

**For:** State and County Offices

**Preparing for CRP General Signup 49**

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



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

On May 29, 2015, the Secretary announced that the next general CRP signup will be held from December 1, 2015, through February 26, 2016. Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP may be offered for enrollment during CRP signup 49. In addition, CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2016, may submit offers. Accepted contracts for CRP signup 49 will become effective on October 1, 2016. All land eligibility categories for general signup 49 are published in 2-CRP, subparagraph 151 B.

For signup 49, FSA will use the environmental benefits index (EBI) to rank offers for selection. The Tool for Environmental Resource Results Assessment (TERRA) and the Conservation Online System (COLS) must be used for general signup 49. These tools will use similar databases (soils, CPA's, zones, etc.) that were used for previous general signups. Notice CRP-796 provided information about renewing and revising State CPA's and zones for general signup 49.

**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:

- signature requirements and the deadline for CRP-1's
- policy for approved conservation plans
- other general information.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
March 1, 2016	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

## Notice CRP-797

### 2 Pre-Signup Activities for General Signup 49

#### A Preparing for Signup

County Offices will use TERRA and COLS to process offers for general signup 49. To assist State and County Offices in preparing for general signup 49, the following pre-populated files have been provided:

- CPA's and wildlife, water quality, and air quality zones according to Notice CRP-796
- look-up tables for EBI sub-factors N2b, N2c, and N5a, established for signup 45 shall continue to be used for signup 49 and are located at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/g49/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

#### B Soils in the Soils Data Management System (SDMS)

SDMS is maintained by the State Office. In preparation for signup 49, State Offices should work with NRCS State Soil Scientist staff to ensure that all soils data within SDMS are complete and accurate.

Each soil type must have all soil attributes and SRR before it can be used by TERRA and COLS during signup.

- Soil attributes will be updated nationally before general signup 49.
- FY 2015 SRR's will be used for general signup 49.
- State Offices shall instruct County Offices to print the Posting Reports for their county(s) from SDMS and post for display as directed in 2-CRP, paragraph 104.
- Soils in SDMS that are not likely to ever be cropped; that is, water, barren, or dam soil map units; may be voided by the State Office upon consultation with NRCS State Soil Scientist staff.
- State Offices will complete any edits to soil attributes in SDMS at <https://intranet-apps.fsa.usda.gov/soilDbMgmt/SoilWelcome.do>

If there are questions about SDMS, contact Jean Agapoff by either of the following:

- e-mail to [jean.agapoff@ca.usda.gov](mailto:jean.agapoff@ca.usda.gov)
- telephone at 530-792-5594.

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### 2 Pre-Signup Activities for General Signup 49 (Continued)

#### C Producer Notifications

Letter notifications were sent by Kansas City the week of November 9, 2015, to **all** participants with general and continuous signup CRP-1's scheduled to expire on September 30, 2016. See Exhibit 1 for an example of the expiring general and continuous signup notification letter.

The mailing list of CRP notification letters sent to CRP participants was posted on the CRP SharePoint web site at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/gs49/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

### 3 WRP, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and 25 Percent County Cropland Limits

#### A Updating WRP and ACEP Acres

The National Office will post State tables of physical county WRP acres by COB November 16, 2015. The WRP State tables will be published on CEPD's SharePoint site at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/gs49/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

Each State Office shall download its WRP State table spreadsheet, which includes columns for current physical county WRP acres and a blank revised WRP/ACEP cropland acres column for the State Office to complete. **ACEP cropland acres are not included in the table.** ACEP cropland acres must be provided by State NRCS and added to the WRP cropland acres. Soils with subclass 'W' and non-irrigated land capability class IV-VII are exempt from ACEP cropland acres. Follow NRCS guidelines for geoprocessing these acres.

State Offices shall contact County Offices and verify the accuracy of the **WRP/ACEP cropland** acres for each physical county in the table. The WRP acres provided in the table for review are based on PECD and NRCS data, which may include non-cropland WRP. ACEP cropland acres have not been added. Revised acre totals of **only cropland** WRP and ACEP are to be included in the table.

**Note:** Revisions to the WRP and ACEP acres on the spreadsheet require local FSA and NRCS concurrence.

State Offices must submit a completed WRP/ACEP State Table of all physical county WRP and ACEP cropland acres, including updated county totals, to CEPD by November 23, 2015. Send submissions to Catherine Feather by e-mail to [catherine.feather@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:catherine.feather@wdc.usda.gov).

#### B County Cropland Limit Report

The updated 25 Percent County Cropland Limit Report will be posted on CEPD's SharePoint site at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/default.aspx>.

#### C County Cropland Limit Waivers

All existing 25 percent county cropland limitation waivers previously approved will be extended for general signup 49.

