

**For:** State and County Offices

**Accepting Signup 200 Offers for the Second Ranking Period**

**Approved by:** Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

Over 1.1 million acres of CRP Grasslands were offered during the signup 200 second ranking period that ended on November 10, 2016. 504,767 acres are deemed acceptable and will be effective on October 1, 2017.

Acceptable offers included the following:

- an average ranking score of 60
- 73.0 percent have a wildlife focused plan
- 70.2 percent of the acreage is in counties under the highest threat of conversion to cropland or development
- 57.8 percent of acreage accepted are in general signup CRP wildlife priority areas protecting additional acres.

**Note:** See subparagraph 2 B for exceptions.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
October 1, 2017	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices, NRCS State Offices, and Forest Service

## Notice CRP-814

### 1 Overview (Continued)

#### B Purpose

This notice provides:

- instructions for accessing a list of acceptable and rejected offers, by county, for each offer submitted for the signup 200 second ranking period
- additional guidance on policies about:
  - acreage revisions
  - withdrawing offers
  - erroneous CRP Grasslands rental rates
  - succession-in-interest
  - signature requirements
  - establishing CRP Grasslands practices
  - 25 percent cropland limitation
  - CRP and ARC/PLC
- revised acceptance letter CRP-27-1 (Exhibit 1)
- revised rejection letter CRP-28-1 (Exhibit 2)
- deadlines for completing activities for acreage offered during the signup 200 second ranking period (Exhibit 3).

### 2 Offer Selection Overview

#### A Selection Process

All eligible signup 200 offers submitted using the Conservation Online System (COLS) by COB November 10, 2016, have been processed.

Offers for which all signatures and eligibility requirements were met before COB November 10, 2016, but not loaded into COLS need to be submitted to Jim Williams by e-mail to [jim.williams@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:jim.williams@wdc.usda.gov).

**Important:** Late-filed offers are **not** omitted offers. Producers listed on any signup 200 register are not considered late-filed offers. Both CRP-1 and CRP-2G must have been completed and signed by an eligible producer and received in the County Office by COB November 10, 2016, to constitute an offer. CRP-1 or CRP-2G alone does **not** constitute an offer.

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### 2 Offer Selection Overview (Continued)

#### A Selection Process (Continued)

All offers were ranked using the national ranking plan according to:

- 2-CRP, Exhibit 24
- the national ranking factors using the formula:  $\text{Score} = F1 + F2 + F3 + F4 + F5 + F6$ .

**Notes:** The maximum possible ranking score is 120 points.

Scoring parameters for F1 through F6 are in 2-CRP, Exhibit 24.

#### B National Ranking Factor Cutoff Score

Offers with a ranking factor score greater than or equal to the national ranking factor cutoff level of 46 points were determined acceptable. All other offers were rejected for the second ranking period.

### 3 Accessing and Reviewing Offer Ranking Reports

#### A Accessing Offer Ranking Reports

Offer ranking reports are on the Conservation and Environmental Programs SharePoint. County Offices shall access the reports according to the following:

- on the Intranet at  
<https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/Signup200/Ranking%20Period%202/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
- CLICK “Acceptable/Rejected Reports”
- download the appropriate State Excel workbook
- view the appropriate county sheet within the State Excel workbook.

**Notes:** The offer ranking reports will include a “Status” column which will indicate whether the offer has been accepted or rejected this ranking period. Offers may be rejected if the offer is less than the ranking factor cutoff score or if the county for which the offered land is physically located has reached or exceeds the total county cropland limit or the general signup limit.

Waivers to exceed the 25 percent county cropland limit were applied to the offer ranking report.

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### 3 Accessing and Reviewing Offer Ranking Reports (Continued)

#### B Reviewing Offer Ranking Reports

Before notifying producers about the results of the offer selection, County Offices must compare the offer data in their offer ranking report for each record with the corresponding CRP-1 and CRP-2G data to ensure that:

- all eligible offers submitted by the County Office are listed in the report
- the data on each offer record listed in the report is correct
- offers with incorrect ranking factors, conservation practices, or other data which could affect ranking scores should be handled as erroneous offers according to paragraph 4.

### 4 Errors, Omissions, and Appeals

#### A Software

COLS software remained available for new CRP Grasslands offers after November 10, 2016. At this time, offers determined to be eligible for the second ranking period must have been entered in COLS and the National Office was to be notified to determine if the offer is acceptable. Offers not entered in COLS by November 10, 2016, will be eligible for evaluation during the third ranking period.

