

For: State Offices

**Renewing or Revising Existing Conservation Priority Areas (CPA's) and
Establishing New or Renewing, Revising Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zones**

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

Land physically located in a National or State CPA meet the basic land eligibility criteria for enrollment through General CRP Signup according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 151 B. 2-CRP, Exhibit 18, provides maps of the National CPA's.

Land physically located in a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone is awarded points within the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 26.

A State may have a State CPA(s) without having a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone. However, a State may not have a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone unless such zone is located within a State or National CPA.

State Committee (STC) must renew (leave unchanged) or revise the existing State CPA's and water, wildlife, or air quality zones. New wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones may be established according to this notice. New CPA's are **not** authorized.

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- general policy about State CPA's and wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones
- procedure for reviewing and renewing **existing** State CPA's and wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones
- procedure for revising existing State CPA's and wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2021	State Offices; State Offices relay to NRCS State Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose (Continued)

- procedure for establishing new State wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones
- deadline for establishing new wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones and renewing and revising existing State CPA's and wildlife, water quality, or air quality zones is **November 27, 2020**.

2 General Policy for State CPA's

A Reviewing or Revising State CPA's

State CPA's allow the States to address important environmental issues within the designated area in a planned and coordinated manner.

STC's must consult with the appropriate State agency, NRCS State Conservationist, and State Technical Committee to review and revise if applicable State CPA's. Reviewed and/or revised CPA's must be reported to DAFP, through Conservation Division (CD) according to paragraph 10.

States for which a National CPA(s) encompass the entire State are not authorized to have or establish any State CPA. National and State CPA's **cannot** overlap.

Exception: A State CPA may overlap the National Longleaf Pine CPA, because of its unique eligibility requirements.

All State CPA's **must** be established for and identified by one of the following primary purposes:

- wildlife
- water quality
- air quality.

2 General Policy for State CPA's (Continued)

A Reviewing or Revising State CPA's (Continued)

Example: State establishes a CPA to address the spotted three-toe horn frog. The primary purpose is wildlife.

All the State CPA's **must** be based on the same geographic aggregation using only 1 of the following geographic aggregations (use the most recent version):

- entire county
- entire 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)
- entire 10-digit HUC
- entire 12-digit HUC
- combination of entire county and 8-digit HUC
- combination of entire county and 10-digit HUC
- combination of entire county and 12-digit HUC.

Exception: States with Wind Erosion Soils List (WESL) soils may request, through CD, a waiver to the geographic aggregation limitations. States that have previously received a waiver **must** renew their waiver request. Submit waiver requests, including renewal request, to David Taylor at david.taylor4@usda.gov.

Example 1: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality on the eastern side of the State using 10-digit HUC boundaries. That same State wants to use 12-digit HUC boundaries on the western side of the State. This is **not** permissible. All the State CPA's **must** be based on the same geographic aggregation.

Example 2: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality using major land resource areas. This is **not** permissible. The State CPA must be based 1 of the approved geographic aggregations.

Example 3: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality using 14-digit HUC. This is **not** permissible. Only 8-, 10-, or 12-digit HUC's are permissible. The State CPA **must** be based on 1 of the approved geographic aggregation.

A State may establish a State CPA without having any wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone within the State CPA. See paragraph 5 for wildlife, water quality, and air quality zone criteria. See subparagraph 9 A for geographic aggregations used in the CPA/Zone shapefile.

2 General Policy for State CPA's (Continued)

B Size Limitations for State CPA's

All State CPA's combined are limited to not more than 25 percent of the cropland in the State remaining after subtracting all the cropland within all National CPA's in the State. Work with your GIS specialist to determine the number of cropland acres in your State that remain after subtracting National CPA's.

Example: North Dakota has a total of 25 million acres of cropland at the time it establishes its State CPA. A total of 10 million acres of cropland in the State is within the portion of the Prairie Pothole National CPA located in North Dakota. Therefore, all State CPA's in North Dakota combined cannot exceed a total of 3.75 million acres $((25M - 10M) \times 0.25 = 3.75M$.

