate regions, but a less frequent disturbance cycle may be much more appropriate in the northern Great Plains where breeding birds are dependent upon adequate residual cover due to the short growing season.

The FWS and the State fish and wildlife agencies share certain management authority and responsibility for migratory birds and the State fish and wildlife agencies have certain responsibility for resident species within their jurisdictions. Consistent with their resource management responsibilities, the FWS and State fish and wildlife agencies have significant expertise relative to the habitat needs and biological functions of resident and migratory bird species. Fish and wildlife professionals are represented on the NRCS State Technical Committee. They are therefore in a unique position to ensure that the primary nesting season and broodrearing season dates meet local fish and wildlife needs. To ensure consistency with CRP program purposes, the State FSA Committees are expected to solicit the recommendations of the NRCS State Technical Committee concerning nesting and broodrearing seasons which will include information on the biological requirements of birds in the area provided to the NRCS State Technical Committee by the fish and wildlife professionals represented on the NRCS State Technical Committee.

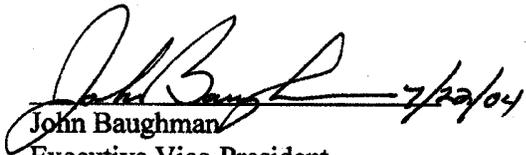
State FSA committee authority to modify any primary nesting or broodrearing provisions is limited to implementing NRCS State Technical Committee recommendations, which are consistent with CRP policies and guidelines.

Adjusting the primary nesting and broodrearing season is intended to provide flexibility in establishing the proper dates to meet wildlife nesting and broodrearing needs in each State. Adjusting these dates is **not** intended to maximize forage obtained through haying or grazing of CRP. Managed haying and grazing of CRP acreage should be authorized primarily for the purpose of enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, reducing soil erosion, and protecting and enhancing water, air and cover quality.

Joint Statement Between FSA, USFWS, and IAFWA (Continued)

 JUL 23 2004
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 JUL 20 2004
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 7/22/04
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