#### B Acreage Revisions

Producers with certain acceptable offers are required to pay for measurement service to determine the actual acreage being enrolled. If TERRA was not used to determine acreage for the submitted offer or an in-field measurement service is requested by the producer, then measurement service must be performed by the County Office and paid for by the participant according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 401 B and 2-CP.

If acreage adjustments to the offer result from the measurement service, the revised offer must be modified in the COLS software according to subparagraph C and handled as an omitted offer.

#### C Erroneous and Omitted Offers

Erroneous and omitted offers must be processed according to 2-CRP, paragraph 339. Offers not successfully submitted using COLS by COB November 10, 2016, or offers with acreage revisions are considered omitted offers.

**Important:** Late-filed offers are **not** omitted offers. Producers listed on any signup 200 register are not considered late-filed offers. Both CRP-1 and CRP-2G must be completed and signed by an eligible producer and received in the County Office by the end of signup to constitute an offer. CRP-1 or CRP-2G alone does **not** constitute an offer.

#### D Appeals

Follow 1-APP for handling appeals.

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### 5 Acceptable and Rejected Offers

#### A Withdrawing Acceptable Offers

Producers have 30 calendar days from the date of CRP-27 to notify the County Office about whether to continue with the offer to participate. Producers with offers for CRP Grasslands can withdraw their offers without liquidated damages. Partial withdrawals are **not authorized**.

**Note:** Producers are not required to notify the County Office in writing. The County Office shall note producer's response in the CRP folder. See 2-CRP, paragraph 341.

#### B Succession-in-Interest Policy

See 2-CRP, paragraph 338 for succession-in-interest policy.

#### C Signature Requirements

See 2-CRP, paragraph 335 for requirements on obtaining signatures.

#### D Changing CRP-2G Data on Rejected Offers

Producers **cannot** change any CRP-2G data or the practice offered, after the offer is determined rejected.

Rejected offers may be used to submit a new CRP-2G offer in COLS. The copy functionality will allow the original rejected offer to be generated and the user can edit, if necessary, to submit for the next available ranking period.

### 6 Establishing or Modifying CRP Practices and Other Conservation Measures

#### A Policy

For provisional offers or pollinator practices, planting time spans for each practice are included in 2-CRP, Exhibit 11.

Certain producers agreed to conservation measures that maximized ranking points. All conservation plans must provide for practices and management measures consistent with:

- the offer
- standards and specifications for the practice.

**Note:** This would apply to provisional offers.

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### 6 Establishing or Modifying CRP Practices and Other Conservation Measures (Continued)

#### B Timing for New Acreage

2-CRP, subparagraph 426 B provides that producers may begin establishing approved practices:

- after submitting the offer to the County Office
- when notified that CRP-1 has been approved.

Producers must be notified that starting a practice before final approval of CRP-1 is at the producer's own risk.

**Important:** Cost shares must **not** be paid unless CRP-1 is approved and the cover meets the standards and specifications of the practice.

Producers with accepted provisional offers must establish the grass cover as offered before the contract can be approved. Provisional CRP Grasslands contracts cannot be approved until the practices are established and the producer notifies the County Office.

#### C Timing for Reoffered CRP Acreage

After the new CRP-1 is approved, producers who offered existing CRP acreage may immediately begin establishing approved practices without being in violation of the existing CRP-1. Participants may remove the existing cover only if required in the conservation plan.

**Important:** Producers must be notified that starting a practice before final approval of CRP-1 is at the producer's own risk.

#### D Conservation Plans

NRCS or TSP has the technical responsibility to develop conservation plans. All conservation plans must be developed according to 2-CRP, Part 11 and Exhibit 11.

### 7 County Cropland Limitation

#### A Applying County Cropland Limit

The National Office has applied the county cropland limitation based on the physical location of the acreage offered. The ranking reports in paragraph 3 will reflect which offers have been rejected because of the county cropland limitation.

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**7 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)**

**A Applying County Cropland Limit (Continued)**

The county cropland limitation is applied to each applicable separate sub-County Office based on the cropland in the sub county area. The following counties are divided into 2 or more sub county areas.

