

For: State and County Offices

Revised Policy and Reporting Requirements for County Cropland Limits

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

The Secretary has announced that a general signup is scheduled to occur this FY. Currently, no date has been scheduled. Although a general signup cannot occur until the CRP regulation is published, FSA is preparing for a general signup for this FY.

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, requires that not more than 25 percent of the total cropland in a county is enrolled in CRP, including continuous, CREP, Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and WRP. The total county cropland limit has been based on the cropland administratively located in the county.

2-CRP provides policy about a waiver to increase the limit above 25 percent, provided certain criteria are met.

Note: Authority for the Secretary to approve waivers to exclude continuous signup acres from total CRP acreage was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In previous general signups, COC's were authorized to set county CRP acreage enrollment limits for general signups at levels below 25 percent of the total county cropland acreage limit to allow acreage for continuous, FWP, CREP, and WRP signups.

State and County Offices use Intranet reports to monitor compliance with the 25 percent cropland limitation. A new version of each of the report has been developed and will be published to the Intranet.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2010	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices and NRCS State Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice:

- provides that the 25 percent cropland limitation will be calculated based solely on the physical location of cropland acreage and CRP acreage beginning **July 12, 2010**
- terminates all existing waivers to the 25 percent cropland limitation and provides instructions for obtaining new waivers
- provides authority and instructions for COC's to set county CRP acreage enrollment limits for general signup
- announces the availability of an enhanced 25 Percent Cropland Limitation Report and the sources of information used to create the report
- instructs County Offices:
 - that they are no longer required to maintain cropland or WRP acreage information in System 36 on Screen EPCC0501
 - to collect and report WRP cropland acreage.

2 Twenty-Five Percent Cropland Limitation Calculation Based on Physical Location

A Determining Total County Cropland

In previous general and continuous signups, the cropland limitation was determined by the total cropland administratively located in the county because of System 36 data limitations.

Beginning **July 12, 2010**, the cropland limitation will be determined by the total cropland physically located in the county based on enhanced web-based functionality.

B Determining Total CRP Acres

In previous general and continuous signups, the 25 percent cropland limitation has been calculated based on the county for which the contract is administered.

Beginning **July 12, 2010**, the 25 percent limit will be calculated based on the **physical** location of CRP/WRP cropland acres. For CRP-2 forms completed in the Conservation Online System (COLS), the physical location of CRP acreage is determined within the Tool for Environmental Resource Results Assessment (TERRA) and entered into COLS.

2-CRP, paragraph 138, indicates that the physical location designation for CRP-2C should be made based on the county where at least 51 percent of the acreage is physically located. In cases where land is located in 3 or more counties, it will be based on the county where the highest percentage of acres is physically located.

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2 **Twenty-Five Percent Cropland Limitation Calculation Based on Physical Location (Continued)**

B Determining Total CRP Acres (Continued)

CEPD analysis has revealed that more than 98 percent of the physical location designations for CRP contracts are accurate. CEPD will issue future guidance to assist State and County Offices in correcting any existing errors in the physical location designation.

3 **Waivers to Exceed 25 Percent County Cropland Limitation**

A Termination of Existing Waivers

Waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation previously approved for any other general signup are terminated.

B Obtaining New Waivers

Offers for FY 2010 general signup are limited to 25 percent of the total county cropland, or for applicable counties, the county limit for general signup acreage, unless a waiver is approved according to 2-CRP, Part 4. All waiver requests **must** be received by CEPD by **July 19, 2010**. Waiver requests received **after July 19, 2010**, will not be considered.

Important: STC may recommend approval but may not authorize a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation.

Notes: Approved cropland waivers to the 25 percent limit will preserve COC determinations authorized by paragraph 4. COC's with an approved cropland waiver to the 25 percent limit will be granted an opportunity to revise general signup enrollment limits set by paragraph 4.

Additional guidance will be forthcoming about new 2008 Farm Bill authority concerning waiving, from the 25 percent cropland limitation, the cropland acreage enrolled under continuous signup or CREP, with county government concurrence.

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4 Authority and Instructions to Set General Signup Enrollment Limits

A Authority to Set General Signup Enrollment Limits

General signup county cropland limits previously set by COC's are **terminated** and may be reauthorized by this paragraph. All general signup county cropland limits have been reset to "**blank**". All County Offices **must** complete instructions in subparagraph B.

