

For: State and County Offices

Preparing for CRP General Signup 29 (SU 29)

Approved by: Acting 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 10- to 15-year contracts beginning program year 2006 and 2007.

For signup 29, FSA will use an the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) to rank offers for selection. General Signup Offer Processing (GSOP) is a web-based EBI determination tool that has been developed for this 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
- determining total county cropland for general signup and continuous signup
- other general information.

<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>June 1, 2005</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices</p>
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Notice CRP-477

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 this general signup. See subparagraph 4 B.

B Rate Review

C/S rates shall be reviewed and, if necessary, updated to reflect current component costs. The cost of eligible items for C/S may also have changed since the rates were established for previous signups. 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.

Notice CRP-477

2 C/S Rates (Continued)

C Rate Consistency

When establishing C/S rates, average costs should be established for CRP practice components consistent with the average costs used to establish C/S rates for other C/S programs in the country. 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 Distributing Natural Resource Data Required for Land Eligibility and EBI Determinations

A Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC's), County Maps, and CPA/Zone Determinations

State Offices were allowed to review and make changes to:

- State conservation priority area (CPA's)
- wildlife, water quality, and air quality zones
- RUSLE rainfall (R) and climatic (C) factors.

The deadline for completing changes to CPA's, zones, and county R and C default factors was January 15, 2004. State Offices should review the website and notify Cathie Kascak at 202-720-0048 of any errors. States are not permitted to revise or modify CPA or zone boundaries other than corrections of errors.

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, a website with a mapping tool to delineate the area is available.

Note: The website is available before the start of the next signup on the State and County Office CEPD Information Center website at <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/dafp/cepdsto.htm>. Select Option 6, "CRP Signup 29 Activities".

Notice CRP-477

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

B Soil Surveys

State Offices shall obtain from NRCS the current Field Office Technical Guide (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.

For those county locations that do not use the CRP Geographic Information System (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.

4 **Required Practice Information**

A Job Sheets

State FSA Conservation Program Specialists shall work with the following to develop job sheets by practice to provide to County Offices on seeding practice requirements for all applicable practices:

- NRCS State CRP Program Manager, NRCS State Agronomist, or other NRCS office specialist
- State fish and game officials
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Note: It is possible that multiple job sheets could be needed if there is a variance because of 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 obtain from the State NRCS soil scientist 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 GSOP software.

These job sheets should include a minimum of the following:

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

4 Required Practice Information (Continued)

B Cost Share Estimates for Practices

Before using GSOP software to record SU 29 offers, FSA will establish a C/S rate for each practice to be used by the system to calculate the total estimated cost share for each offer. County Offices shall establish estimated C/S rates that reflect the average per acre cost of installing the whole practice. Do **not** use “not to exceed” rates when establishing this cost. See paragraph 2 for guidance in establishing the C/S rates.

The estimated C/S rates established for each county shall be entered in the GSOP Cost Share Maintenance Screen before sign up for SU 29. Refer to the GSOP User Guide, Part III Administrative Menu, Section 23, pages 29 and 30, for instructions on loading the C/S rates. The GSOP User Guide is posted on the State and County CEPD Information Center website at <http://dc.fasintranet.usda.gov/dafp/ceptsto.htm>.

Note: The estimated total cost share amount is printed on GSOP-generated CRP-2 forms only to provide producers an estimate of the possible cost share payments and the practice cost obligations. These amounts will not necessarily be reflected in the actual cost share out lays using CRES and 1-CONSV.

On the State and County Office CEPD Information Center website, select Option 6, "CRP Signup 29 Activities", then select Option 4, "GSOP User Guide", to view or print the GSOP User Guide.

5 Continuous Signup Provisions

A Continuous Signup 28 and 30

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. For FY 2005, continuous signup 30 shall begin on October 1, 2004.

B Practice Incentive Payments (PIP) and Signing Incentive Payments (SIP)

PIP and SIP will continue to be made according to 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.

Notice CRP-477

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/SYS36 Farm Summary File.

County Offices must update the total county cropland acreage in the CRP software using the AS400/SYS36 Farm Summary File according to this notice. The CRP software will compare the acreage enrolled in CRP and WRP, excluding CRP acreage that is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2005, 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 this general signup.

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 include 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 Screen EPCC1001 will be displayed.

Notice CRP-477

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 total 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 total 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>

Notice CRP-477

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”. CRP-Select Expiration Year Screen EPCC0505 will be displayed. ENTER “2005” 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”. CRP-Select Expiration Year Screen EPCC0505 will be displayed. ENTER “2005” 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 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Farmable Wetlands Pilot Program (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.**

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 immediately.**

Note: 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 immediately 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.

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.

Note: 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 GSOP 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 GSOP software statement, "All eligibility criteria are met and offer is eligible for CRP." 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 by **the FSA National Office** for a waiver **before** the signup period began.

F State Intranet Reports for 25 Percent Cropland Limitation

CRP Intranet reports have been 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 are posted at CEPD's State Office Information Center site at <http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/dafp/cepdsto.htm>.

Note: AS400/SYS36 25 percent "available cropland transmissions" from County Offices are obsolete and can no longer be processed.

Notice CRP-477

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 as soon as possible.
5	Ensure that all applicable files are updated with the correct total county cropland according to paragraph 6.
6	Determine whether a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation will be required according to 2-CRP, Part 4, and paragraph 6.
7	Request waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation immediately 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 erodibility index (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 immediately according to paragraph 6.