



TO: FSA and NRCS Employees

February 9, 2005

FROM: Washington State FSA Office
NRCS State Office

SUBJECT: Clarifying Agency Roles and Responsibilities for CRP

Since passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, the Secretary of Agriculture has made important changes in the administration of the Conservation Reserve Program. The following agency roles have been mutually agreed to by Washington State NRCS and FSA.

Washington NRCS will:

1. Make eligibility determinations for Continuous CRP (including CREP).
2. Report to FSA COC promptly:
 - Findings that may affect a producer's eligibility; and
 - Cases of apparent non-compliance.
3. Complete 10% of all practice certifications (Form AD-862) for all practices for which NRCS has technical responsibility (see attached for selection criteria).
4. Secure signatures on the CRP conservation plan for producers with a share greater than zero.
5. Conduct annual status reviews on 10% of all contracts and submit written reviews to FSA (see attached for selection criteria).
6. After producer is accepted into CRP, assist producer with:
 - Seeding recommendations and coordinating wildlife habitat standards with State wildlife agencies;
 - Developing conservation plans containing all appropriate practices including operation and maintenance and provide FSA with a copy of the plan and a completed CRP Conservation Plan Worksheet. Examples of the Worksheet are attached and electronic versions will be provided by the FSA and NRCS State Offices.
 - Developing haying and grazing plans for managed haying and grazing including operation and maintenance;
 - Marking redefined field boundaries;
 - Practice layout, survey and design;
 - Applying NRCS assigned conservation practices to ensure they meet NRCS standards and specifications and
 - Obtaining Conservation District approval of conservation plans.
7. Coordinate planning of tree planting with the producer and State Forestry Agency.
8. Certify that conservation plan meets minimum requirements identified in 2-CRP.
9. Complete Form NRCS-CPA-52.
10. Adding mid-contract maintenance activities to existing CRP plans when requested by producer.

NRCS employees are prohibited from servicing CRP-2's on land that they, or their immediate family own, rent or lease. The NRCS Area Conservationist will designate another employee to service these CRP-2's.

Selecting 10% of CRP AD-862's for Certification and 10% of CRP Contracts for Annual Status Reviews.

The FSA COC, in consultation with the FSA County Executive Director and NRCS District Conservationist, shall select 10% of the AD-862's on which NRCS will certify practice installation and the 10% of the CRP contracts on which NRCS will conduct annual status reviews.

At the beginning of the calendar year, COC's shall determine the number of CRP contracts on which the stand is not certified as established (for annual status reviews) and within this group, the number of contracts on which producer reports of practice installation are expected in the coming year (for AD-862's). Within each of these groups, COC's shall select contracts for annual status review completion or AD-862 certification by NRCS based on the criteria below. NRCS will conduct annual status reviews on 10% of contracts that are not certified as established and complete field visits and form AD-862 on 10% of the reports of practice installation. If the contracts selected by the COC based on the guidelines below are less than 10% of the total, the remaining contracts up to 10% will be selected randomly.

COC's should use the following guidelines in selecting contracts for NRCS action. These guidelines are suggestions which COC's and Service Center staff may modify or expand as determined appropriate.

- Limit AD-862 certification to new stands.
- Identify contracts which have already experienced problems with stand establishment.
- Identify sites where it will be most difficult to establish a vegetative stand due to soils, precipitation or existing weed problems.
- Identify producers that are inexperienced in establishing vegetative CRP stands or who have had difficulties in the past.
- Limit the number of status reviews on the same contract to one status review unless additional reviews are determined necessary.
- Limit status reviews to contracts that are not certified and less than three years has passed since the effective date.
- Limit status reviews to contracts where NRCS did not certify an AD-862 unless determined necessary.
- Identify contracts or practices that were completed with assistance of Technical Service Providers.



JAMES F. FITZGERALD
State Executive Director
USDA Farm Service Agency



R.L. "GUS" HUGHBANKS
State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service