COC's are authorized, in consultation with NRCS, to set the county cropland limitation at not less than 22 percent or more than 25 percent for the general signup CRP enrollment so that the remaining acreage may be set aside for continuous signup, CREP, FWP, or WRP. COC's may set the county cropland limitation in tenths (i.e., 22.1, 24.9).

COC's must consult with NRCS to determine the county cropland limitation to be used for general CRP signup. When determining the appropriate county cropland limitation, COC's should take the following into account:

- factors, such as interest in and potential for continuous signup enrollment
- CREP agreements that are in effect in the county
- interest in WRP and potential effects for future general signup enrollment.

Note: COC's must document the basis used to determine the county cropland limitation in the COC minutes.

B Instructions for Setting General Signup Enrollment Limits

By COB **July 12, 2010**, County Offices must enter the new general signup county cropland limitation percentage into COLS. See Exhibit 1 for instructions.

By COB **July 13, 2010**, State Offices must run the Cropland Limit Waiver Report available in COLS to ensure that all County Offices have completed the instructions in this paragraph. State Offices are encouraged to run the report **before July 13, 2010**, to determine progress made by the County Offices in completing the instructions in this paragraph. See Exhibit 2 for instructions on how to generate the Cropland Limit Waiver Report.

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5 Availability of Enhanced 25 Percent Cropland Limitation Report

A Availability of Reports

State and County Offices currently use 3 existing Intranet reports to monitor compliance with the 25 percent cropland limitation. These reports will be replaced with new reports.

The new reports will incorporate all the previous information found on the existing reports. In addition, the new reports will:

- use the cropland total from the web-based Farm Records Database
- include land enrolled in State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)
- include the general signup enrollment limits specified by the County Offices according to paragraph 4.

Note: The new reports will be published on the Intranet on **June 21, 2010**.

B Data Sources Used for Report

The following describes the data source used to create the report.

Data Element	Data Source
Total county cropland.	Based on quarterly extracts from the Web-based Farm Records Database. Updates may occur more frequently as necessary.
Total CRP acres, including signup type, marginal pastureland, and practices.	Based on weekly upload of System 36 contract information and web-based contract information for SAFE records.
Total WRP cropland acres.	Based on NRCS data.
General signup enrollment limit.	Based on information entered in COLS by the County Offices.
County Cropland Limit Waivers.	Based on approved waivers.

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6 WRP Cropland Acreage

A Suspension of Information Entry

Total cropland acres will be based on quarterly data extracts from the web-based Farm Records Database. WRP acres will be collected and reported according to subparagraphs B and C.

Because of the availability of web-based data sources, County Offices are no longer required to enter cropland acres or WRP acres into System 36 on Screen EPCC0501.

Note: A future software update will remove this functionality.

B Collecting WRP Acreage

The collection of WRP cropland data is necessary to implement the 25 percent cropland limitation. Cropland enrolled under WRP counts toward the 25 percent cropland limitation.

Example: Jefferson County, LA, has 100,000 acres of cropland. A total of 22,000 acres are enrolled in CRP and 2,000 acres are enrolled in WRP. Because of the 25 percent cropland limitation, Jefferson County cannot enroll more than 25,000 acres in CRP and WRP cropland, excluding marginal pastureland. Therefore, Jefferson County has room to enroll no more than 1,000 additional cropland acres of CRP and WRP.

C Reporting WRP Acreage

To calculate and report WRP cropland acres, State Office may do either of the following.

- Instruct their County Offices to follow the instructions in Exhibit 3. State Offices **must** report to the National Office when **all** County Offices have completed the instructions in Exhibit 3.
- Use a GIS process whereby the CLU layer is combined with the WRP layer provided by the National Office to extract cropland acres for each WRP easement polygon. State Offices must provide the National Office 1 State spreadsheet that includes easements numbers and their associated administrative cropland acres.

Note: Instructions for downloading the WRP GIS layer are in Exhibit 3. State Offices should call the National Office for the password.

State Office may direct all questions, notices of completion, and State spreadsheets may be directed to Shawn Bucholtz by e-mail at shawn.bucholtz@wdc.usda.gov.