STC's **must inform** DAFP, by memorandum through CD, that not more than 25 percent of the available cropland in the State has been designated as State CPA.

C State CPA's and CREP Project Areas

An approved CREP project area is **not** a State CPA unless the approved CREP agreement specifically identifies the CREP project area as a State CPA.

CREP project areas that are State CPA's, as specified in the CREP Agreement, **must** meet the size limitation according to subparagraph B. Contact the National Program Manager for CREP, at virgil.ireland@usda.gov, if the CREP project area is a State CPA and it exceeds the size limitation.

3 Reviewing and Revising Existing State CPA's

A Review of Existing State CPA's

STC's must review the existing State CPA to determine if the:

- purpose of the existing State CPA is being met
- CPA is still functioning and necessary
- boundaries of the existing State CPA are correct
- total cropland of all existing State CPAs does not exceed the 25 percent cropland limitation.

If STC determines there are no changes to the existing State CPA, the STC must inform DAFP by memorandum if the State CPA will be renewed.

Exception: Changes to the boundary due to administrative update to the shapefile are **not** considered changes that require a revised State CPA.

State conservation specialists must find their **current** certified State CPA's and Zones maps on the Sharepoint web site located at https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/FBC-GDMS/FSA_GIS/Maps_By_ProgramArea/Forms/AllItems.aspx?viewpath=%2Fsites%2FFBC-GDMS%2FFSA_GIS%2FMaps_By_ProgramArea%2FForms%2FAllItems.aspx.

After accessing the SharePoint site:

- click on the "State" column filter and place a checkmark next to the two-letter State Postal code
- PDF files for the selected State will be listed

Note: Download the appropriate State PDF files.

- open the map and review for accuracy as to the location of current CPA's and Zones.

3 Reviewing and Revising Existing State CPA's (Continued)

B Updating Source Data for CPA's

County boundaries and Hydrologic Unit data have been updated since the last time CPA's were approved. State GIS Specialists must update any current CPA's and zones using instructions in Exhibit 2 (for CPA's) and 1-GIS, Exhibit 32 (for zones) and submit the corrected CPAs by email to David Taylor at david.taylor4@usda.gov and Brandon Soldner at brandon.soldner@usda.gov. Note in the email if existing CPA's and associated zones contained the correct counties and/or hydrologic units.

Note: All states were required to download the most recent HUC codes effective on October 1, 2020. Do not download other versions of HUC codes. The correct county boundary dataset is located in Citrix in I:\Geodata\Government Units and named Fsa_counties_dd17.gdb\FSA_Counties_dd17_NonGeneralized. If State CPA's or associated zones were incorrectly mapped, include an explanation for the discrepancy.

4 Reviewing and Revising Existing State Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone's

A Policy for Revising Existing State Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone's

Each State wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone is limited to 25 percent of the cropland acres in the State. STC's must review the existing State zones to determine if the:

- purpose of the existing State zones are being met
- zone is still functioning and necessary
- boundaries of the existing State zones are correct, (Updated data source)
- total cropland of each zone meets the 25 percent cropland limitation.

If the STC determines there are no changes to the existing State zone(s), the STC must inform DAFP by memorandum if the State zone will be renewed.

Exception: Changes to the boundary because of administrative update to the shapefile are not considered changes that require a revised State zone.

Note: Any revisions to approved State zones must include a justifiable basis and be submitted with Exhibit 1.

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4 Reviewing and Revising Existing State Zone's (Continued)

A Policy for Revising Existing State Zone's Continued)

State zone designations are effective only through the earlier of either, 5 years from the date of approval or when the area no longer contains actual or significant adverse environmental impacts that can be addressed by enrollment in CRP for the applicable zone type.

Any STC request to change existing State zone's, other than correction of inadvertent errors, must be based on verifiable, documented, critical, environmentally-related circumstances and State Technical Committee recommendation.

