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Transmitted via email

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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-8-11

SUBJECT: LTP – CRP – Critical Feed Use

Purpose: To provide initial information and guidance to field staff for producer modification of CRP contracts for “Critical Feed Use”

Expiration Date: September 30, 2008.

Background

On May 27, 2008, USDA announced that certain acreage enrolled in CRP practices CP-1, CP-2, CP-4B, CP-4D, CP-10, CP-18B and CP-18C would be available for hay and forage after the ending of the primary nesting season. Beginning June 2, 2008, CRP participants may request FSA to voluntarily modify CRP contracts for critical feed use, such as haying and grazing. CRP participants may use their CRP acreage for a critical feed use or may lease the privilege to any other individual.

Program Planning Guidance

All acres devoted to these CRP practices are eligible for haying and grazing except the following:

- Acres where the cover has not been fully established for 12 months
- Acres under a useful life easement
- Lands within 120 feet of a stream or permanent water body

Modified CRP Conservation Plan is Required

CRP participants that request to hay or graze as a critical feed use must obtain a modified conservation plan. NRCS will be responsible for providing technical assistance to eligible landowners approved for critical feed use. Technical assistance responsibilities will include:

- All contracts will have a conservation plan modification which details the specific requirements and/or restrictions of haying or grazing.
- All land approved with a revised conservation plan will have a site inspection completed to ensure compliance.
- All plans must include an updated environmental evaluation during the conservation planning process. In most cases it is expected that the existing environmental information in the current plan can be used as a starting point and updated as needed. When no changes are identified initial and date the existing CPA-052 as being correct.
- District Conservationists have the option to only develop hardcopies of the modified plan (job sheet) for the landowner and FSA. NRCS will have access to the FSA file copy when revisions become necessary and for compliance checks.

Haying Provisions - In cases where the critical acreage is used for haying, a conservation plan modification will usually be as simple as a haying job sheet. The state office will develop a job sheet template that will detail the minimum height for haying of the specific forage species. Field staff will work with participants to identify the field locations, the percent of each field to be hayed, and identify any ineligible areas.



Participants will sign the haying job sheet. CRP participants that modify the CRP contract to include haying as a critical feed use must:

- remove all hay from CRP acreage before November 10, 2008
- limit haying of CRP acreage to 1 cutting
- not hay and graze the same acreage
- leave at least 50 percent of each field's eligible acres unhayed
- not conduct the haying activity during the primary nesting season (after August 1)
- re-establish, at the participant's expense, any cover destroyed or damaged as a result of critical feed use.

Grazing Provisions - Grazing plans will require more specific detail. Field evaluations will be completed to assess the stand, and work with the landowner on stocking rates and grazing heights. Participants will sign the CRP grazing plan. CRP participants that modify the CRP contract to include grazing as a critical feed use must:

- remove the livestock from the CRP acreage before November 10, 2008
- not hay and graze the same acreage
- leave at least 25 percent of each field ungrazed for wildlife or graze all of the CRP
- acreage at no more than 75 percent of the stocking rate, as determined by NRCS or TSP
- not conduct the grazing activity during the primary nesting season (after August 1) re-establish, at the participant's expense, any cover destroyed or damaged as a result of critical feed use.

ToolKit Guidance

All modified CRP plans for Critical Feed Use will be developed through entry into ToolKit. The CRP practice list will be revised to include conservation practices 511, Forage Harvest Management and 528, Prescribed Grazing.

To get PRS credit for "acres planned" enter the appropriate ToolKit practice narratives (511 or 528) using program CTA-GLC with a land use of either pasture or hayland and enter the "new" plan approval date on the reporting tab (FY-2008).

To get PRS credit for acres implemented, schedule the starting date of the revised practices for August 1, 2008 and subsequently report the applied practices under CRP.

This activity has significant workload implications. In MN there are approximately 960,000 acres in 20,000 producer contracts available for these provisions. NRCS will be coordinating closely with FSA to provide timely and effective technical assistance as soon as possible. Field staff will be sent additional information and guidance as it is developed.

Direct your questions on the CRP policy information in this bulletin to Paul Flynn, State Resource Conservationist at 651-602-7870.

/s/

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

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FO
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