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7 Action

A State Office Action

State Offices shall follow the provisions of this notice and ensure that County Offices follow the provisions in this notice, including:

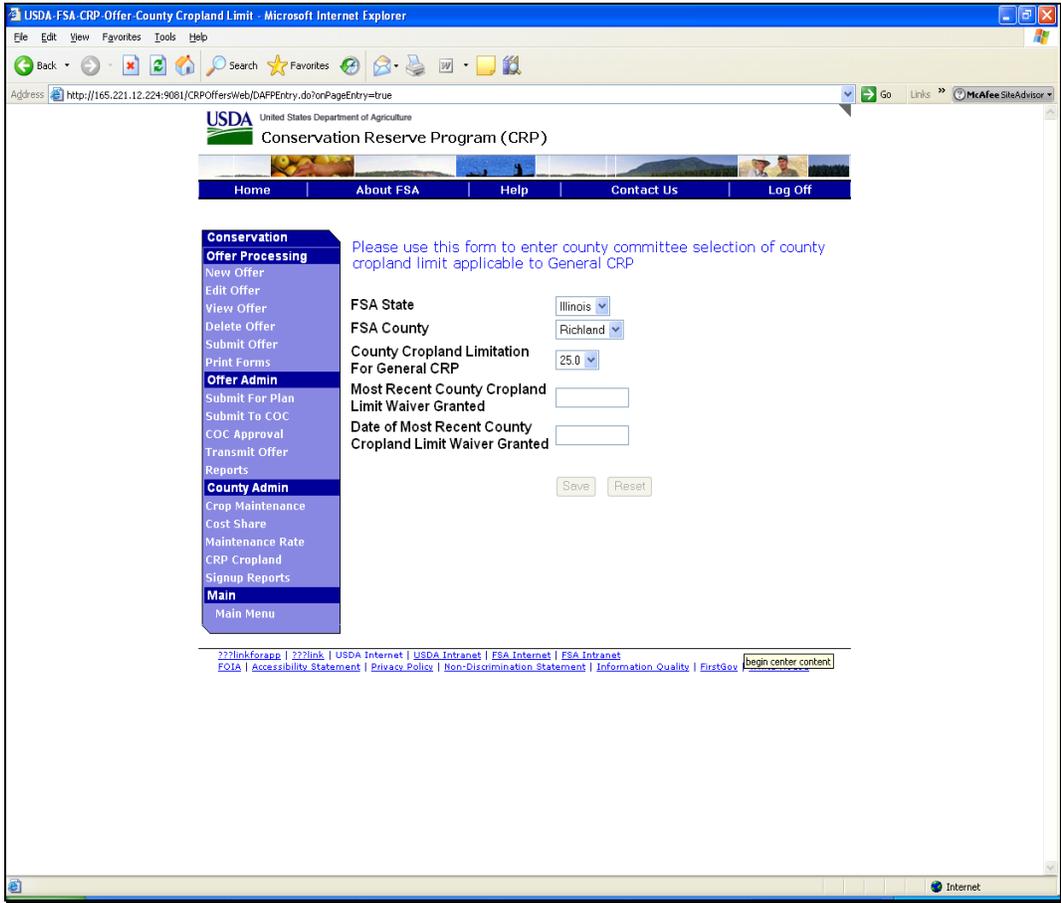
- by COB **July 13, 2010**, run the Cropland Limit Waiver Report available in COLS to ensure that all County Offices have entered the new general signup county cropland limitation percentage into COLS
- submit the 25 Percent Cropland Limitation waiver requests to CEPD by **July 19, 2010**
- ensure that WRP cropland acreage has been reported to the National Office using 1 of the 2 options in subparagraph 6 C by **July 12, 2010**.