B Updating Source Data for Zones

County boundaries and Hydrologic Unit data have been updated since the last time zones were approved. State GIS Specialists must update any current zones using instructions in 1-GIS Exhibit 32 (for zones) and submit the corrected zones by email to David Taylor at david.taylor4@usda.gov and Brandon Soldner at brandon.soldner@usda.gov. Note in the email if existing zones contained the correct counties and/or hydrologic units.

Note: All states were required to download the most recent HUC codes effective on October 1, 2020. Do not download other versions of HUC codes. The correct county boundary dataset is located in Citrix in I:\Geodata\Government Units and named Fsa_counties_dd17.gdb\FSA_Counties_dd17_NonGeneralized. If State CPA's or associated zones were incorrectly mapped, include an explanation for the discrepancy.

5 General Policy for Wildlife, Water Quality, or Air Quality Zones

A Developing Wildlife, Water Quality, or Air Quality Zones

Each State wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone is limited to 25 percent of the cropland acres in the State. A State may not have a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone unless such zone is located within a State or National CPA. The purpose of a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone is to designate a geographic area that achieves the desired wildlife, water quality or air quality objectives.

Land physically located in a wildlife, water quality, or air quality zone is awarded points within the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) according to 2-CRP, Exhibit 26.

STC's may establish 1 or more zones. Zones with different purposes may overlap. The water quality, wildlife zones, and air quality zones may include up to 100 percent of the State CPA.

STC's must consult with both the NRCS State Conservationist and State Technical Committee to establish a zone.

5 General Policy for Wildlife, Water Quality, or Air Quality Zones (Continued)

B Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Boundaries

Wildlife, water quality, and air quality zone boundaries within a State CPA **must** be based on the same geographic aggregation used to establish the applicable State CPA according to subparagraph 2 A.

Example: The State CPA within which the STC wishes to establish a water quality zone was established using 12-digit HUC boundaries. The water quality zone **must** also be based on the 12-digit HUC boundaries.

Exception: The boundaries for wildlife, water quality, and air quality zones located within a National CPA **must** be based on entire counties.

6 Wildlife Zones

A Establishing A Wildlife Zone

Wildlife zones must be established in locations where enrollment of the cropland within the area will contribute to restoration of habitat of threatened or endangered species or contribute to the restoration of important and declining wildlife species of national, regional, State, or local significance. Provide justification and documentation that the wildlife zone is in a location that contributes to the restoration of the habitat as described above. STC must provide DAFP a memorandum through CD with justification and documentation to David Taylor at david.taylor4@usda.gov.

STC's must consult with State Technical Committee, State fish and game biologists, USFWS officials, NRCS State biologists, State foresters, to determine areas within a State CPA that will be designated as a wildlife zone.

7 Water Quality Zones

A Establishing A Water Quality Zone

Water quality zones may be established in locations where enrollment of the cropland within the area will contribute to reducing groundwater or surface water quality impairment. STC must:

- consult with EPA, State water quality agency, and State Technical Committee when establishing a water quality zone
- ensure that water quality zones will assist in compliance of State water quality laws
- prioritize and approve **only** the highest priority water resources of the State.
- STC must provide DAFP a memorandum through CD with justification and documentation to David Taylor at **david.taylor4@usda.gov**.

Note: Water quality zones may include ground water or source water protection areas.

STC, in consultation with the State Water Quality Agency and the State Technical Committee, may use the following as tools in establishing a water quality zone:

- areas where CRP enrollment would assist in the compliance of total maximum daily load standards
- EPA or the appropriate State agency-identified wellhead and groundwater recharge areas
- areas with Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization Amendment coastal nonpoint pollution control programs
- State 303(d) and 305(b) reports.

8 Air Quality Zones

A Establishing Air Quality Zones

Air quality zones may be established in locations where enrollment of the cropland within the area will contribute to attainment of air quality standards. STC, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, EPA, and State air quality representatives, may recommend designated agricultural zones that contribute to the nonattainment of air quality standards. STC must provide DAFP a memorandum through CD with justification and documentation to David Taylor at **david.taylor4@usda.gov**.

