

FSA Public Scoping Meeting



CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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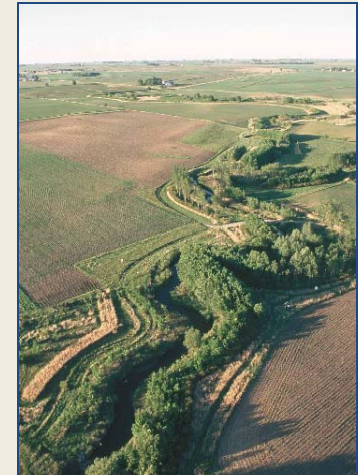


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Meeting Agenda



- Purpose of meeting
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) overview
- Brief discussion of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Changes to CRP provisions defined in 2008 Farm Bill
- Comments



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Purpose of Meeting



- The purpose of this meeting is to solicit comments on proposed alternatives to implement changes to CRP provisions defined in the 2008 Farm Bill
- An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for CRP was prepared in 2003, however, these Farm Bill changes to CRP require that a Supplemental EIS be prepared prior to implementation
- Comments received will be used to finalize alternatives to be addressed in the Supplemental EIS

Conservation Reserve Program



- **Authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 (Farm Bill)**
- **Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) with support of other Federal and local agencies**
- **Provides financial assistance to producers for removing agricultural land from production and installing approved conservation practice(s)**
- **Program goals are to improve ground and surface water quality, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat and to address issues raised by State, regional, and National conservation initiatives**

National Environmental Policy Act



- NEPA requires Federal agencies to assess environmental impacts of actions, programs, or projects prior to implementation
- Provides opportunity for public involvement and comment during the decision making process
- Provides an agency with information to make a better, more informed decision

Key Steps in NEPA Process



- **Notify the public and government agencies of FSA's intent to complete an EIS**
- **Gather public and agency comment relevant for identification of alternative development and possible environmental concerns**
- **Hold public scoping meetings**
- **Develop Draft EIS**
- **Solicit public and agency comments on the Draft EIS**
- **Develop a Final EIS**
- **Announce FSA's decision**

Environmental Impact Statement



- **A description of:**
 - Purpose and need for a program or changes to an existing program
 - Alternatives for administration and implementation of program changes
 - Existing environmental conditions
- **Evaluation of environmental impacts associated with proposed program changes in comparison to a no action alternative**
- **Consideration of public input and comments during the decision making process**

What will this EIS address?



- **No Action**
 - Required under NEPA to establish an environmental baseline
 - Allow for continuation of CRP as it is currently administered
- **Action Alternative 1**
 - Full implementation of applicable 2008 Farm Bill provisions in accordance with current procedures
- **Action Alternative 2**
 - Implementation of CRP in accordance with applicable 2008 Farm Bill provisions exercising discretion that differs from current procedures

Provision Changes



- 10 provisions defined in the 2008 Farm Bill will be addressed in this EIS
- Administrative provision changes that would not impact environmental resources are not included
- Mandatory provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill were addressed in previous NEPA documentation
 - Changes to Farmable Wetland Program eligibility and enrollment limitations
 - Cost sharing for thinning of certain tree stands to improve wildlife habitat
 - Waiver provision for Adjusted Gross Income limitation

Provision Changes



The CRP purposes now explicitly recognize addressing issues raised by state, regional and national conservation initiatives

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
USDA targeted national conservation initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Water Resource Protection Initiative•Highly Erodible Land Initiative•Regional Restoration of Critical Wildlife Habitat of National Concern	No new initiatives and reduce existing wetland initiative

Provision Changes



Enrollment authority for 2010 through 2012 reduced to 32.0 million acres

***(Authority through 2009 set at 39.2 million acres)**

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<p>Maintain 32 million acres apportioning 24 million acres for General Signup and 8 million acres to targeted signup consisting of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•CREP- 2.0 million acres•Continuous – 2.5 million acres•Farmable Wetlands – 0.75 million acres•SAFE – 1.0 million acres•Initiatives – 1.75 million acres	<p>Reduce acreage to 20 million acres for General Signup and 4 million acres for targeted signups as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•CREP – 1.0 million acres•Continuous – 1.7 million acres•Farmable Wetlands – 0.30 million acres•SAFE – 0.40 million acres•Initiatives – 0.40 million acres

CREP = Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program; SAFE = State Acres For wildlife Enhancement

Provision Changes



Alfalfa and multiyear grasses and legumes in a rotation practice with other eligible commodity may now meet crop history requirements

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
6 years alfalfa and 2 years other eligible commodity rotation meets CRP crop history requirements	10 years alfalfa and 2 years other eligible commodity rotation meets CRP crop history requirements



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Provision Changes



Exceptions to 25% county acreage limitations under Continuous Signup and CREP

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•County government exercises yes/no authority•No additional per county acreage limitation imposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•County government exercises yes/no authority•No more than 50% of a county's cropland may be enrolled in CRP

Provision Changes



Requires management by the participant throughout the contract term to implement the conservation plan

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Make <i>mid-contract management</i> optional	Require <i>mid-contract management</i> for only certain approved conservation practices



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Provision Changes



Changes to managed grazing and harvest:

- Authority for managed grazing and harvest removed, new authority added for routine grazing and managed harvest
- Continued authority for emergency harvest and grazing and installation of wind turbines
- Prescribed grazing authorized for control of invasive species
- Activities must not defeat purpose of CRP contract
- Rental payment reduction commensurate with economic value of activity is imposed



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

Provision Changes



Changes to managed grazing and harvest (cont...)