B County Office Action

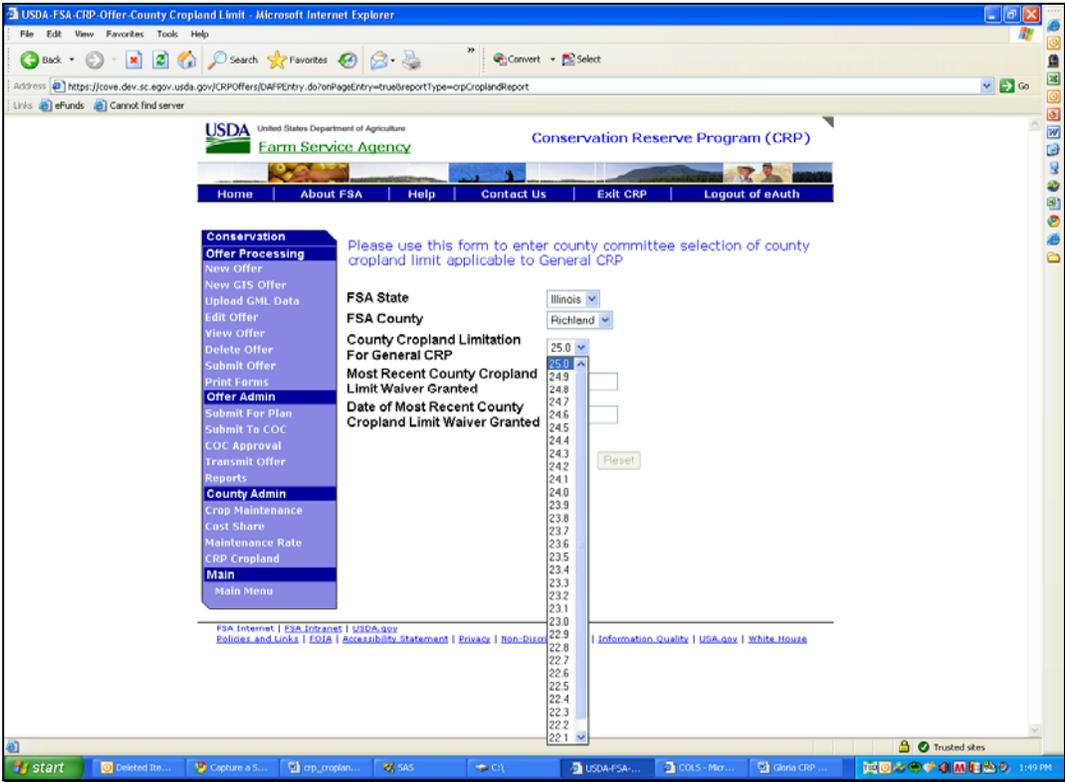
County Offices shall follow the provisions of this notice and must enter the new general signup county cropland limitation percentage into COLS by **July 12, 2010**. See Exhibit 1 for instructions.

COLS County Office Instructions for Updating the CRP County Cropland Limit

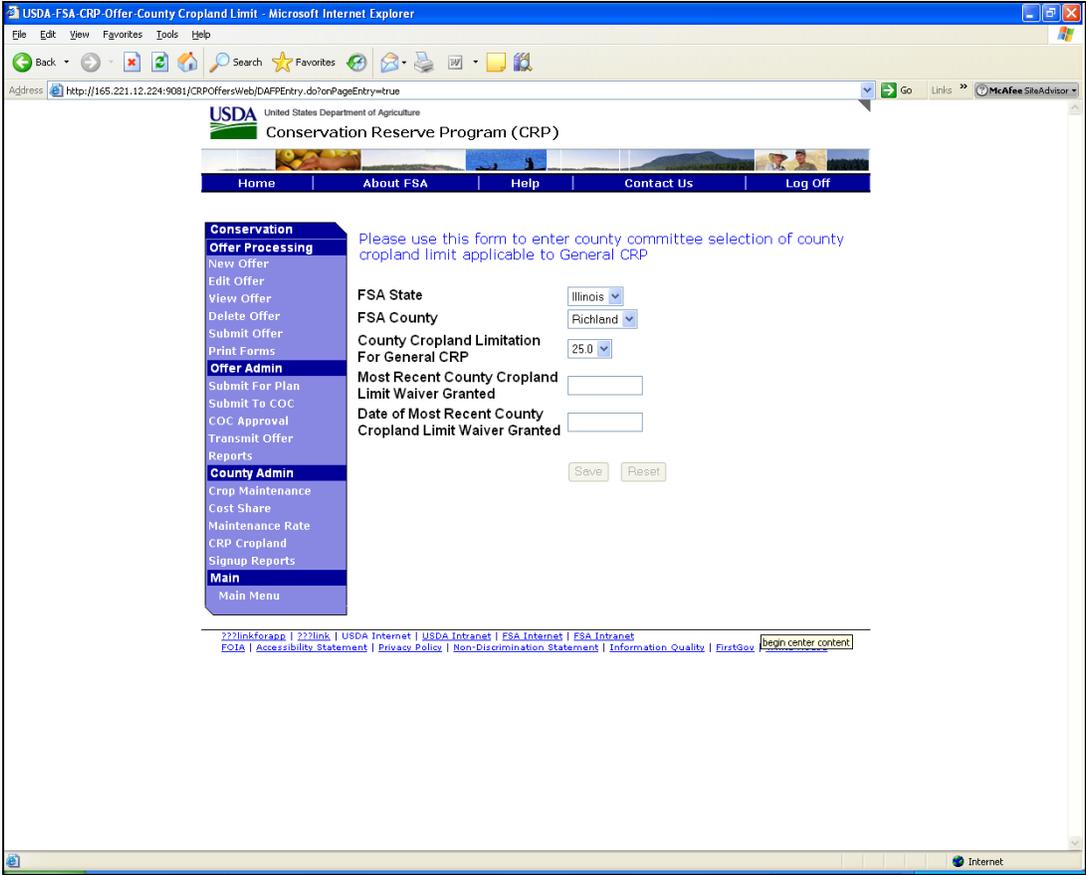
County Offices shall enter the new general signup county cropland limit into COLS according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Log in to COLS through the eAuthentication Login Screen.
2	On the main menu, CLICK “Offer” located under “Applications”.
3	CLICK “CRP Cropland” under “County Admin”.
4	<p>Select FSA County according to the following.</p>  <p>The “FSA State” field will default to the State applicable to the user’s eAuthentication ID and password as entered in login.</p> <p>The “FSA County” field will default to the county applicable to the user’s eAuthentication ID and password as entered in login. If the County Office administers more than 1 county, then the user must select each county separately from the drop-down box to enter and update the cropland limit for each applicable county.</p>

