



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • FARM SERVICE AGENCY

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CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) GENERAL SIGN-UP BEGINS TODAY

(Jackson, MS) - August 2, 2010 – Mississippi FSA State Executive Director Michael Sullivan today announced the beginning of the 39th general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The sign-up will continue through August 27, 2010. During this sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

The 2008 Farm Bill authorized USDA to maintain CRP enrollment up to 32 million acres. "America's farmers and ranchers play an important role in improving our environment, and for nearly 25 years, CRP has helped this nation build sound conservation practices that preserve the soil, clean our water, and restore habitat for wildlife," said Sullivan.

CRP is a voluntary program that assists farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers to use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for rental payments, cost-share, and technical assistance. CRP protects millions of acres of America's topsoil from erosion and is designed to improve the nation's natural resources base. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production by entering into long-term contracts for 10 to 15 years. In exchange, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation practices.

By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP also protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to wildlife population increases in many parts of the country. As a result, CRP has provided significant opportunities for hunting and fishing on private lands.

Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this sign-up provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall covering about 4.5 million acres may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this sign-up are scheduled to become effective Oct. 1, 2010.

FSA implements CRP on behalf of Commodity Credit Corporation. FSA will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) for environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental

factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

Those who would have met previous sign-up EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this sign-up. In addition to the general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program is now ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land. For more information, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>. A copy of Soil Rental Rates for each Mississippi County can be viewed online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/ms .

Sullivan encourages landowners to contact the local FSA Office for details before the sign-up deadline of August 27, 2010.

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