8 Air Quality Zones (Continued)

A Establishing Air Quality Zones (Continued)

STC, in consultation with the State technical committee, may also recommend zones within 50 miles of a Class 1 air designated area in which agricultural crop production could impact air quality standards.

Note: The State Office must consult with the State air quality official for the most recent Class 1 designations.

Air quality zones must be located within an air quality CPA.

9 Process for Creating and Submitting State CPA and Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Shapefiles

A Creating State CPA and Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Shapefiles

The State conservation specialists working with the State GIS specialists shall create a GIS shapefile for CPA that defines the project area boundary as a polygon. Follow instructions in Exhibit 2 to create State CPA's and instructions in 1-GIS Exhibit 32 to create Zones within CPA's.

Note: All states were required to download the most recent HUC codes effective on October 1, 2020. Do not download other versions of HUC codes. The correct county boundary dataset is located in Citrix in I:\Geodata\Government Units and named Fsa_counties_dd17.gdb\FSA_Counties_dd17_NonGeneralized. If State CPA's or associated zones were incorrectly mapped, include an explanation for the discrepancy.

B Cropland Limitation 25 Percent

According to:

- subparagraph 2 C, State CPA's shall include no more than 25 percent of available remaining cropland in the State
- subparagraph 5 A, water, wildlife, and air quality zones may include up to 100 percent of State CPA's.

Each State Office is **required** to conduct analysis necessary to ensure that provisions in subparagraphs 2 C and 4 B are followed. Certification of 25 percent cropland limitation shall be sent to David Taylor by e-mail to david.taylor4@usda.gov.

STC's **must** inform DAFP, by memorandum through CD, that not more than 25 percent of the available cropland in the State has been designated as State CPA.

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9 Process for Creating and Submitting State CPA and Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone Shapefiles (Continued)

C Submitting State CPA’s and Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zones

The State conservation specialist shall:

- zip the files and send them to David Taylor at **david.taylor4@usda.gov** and Brandon Soldner at **brandon.soldner@usda.gov** by close of business November 27, 2020
- use the following checklist for revising and submitting State CPA and zones.

Step	Action	Reference	Completed
1	Chose polygons to be included in the State CPA.	Subparagraph 2 A.	
2	Chose polygons within State CPA to be included in water, wildlife, and air quality zones.	Paragraphs 6, 7, 8, and 9.	
3	Chose polygons within National CPA to be included in water, wildlife, and air quality zones.	Paragraphs 6, 7, 8, and 9.	

STC’s must inform DAFP that the State Agency and State Technical Committees concur with renewed and revised CPA’s and new, renewed and revised zone establishment.

10 Action

A National Office Action

The National Office shall:

- process the submitted shapefiles and create corresponding Tool for Environmental Resource Results Assessment (TERRA) shapefiles
- update the conservation web services used by TERRA with correct CPA’s and zones
- notify State Offices individually when the shapefiles have been completed and the revised CPA’s are effective.

B State Office Action

State Offices shall follow the provisions of this notice.


Request For Renewing or Revising Existing Conservation Priority Areas (CPA's) and Establishing New or Renewing, or Revising Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zones

The following information must be submitted for requests for a revision to an existing CPA or requests for new, renewed, or revised Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zone.

- State Name.
- CPA/Zone Name.
- Current CPA/Zone Size (acres).
- Proposed CPA/Zone Size (acres).
- Justification for the modification of the existing State CPA/Zone.
- List of counties within CPA/Zone if applicable.
- List of Hydrologic Unit Codes if applicable.
- Date the State Technical Committee minutes were signed.

Creating State CPA Shapefile


The following is the process for CPA based on county boundaries.

Step	Process
1	Start ArcMap.
2	Add the FSA Counties dd17 feature dataset.
3	Click the “Select Features” tool. 
4	Click on a county to select to be included in the conservation eligibility area. Hold the “Shift” key while clicking to select additional counties.
5	Open ArcToolbox.
6	Expand the Data Management Tools toolbox.
7	Expand the Generalization toolset.
8	Double-click the “Dissolve” tool.
9	Set the “Input Features” drop-down menu to “county”.
10	Set the Output Feature Class to c:\geodata\conservation\ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cpa_a_<st>_<prj>.shp. • crep_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp • safe_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp Select the appropriate naming convention based on the conversation type being created.
11	Uncheck “Create multipart features”.
12	CLICK “OK” to run the “Dissolve” tool.
13	Attribute the shapefile using the steps provided in Exhibit 2, subparagraph D.