<b>State</b>	<b>Sub county</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Sub county</b>
Iowa	East Pottawattamie	Minnesota	East Otter Tail
	West Pottawattamie		West Otter Tail
			East Polk
			West Polk
Maine	Houlton		North Saint Louis
	Aroostook		South Saint Louis
	Fort Kent	Ohio	East Lucas
			West Lucas

**8 Total CRP and DCP Cropland**

**A Sufficient DCP Cropland**

Before notifying any producer that an offer was determined acceptable, the County Office must ensure that the offered CRP acreage, excluding marginal pastureland, does not exceed the farm’s effective DCP cropland minus base acres (including generic base acres). See 1-ARCPLC for cases where base acres may need to be reduced because of participation in CRP.

**B Restoration of Base Acres**

When base acres are restored from CRP (expired, voluntarily terminated, or early released), a farm must have sufficient effective DCP cropland to accommodate the restoration of those base acres. Enrollment in ARC/PLC is not allowed when the sum of the base acres (including generic base acres) exceeds the effective DCP cropland.

**C ARC/PLC Election of Restored Base Acres**

If the restoration of base acres results in the addition of a covered commodity’s base acres where base acres did not exist before the election, a manual CCC-857 must be completed within 30 calendar days of the restoration. See 1-ARCPLC, paragraph 42.

**Note:** The election must be completed before loading the restored base acres into FRMS and MIDAS as software requires the entry of an election when base acres are added to a farm.

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### 9 Action

#### A Processing Acceptable and Rejected Offers

To process acceptable and rejected offers, County Offices must:

- set workload priorities and plan office activities to devote all available resources to CRP
- access and review the offer data according to paragraph 3 and 2-CRP, paragraph 401
- for all offers which are not erroneous, after all data and eligibility reviews, immediately notify producers of their acceptable and rejected offers according to this notice using CRP-27-1 (Exhibit 1) and CRP-28-1 (Exhibit 2) so that rejected offers have the opportunity to submit a revised offer using the small-scale livestock grazing operation option according to Notice CRP-813

**Notes:** As a cost savings measure, County Offices should consider notifying producers through e-mail by scanning and emailing CRP-27-1's and CRP-28-1's with return receipt. If return receipt is not received by the County Office by November 30, then County Offices should contact producers or mail CRP-27-1 and CRP-28-1's to producers. The original scanned notification form shall be retained with the offer.

See subparagraph C for additional procedure for rejected offers.

- notify producers of contract approval using CRP-27-1 (Exhibit 1)
- upon request, release all general information used for payment rates and ranking scores.

**Note:** This general information requirement does not include information about individual offers or producers that cannot be released according to 2-INFO.

#### B Preparing CRP-1 for Approval

To prepare CRP-1 for approval, County Offices must:

- review 2-CRP, Part 12 for activities to complete before approving CRP-1
- ensure that practices accepted under continuous signup provisions offered during signup 200 are recorded as signup 200 contracts
- ensure effective dates of CRP Grasslands contracts will be October 1, 2017.

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### 9 Action (Continued)

#### C Assisting Producers With Rejected Offers

County Offices, with NRCS assistance, must assist producers whose offers were not determined acceptable, with:

- technical assistance for management of existing grasslands, or bringing acreage back into production
- conservation compliance provisions
- understanding how their offer could have been adjusted to be more competitive
- information about enrolling in ARC/PLC, if applicable
- information about the small-scale livestock grazing operation initiative (explain they will only be ranked against other small livestock operations instead of all offers).

#### D State Office Action

State Offices must:

- set workload priorities to allocate available resources to CRP to process offers timely
- ensure that all applicable County Offices begin notification to producers immediately upon completing required actions as provided in this notice.

**Note:** Report County Offices that have not begun notification to producers according to subparagraph A and provide the reason to the Director, CEPD, Attn: Jim Williams, by:

- e-mail to [jim.williams@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:jim.williams@wdc.usda.gov)
- noon e.t. December 6, 2016.

**Note:** Additional summary information will be posted and may be obtained from <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/Signup200/Ranking%20Period%202/Forms/AllItems.aspx> following public announcement of the acceptances.

Acceptance Letter

The following is an example of CRP-27-1, Notice Regarding Acceptable CRP Grassland Offers.

