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Help the Land*

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Transmitted via Email

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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-7-3

**SUBJECT: LTP – CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) – GENERAL SIGN-UP 32,
RE-ENROLLMENT CONSERVATION PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Purpose. To clarify NRCS policy and responsibilities for developing General CRP Sign-up 32 conservation plans.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2007

Background

FSA and NRCS are continuing to work with existing CRP program participants whose contracts expire in years 2008 – 2010 to determine their desire for either extending or re-enrolling acres currently under contract. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 NRCS is responsible to develop a new conservation plan for those contracts that expire in years 2008 – 2010 and are to be fully re-enrolled in CRP. NRCS has no planning assistance responsibility for extended contracts.

Planning Guidance

- All re-enrolled CRP plans will be developed through entry into ToolKit. Toolkit data will use the Toolkit contract wizard to generate a contract support document (LTP-1155).
- All plans must include an updated environmental evaluation during the conservation planning process. Existing environmental information in the current plan can be used as a starting point and updated as needed. Planning policy mandates that completion of the NRCS-CPA-052 form and include an on-site review of existing conditions. Where all of the CRP practices remain unchanged, and a review of the updated information indicates no change from the existing NRCS-CPA-052, as well as a previous field visit having been conducted, NRCS can initial and re-date the existing form.
- Field staff have the flexibility to decide if they need to conduct on-site planning assistance of the re-enrolled acres. When on-site planning assistance is provided it will not include a review or evaluation of the existing cover or a determination if the existing cover meets NRCS standards. FSA is responsible for conducting all contract compliance reviews and rectifying all compliance issues with contract holders.
- All re-enrolled acres will be planned according to their appropriate NRCS practice standard. FSA is responsible to determine the acres of each re-enrolled CRP practice. Minnesota has modified practice narratives for re-enrolled contracts to; 1) list the

corresponding CRP practice codes and; 2) remove wording that references the “establishment” of cover or “establishment” of vegetation according to attached job sheets.

- Plan narratives will show all re-enrolled CRP acres as retaining their original CRP practice code, for example;
 - ✓ Acres originally enrolled as practice CP-1 will be re-planned and contracted to CP-1 not CP-10
 - ✓ Acres originally enrolled with practice CP-23 will be re-planned and contracted as CP-23
 - ✓ Only those acres originally enrolled as practices CP-10 or CP-11 will be re-planned using code CP-10 or CP-11
- The state office is revising the CRP practice job sheets to include wording concerning the appropriate normal practice operation and maintenance. Plans will not show O&M requirements as a stand alone practice narrative.
- All re-enrolled CRP acres will have a corresponding mid contract management activity planned, unless waived by the FSA State Committee. Where appropriate, 15-year contracts will schedule two separate mid-contract management activities and each 10-year contract will schedule one activity. To achieve the mid-contract management requirements all re-enrolled grassland acres will schedule practice 647, Early Successional Habitat Management and all re-enrolled forested acres will schedule practice 666, Forest Stand Improvement. CP practices with multiple vegetative covers, such as CP-4D, will only schedule a single activity based on the majority of the CP practice acres. For example on the CP-4D practice schedule a mid-contract activity for grass only, not grass and tree/shrub. All mid-contract management information provided in the conservation plan should be flexible enough to allow participants to select from a set of appropriate options within the allowable time frame. In many cases these options and time frames can be described in a job sheet. Presenting this information in a flexible format will minimize the need for future plan modifications if participants decide to select alternative activities or alter their implementation schedule.
- Area Resource Conservationists will be developing new Conservation System Guidesheets for reporting re-enrolled CRP plans in PRS. Additional information will be distributed when PRS becomes operational in FY 2007.
- NRCS will only develop hardcopies of the REX plan for the landowner and FSA. NRCS will have access to the FSA file copy when revisions become necessary.

Toolkit Guidance

Use all existing Toolkit data entry procedures for normal conservation planning, with the additions noted below;

- Enter the “new” plan approved date. This is the date the participant approves the re-enrolled plan.

- For **all** plans enter both the 327, Conservation Cover and 645, Upland Wildlife Habitat practices with a “planned application date” of 2007. Enter other conservation practices as appropriate, such as 612, Tree Planting, 643, Restoration of Declining Habitats, 657, Wetland Restoration or others with a “planned application date” reflecting the year the practice was actually established.
- For re-enrolled CRP plans NRCS has previously reported that these acres met a practice standard. The FSA compliance report is responsible to document that the existing cover is serving the original intended purpose. NRCS will rely on FSA’s compliance review information documenting that the existing cover is adequate. NRCS is not responsible to document that these practices meet a current practice standard.
- NRCS will not be including REX practices reported in FY 2007 on the list of Ecological Sciences practices subject to quality assurance review.
- Enter an appropriate practice for the required mid-contract management activities on all acres. Schedule each mid-contract management practice using the planned application date. Each plan must have at least one mid-contract practice scheduled with a future planned application date.

FSA’s target date for completion of Sign-up 32 re-enrolled conservation plans is December 30, 2006. However, each ASTC (FO) has submitted a list of counties where this date has been determined to be unrealistic. The fall back completion date for the identified counties is January 30, 2007. Those counties that have a Contribution Agreements with a local Soil and Water Conservation District to provide CRP conservation planning assistance on REX acres as a Technical Service Provider will need to inform them of this guidance. Direct your questions on the information in this bulletin to Paul Flynn, State Resource Conservationist at (651) 602-7870.

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