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

B CPA Based on HUC's


The following is the process for CPA, CREP, SAFE Based on HUC's

Step	Process
1	Start ArcMap.
2	Add the WBD feature class.
3	Click the "Select Features" tool. 
4	Click on a hydrologic unit to select to be included in the conservation eligibility area. Hold the "Shift" key while clicking to select additional counties. Note: Users may use an attribute query to select HUC's.
5	Open ArcToolbox.
6	Expand the Data Management Tools toolbox.
7	Expand the Generalization toolset.
8	Double-click the "Dissolve" tool.
9	Set the "Input Features" drop-down menu to the WBD layer.
10	Set the Output Feature Class to c:\geodata\conservation\ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cpa_a_<st>_<prj>.shp • crep_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp • safe_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp. Select the appropriate naming convention based on the conservation type being created.
11	Uncheck "Create multipart features".
12	CLICK "OK" to run the "Dissolve" tool.
13	Attribute the shapefile using the steps provided in Exhibit 2, subparagraph D.

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

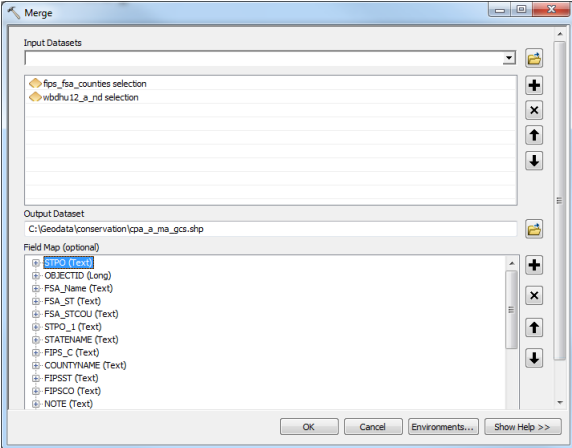
C CREP, SAFE Based on Other Geographic Aggregations

The following is the process for CPA based on other geographic aggregations.

Step	Process
1	Start ArcMap.
2	Add the WBD feature class.
3	Click the “Select Features” tool .
4	Click on a hydrologic unit to select to be included in the conservation eligibility area. Hold the “Shift” key while clicking to select additional counties. Note: Users may use an attribute query to select HUC’s.
5	Right-click the WBD feature class in the Table of Contents.
6	CLICK “Selection” and “Create Layer from Selected Features”.
7	Remove the checkmark from the wbd selection layer.
8	Add the FSA Counties dd17 feature dataset to the map document.
9	Click the “Select Features” tool  .
10	Click on a county to select to be included in the conservation eligibility area. Hold the “Shift” key while clicking to select additional counties.
11	Right-click the County feature dataset in the Table of Contents.
12	CLICK “Selection” and “Create Layer from Selected Features”.
13	Open ArcToolbox.
14	Expand the Data Management Tools toolbox.
15	Expand the General toolset.
16	Double-click on “Merge”.
17	From the “Input Datasets” drop-down menu, select the wbd selection layer.

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

C CPA Based on Other Geographic Aggregations (Continued)

Step	Process
18	From the “Input Datasets” drop-down menu, select the FSA_Counties_dd17 layer.
19	<p>Set the Output Dataset to c:\geodata\conservation\:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cpa_a_<st>_<prj>.shp. • crep_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp • safe_<code>_a_<st>_<prj>.shp <p>Select the appropriate naming convention based on the conversation type being created.</p> 
20	CLICK “OK” to run the tool.
21	When the tool has finished running, open the Editor Toolbar.
22	CLICK “Editor” and “Start Editing”.
23	Select the shapefile from the list of layers.
24	CLICK “OK”.
25	CLICK “Editor” and “Merge”.
26	Right-click on shapefile in the Table of Contents.
27	CLICK “Selection” and “Select All”.
28	On the Editor Toolbar, CLICK “Editor” and “Merge”.
29	Select the first feature and CLICK “OK”.
30	CLICK “Editor” and “Save Edits”.
31	CLICK “Editor” and “Stop Editing”.
32	Attribute the shapefile using the steps outlined in Exhibit 2, subparagraph D.