COLS County Office Instructions for Updating the CRP County Cropland Limit (Continued)

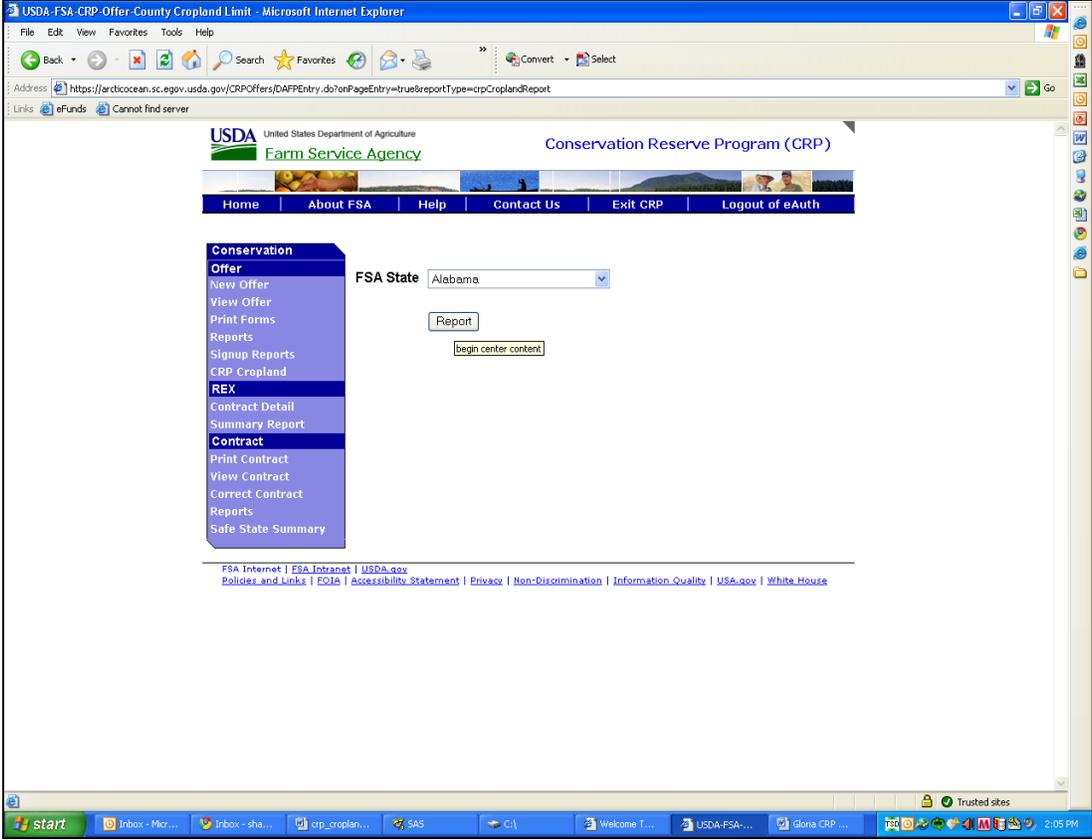
Step	Action
5	<p>Select the value from the “County Cropland Limitation For General Signup” drop-down box according to the following.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a web browser window titled 'USDA FSA CRP- Offer County Cropland Limit'. The page contains a navigation menu on the left with categories like 'Conservation', 'Offer Processing', 'Offer Admin', 'County Admin', and 'Main'. The main content area has a form with the following fields: 'FSA State' (dropdown set to Illinois), 'FSA County' (dropdown set to Richland), 'County Cropland Limitation For General CRP' (dropdown menu open showing values from 25.0 to 22.1), 'Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted' (text input), and 'Date of Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted' (text input). A 'Reset' button is located below the dropdown menu.</p> <p>The “County Cropland Limitation For General CRP” field will require selection by the user based on the determination of COC according to paragraph 4.</p> <p>The drop-down selection options will be in one-tenth percent increments between the range 25 to 22 percent and allow the user to make a selection including tenths if so determined by COC (i.e., 24.3).</p> <p>Note: The “FSA County” field will display the default of “25” and require the user to select a cropland percentage from the drop-down box if COC determines a percentage less than 25. If the user does not click “Save,” a cropland percentage will not be recorded even if left at 25 percent.</p> <p>No data entry is required in the “Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted” or the “Date of Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted” fields.</p>