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Routine</i> grazing and harvest only authorized for CPs currently authorized for <i>managed</i> harvest and grazing, and incidental grazing*• Prescribed grazing is <i>not authorized</i> for CP23, CP23A, CP25, CP27, CP31, or CP39-41• Payment reduction commensurate with economic value of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any changes making different CPs eligible for routine grazing or harvest require individual State NEPA analysis*• Same prescribed grazing provisions as Alternative 1• Payment reduction commensurate with economic value of activity

**Changes to established Primary Nesting Season, period of routine grazing and harvest, or frequency of routine grazing and harvest requires State individual NEPA analysis consistent with CRP policy*

Provision Changes



Changes to annual rental rates

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•For new General Signup contracts, use updated National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) adjusted rental rates with soil productivity adjustments•Incentives for Targeted Signup may be increased to ensure program acreage targets are achieved (20% above current levels)•Maintenance incentives reduced to zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•For new contracts, use updated NASS adjusted rental rates with soil productivity adjustments•Incentives for Targeted Signup will remain the same as current program•Maintenance incentives reduced to zero

Provision Changes



Special treatment of CRP land transitioning from retiring owner or operator to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Special treatment of CRP land would dispense \$6.25 million for each of program years 2009-2012•Assumes maximum participation in program for each of those years	Same as Alternative 1

Provision Changes



Adds incentives for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as well as beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers and Indian tribes to participate in conservation programs

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Eligible for cost share rates at least 25% above otherwise applicable rates (up to 90%)•Advance payments of up to 30% of the amount determined for the purchase of materials and services	Eligible for Signup Incentives only

Provision Changes



Encourages development of habitat for native and managed pollinators and use of conservation practices that benefit them

Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Develop new Pollinator Habitat Conservation Practice and modify existing wildlife, grass, buffer strip, windbreak, shelterbelt, and tree related conservation practices to benefit native and managed pollinators by including plant species beneficial for pollinators at specified composition rates	Only modify existing wildlife, grass, buffer strip, windbreak, shelterbelt, and tree related conservation practices to benefit native and managed pollinators by including plant species beneficial for pollinators at specified composition rates

No Action Alternative



- **Required by NEPA**
- **Would allow for continuation of CRP as it is currently administered**
- **Includes changes in provisions that have occurred since the 2003 EIS and analyzed under previous NEPA documents**
- **Establishes the baseline environmental conditions for comparing impacts of the Action Alternatives**

Summary of Action Alternatives

Provision	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
General	USDA targeted national conservation initiatives	No new initiatives and reduce existing wetland initiative
Maximum Enrollment	Maintain 32 million acres: 24 million for General Signup and 8 million for targeted signup	Reduce acreage to 20 million for General Signup and 4 million for targeted signups
Alfalfa and Legumes	6 years alfalfa and 2 years other eligible commodity meet CRP crop history requirements	10 years alfalfa and 2 years other eligible commodity meet CRP crop history requirements
Acreage Limitation	Exception to 25% cropland limit with county government approval; no additional per county acreage limitation	Exception to 25% cropland limit with county government approval; limited enrollment to 50% of county's cropland
Contract Management	Required Conservation Plan management throughout contract making mid-contract management optional	Required Conservation Plan management throughout contract with mid-contract management required on certain appropriate conservation practices
Harvesting and Grazing	Routine harvesting and grazing only allowed on currently authorized CPs, changes to PNS, timing or frequency require NEPA Prescribed grazing not allowed on CP23, CP23A, CP25, CP27, or CP31 Payment reduction applied	Making different CPs eligible for routine grazing and managed harvesting, as well as changes to PNS, timing, or frequency require NEPA Prescribed grazing same as Alternative 1 Payment reduction applied
Rental Payments	Use NASS adjusted rental rates with soil productivity adjustments for General Signup for contracts after 10/1/09 Incentives for Targeted Signup may be increased	Use NASS adjusted rental rates with soil productivity adjustments for new contracts after 10/1/09 Incentives for Targeted Signup same as current program
Special Treatment of CRP Land	Special treatment for land transitioning from retiring farmer to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer Dispense \$6.25 million for each program year 2009-2012	Same as Alternative 1
Incentives for Certain Farmers and Ranchers	Beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and Indian Tribes eligible for cost share at least 25% above applicable rates (up to 90%) and advance payments of 30% of materials and services	Beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and Indian Tribe eligible for Signup Incentives only
Pollinators	Develop new Pollinator Habitat Conservation Practice and modify existing practices to benefit pollinators	Modify existing practices to benefit pollinators

Audience Comment Period



- **Verbal comments**
 - State name and zip code
 - Please be brief to allow time for all parties to comment
- **Written comments**
 - Forms available at sign-in desk
 - Leave completed form with attendant or mail to address provided on form
 - Please submit comments by October 19, 2009
- **Submit comments online**
 - <http://public.geo-marine.com>
 - Cards with web address available at sign-in desk
 - Please submit comments by October 19, 2009



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