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### 4 Required Practice Information for Conservation Plan

#### A Job Sheets

2-CRP, subparagraph 66 B was updated to provide a list of eligible conservation practices and their CRP-1 length for signup 49. When developing the conservation plan, State Conservation Program Specialists must work with the NRCS State CRP Program Manager to update or develop job sheets by practice, to provide County Offices seeding practice requirements for all signup 49 practices.

**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.

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

- 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 Offices 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 for each map unit symbol in SDMS and is automatically applied by the TERRA and COLS offer system.

These job sheets should include a minimum of the following:

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

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### 4 Required Practice Information for Conservation Plan (Continued)

#### B Cost Estimates for Practices

For the “new offer” COLS process, FSA established a cost for each practice to be used for the total estimated practice cost for each offer. County Offices shall update or establish an estimated total C/S amount using flat rate 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 COLS software to print the total **estimated** cost on CRP-1.

### 5 Conservation Plan Provisions for Signup 49

#### A Conservation Plan Completion

A conservation plan must be completed no later than September 9, 2016. The NRCS National Office has agreed with this deadline.

**Notes:** Participants must be notified that starting a practice before approval of CRP-1 is at their own risk. C/S will only be paid for those eligible costs that are approved under the conservation plan.

The specifications for all applicable practices shall be included in the approved conservation plan according to 2-CRP.

### 6 Signup 49 Signature Requirements

#### A Requirements

To ensure that CRP-1's for general signup 49 are approved by September 30, 2016, **all** participants are strongly encouraged to sign and date CRP-1 no later than COB September 16, 2016.

**Note:** See 2-CRP, paragraph 335 for signature requirements during signup.

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### 7 Action

#### A State Office Action

State Offices shall:



- make preparation for CRP general signup a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities
- follow the provisions of this notice
- ensure that County Offices follow the provisions of this notice.

#### B County Office Action

County Offices shall:

- make preparation for CRP general signup a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities
- follow the provisions of this notice.

Example of the Expiring General and Continuous Signup Notification Letter

 <p><b>United States Department of Agriculture</b></p>	
<p>Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services</p> <p>Farm Service Agency</p> <p>Farm Programs</p> <p>1400 Independence Ave, SW Stop 0510 Washington, DC 20250-0513</p> <p>Voice: 202-720-6221 Fax: 202-720-4619</p>	<p>October 27, 2015</p> <p>Dear CRP Participant:</p> <p>Thank you for being part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which is celebrating 30 years of conserving our nation's natural resources (#CRPis30). I hope you will continue to participate in this valuable program, but that requires action on your part because one or more of your CRP contract (s) expires on September 30, 2016. You have the following options for your expiring contract(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>CRP General Signup, Continuous Enrollment, or CRP Grasslands:</b> All or a portion of your acreage may be eligible for enrollment in: 1) a new general CRP contract during the sign-up period of December 1, 2015 through February 26, 2016; 2) a continuous CRP contract which you may enroll any time before August 31, 2016; or 3) the new CRP Grasslands Program which you may enroll any time before September 30, 2016. If you plan to return a portion of your land to production, important conservation benefits may still be achieved by re-enrolling sensitive acres such as buffers or pollinator habitat.</li> <li>2. <b>Transition Incentives Program (TIP):</b> If you are not planning to farm the land from the expiring contract yourself, TIP may provide you two additional annual rental payments on the condition you sell or rent your land to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of an underserved group. New landowners or renters are required to use sustainable grazing or farming methods as they return the land to production. TIP offers a way to create new farming opportunities while continuing conservation efforts. If you are interested in TIP, contact your local FSA office no later than August 31, 2016.</li> <li>3. <b>Contract Expiration.</b> If you do nothing, your CRP contract will expire. You will receive your final payment in October of 2016. You may plant, graze or hay the acreage after September 30, 2016. Since CRP land typically does not have a recent history of pesticide or herbicide application, the land may be valuable for organic production without a transition period. Prior to contract expiration, you should visit with your local FSA office and review the current crop acreage base reinstatement provisions. Before planting, check with FSA or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to see if your land may be subject to conservation and wetland compliance provisions.</li> <li>4. <b>Conservation Easements or Working Lands Programs.</b> CRP land may transition into conservation easements to provide longer term benefits. NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) or state or private easement programs may be an option. If you are planning to convert your CRP land to agriculture use, USDA's working lands programs, including FSA's CRP Grasslands, NRCS's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or the Environmental Quality Incentives Program may be available to address your resource needs. In many cases a combination of approaches can be taken on the same parcel. For example, riparian areas or other sensitive parts of a parcel may be enrolled in continuous CRP and the remaining land that is returned to farming can participate in CSP and even receive additional ranking points.</li> </ol> <p>Please contact your local USDA Service Center, or visit <a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp</a> to explore your options.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Val Dolcini Administrator</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer</p>