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

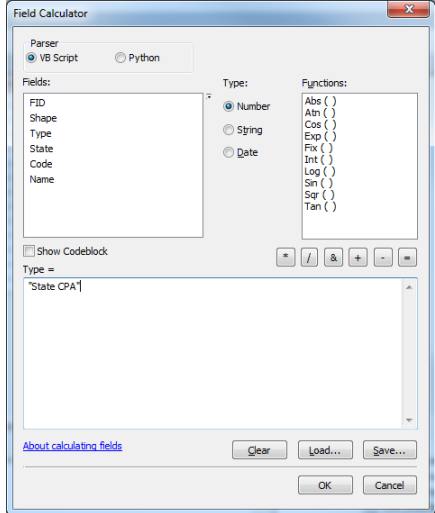
D Attributing State CPA

The following is the process for attributing State CPA.

Step	Processes		
1	With ArcMap open and the CPA feature class added, open ArcToolbox.		
2	Expand the Data Management Tools toolbox.		
3	Expand the Fields toolset.		
4	Double-click “Add Field”.		
5	Set the “Input Table” drop-down menu to the appropriate shapefile (e.g. cpa a <st> <prj>.		
6	Set the “Field Name” field to “ Type ”.		
7	Set the “Field Type” drop-down menu to “ TEXT ”.		
8	Set the “Field Length” field to “ 25 ”.		
9	CLICK “ OK ”.		
10	After the tool successfully executes, run the “Add Field” tool again for the following fields.		
10	Field Name	Field Type	Field Length
	State	TEXT	5
	Code	TEXT	5
	Name	TEXT	255
11	Under “ArcToolbox”, “Data Management Tools”, and “Fields”, double-click “Delete Field”.		
12	Set the “Input Table” drop-down menu to the applicable conservation shapefile.		
13	CLICK “ Select All ”.		

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

D Attributing State CPA (Continued)

Step	Process
14	Remove the checkmarks from the following attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type • State • Code • Name.
15	CLICK “ OK ” to run the tool.
16	After the tool has processed, right-click on the shapefile in the Table of Contents.
17	CLICK “Open Attribute Table”.
18	Right-click the “ Type ” column header.
19	CLICK “ Field Calculator ”. CLICK “ Yes ” to continue if prompted.
20	ENTER “ State CPA, SAFE, CREP ” in the code block based on the type of conservation file being created. Ensure to include quotation marks.
21	CLICK “ OK ”. 

Creating State CPA Shapefile (Continued)

D Attributing State CPA (Continued)

Step	Process
22	Right-click the “ State ” column header.
23	CLICK “ Field Calculator ”. CLICK “ Yes ” to continue if prompted.
24	Enter the 2-letter postal abbreviation for the State, surrounded by quotation marks, in the code block. (e.g. “WI”)
25	CLICK “ OK ”.
26	Right-click the “ Code ” column header.
27	CLICK “ Field Calculator ”. CLICK “ Yes ” to continue if prompted.
28	ENTER the abbreviation of the CPA, CREP, SAFE in the code block. Ensure to include quotation marks. CPA Example: “CPA” CREP Example: “MWQ” SAFE Example: “PM”
29	CLICK “ OK ”.
30	Right-click the “ Name ” column header.
31	CLICK “ Field Calculator ”. CLICK “ Yes ” to continue if prompted.
32	ENTER the conservation project name in the code block. Ensure to include quotation marks. CPA Example: “Maryland CPA” CREP Example: “Minnesota Water Quality” SAFE Example: “Pollinator and Monarch”
33	CLICK “ OK ”.