 <p><b>United States Department of Agriculture</b></p>	<p>Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services</p>	<p>Farm Service Agency</p>	<p>State/county name or organizational unit Mail stop code and/or room number P.O. Box or Street Address City, State, ZIP Code</p>
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**NOTICE REGARDING ACCEPTABLE CRP GRASSLANDS OFFERS**  
(For Second Ranking Period)

Date: (MM-DD-YYYY) \_\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

This notice is to inform you that your offer on tract \_\_\_\_\_ under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands has been determined acceptable. Your contract will begin on October 1, 2017.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Technical Service Provider (TSP) must develop a plan, approved by the Conservation District, and signed by all signatories on the CRP contract offer to participate in the CRP. So that we may continue to process your offer, you should continue to work with NRCS or TSP to obtain the required plan on the acreage which is subject to this offer. Your offer cannot be approved by the County Committee without an approved conservation plan.

**Provisional offers have one year from the date of this letter to establish the grass cover used for ranking purposes at your expense. Notify the \_\_\_\_\_ county office as soon as the grass is established so we can continue to process your offer.**

Practices to be carried out under CRP Grasslands may be started with the understanding that cost-share payments will not be made if the practice is not included in the approved conservation plan.

You have 30 calendar days from the date of this letter to notify this office of whether you want your offer approved to participate in the CRP Grasslands so that NRCS or TSP may begin the conservation plan development. If FSA does not hear from you within the 30 calendar day period, your offer will be rejected.

The same acreage cannot be enrolled under the CRP and ARC or PLC. In addition, the total land participating in CRP and the total base acres on a farm cannot exceed the total eligible land for the program on the farm. The owner of the land enrolling land into CRP may be required to reduce all or a portion of the base acres on a farm before contract (CRP-1) can be approved. Please contact the \_\_\_\_\_ County FSA office for more information.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Executive Director

Enclosures

**CRP-27-1 (11-17-18)**

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Rejection Letter

The following is an example of CRP-28-1, Notice of Unacceptable Offer.

 <p><b>United States Department of Agriculture</b></p>	<p>Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services</p>	<p>Farm Service Agency</p>	<p>State/county name or organizational unit Mail stop code and/or room number P.O. Box or Street Address City, State, ZIP Code</p>
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**NOTICE OF UNACCEPTABLE OFFER  
(For Second Ranking Period)**

Date: (MM-DD-YYYY) \_\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your offer to place land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands. Your offer to participate in the second ranking period for CRP Grasslands was not accepted because:

- Grasslands Ranking Score Too Low
- Land Determined Ineligible
- County Cropland Limitation Has Been Reached
- Existing Restrictive Easement
- 1-Year Ownership/Operatorship Eligibility Not Met
- Landowner/Tenant Provision Not Met
- Other

If your offer was determined not acceptable due to the ranking criteria "Grasslands Ranking Score Too Low" then it may be acceptable in the next ranking period.

If you have livestock you may want to modify your offer to take advantage of the small-scale livestock grazing operation initiative. If your livestock farm has 140 Animal Units or less during the normal grazing period, and the offer is less than 200 acres per farm you may be eligible. Please contact your county FSA office for more information.

FSA will automatically consider the offer for the next ranking period if "Grasslands Ranking Score Too Low" was the only criteria not met. If you do not want the offer considered for the next ranking period please contact your county FSA office.

It may be possible that your offer for CRP Grasslands sign-up may be modified to increase the ranking score and the likelihood of acceptance in future ranking periods.

You may appeal this determination to the County Committee by filing a written request no later than 30 calendar days after you receive this notice in accordance with the FSA appeal procedures found at 7 CFR Part 780. If you appeal to the County Committee, you have the right to an informal hearing which you or your representative may attend either personally or by telephone. If you appeal this determination to the County Committee, you may later appeal an adverse determination of the County Committee to the FSA State Committee or the National Appeals Division or request mediation. To appeal, write to the County Committee at the following address and explain why you believe this determination is erroneous. (Insert COC address.)

If you do not timely file an appeal of this determination, this shall be the final administrative determination with respect to this matter in accordance with regulations at 7 CFR Part 780 and 7CFR Part 11.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Executive Director

Enclosures

**CRP-28-1** (11-17-16)

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**Key Completion Dates**

Key dates in processing second ranking period signup 200 offers are identified in the following table (for non-provisional offers).

<b>Action</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
County Offices must review offers on the ranking reports, and conduct eligibility and data reviews according to subparagraph 3 B and 2-CRP, paragraph 401, to detect any erroneous and omitted records.	Immediately, but no later than December 6, 2016.
County Offices must begin notifying producers with accepted and rejected offers.	Immediately upon completing actions required in subparagraph 9 A, not later than December 6, 2016.
Conservation plans must be completed and approved.	September 8, 2017
CRP-1's must be approved and entered in COLS.	September 15, 2017