COLS County Office Instructions for Updating the CRP County Cropland Limit (Continued)

Step	Action
6	<p>Click “Save” to update according to the following.</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "USDA - FSA - CRP - Offer - County Cropland Limit - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows a URL starting with "http://165.221.12.224:9081/CRPOffersWeb/DAFPEntry.do?onPageEntry=true". The page content includes the USDA logo and "Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)". A navigation menu has links for Home, About FSA, Help, Contact Us, and Log Off. A left-hand menu lists various options under "Conservation", "Offer Processing", "Offer Admin", "County Admin", and "Main". The main content area contains a form with the following fields: "FSA State" (dropdown menu set to "Illinois"), "FSA County" (dropdown menu set to "Richland"), "County Cropland Limitation For General CRP" (dropdown menu set to "25.0"), "Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted" (text input field), and "Date of Most Recent County Cropland Limit Waiver Granted" (text input field). There are "Save" and "Reset" buttons at the bottom of the form. At the bottom of the page, there are several links including "linkforapp", "link", "USDA Internet", "USDA Intranet", "FSA Internet", "FSA Intranet", "FOIA", "Accessibility Statement", "Privacy Policy", "Non-Discrimination Statement", "Information Quality", "FirstGov", and "begin center content".</p> <p>Users shall CLICK “Save” to update and save the new COC-determined county cropland limit for general signup. All County Offices shall update the cropland limit percentage even if COC determines the cropland limit will be left at 25 percent.</p>

COLS State Office Instructions for Printing the Cropland Limit Waiver Report

State Offices shall print the Cropland Limit Waiver Report according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Log into COLS through eAuthentication Login Screen.
2	On the main menu, CLICK “CRP Cropland” located under “Conservation-Offer” .
3	Select your State from the “FSA State” drop-down menu.
4	<p>CLICK “Report”.</p>  <p>The Cropland Limit Waiver report will show the general signup limit for each county. Counties that have not completed the steps in Exhibit 1 will have “blank” in this spot.</p>

County Office Instructions for Collecting and Reporting WRP Acres

County Offices shall collect and report WRP acres according to the following.

Step	Action
1	Go to the CEPD Data Entry SharePoint site at https://fsa.sc.egov.usda.gov/states/cepd/default.aspx .
2	CLICK “WRP Cropland Data Entry”.
3	Select the relevant State folder.
4	<p>Click the relevant county Excel workbook. When prompted how to open, CLICK “Edit”.</p> <p>Each Excel workbook contains a list of WRP easement agreements. Included in the file are the following fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGREE_NUM - the WRP easement agreement number • EASE_ACRES - the number of acres of the WRP easement agreement • STATE - the State in which the WRP easement agreement is physically located • FSA_CODE - the county in which the WRP easement agreement is physically located • CROPLAND - that field that must contain the number of acres of the easement that are cropland.
5	<p>For each WRP easement agreement (each row), fill in the “CROPLAND” column with the number of acres of the WRP easement that are cropland. This field must not be left blank. If the easement contains no cropland, then a value of zero must be entered into the column.</p> <p>Notes: To assist County Office in locating a WRP easement agreement, a WRP easement agreement shapefile has been provided on the SharePoint site. The shapefile is in a zipped file named “WRP_05012010”. The zipped file is password protected. County Offices must call their State Office to receive the password.</p>
6	<p>After entering data into 1 or more rows, click the “Save” icon to save the file to the SharePoint site.</p> <p>Note: Users may save their work at any time. User can return to their Excel workbook to resume edits at any time.</p>
7	Once the County Office has completed entering the cropland acres for all WRP easements, the County Office must send an e-mail to their State Office certifying that the data entry has been completed.