

# Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Commodity Credit Corporation

#### Conservation Reservation Program

**AGENCY:** Commodity Credit Corporation, USDA.

**ACTION:** Solicitation of proposals for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

**SUMMARY:** The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is publishing this notice to invite State governments to propose Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects under the general Conservation Reserve Program, which is governed by regulations under 7 CFR Part 1410. CREP is an opportunity for the joining of resources of the Federal and State governments to address critical environmental issues such as soil erosion, water quality degradation and wildlife habitat loss associated with agricultural activities. This action is also part of the National Performance Review Initiative to deliver better service and foster partnership and community solutions.

**ADDRESSES:** Submission of CREP proposals by a State should be addressed to the Secretary of Agriculture, Attention: Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, Farm Service Agency, STOP 0510, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-0510.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Caroline Roe, Environmental Program Specialist, Environmental Activities Branch, Farm Service Agency, Room 4715 South Agriculture Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0510, telephone (202) 720-6221, email at caroline\_roe@wdc.fsa.usda.gov or contact the Conservation Program Specialist in the State Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is authorized by Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. The purpose of the CRP is to assist farmers and ranchers in conserving soil, water, and wildlife resources by converting highly erodible and other environmentally sensitive acreage normally devoted to the production of agricultural commodities and marginal pastureland to a long-term resource-conserving cover. CRP participants enroll in contracts for periods of 10- to 15-years in exchange for annual rental payments and cost-share assistance for installing those long-term resource-conserving practices. Up to 36.4 million acres are authorized to be enrolled in the CRP at any one time.

CCC enrolls land through periodic general signups in which CCC entertains offers from applicants seeking enrollment in the program. CCC evaluates the costs and benefits associated with each offer, its program goals, and any other related issues and accepts only those offers that provide the most cost-effective environmental benefits.

CCC also uses a continuous signup for certain highly valued environmental practices such as filter strips, riparian buffers, and grass waterways. Because of the significant environmental benefits to be obtained from the enrollment of these areas, CCC permits the enrollment of these acreages at any time at certain prescribed rental rates.

The "Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program" (CREP) is the name given to special joint undertakings between States and the Federal government using CRP contracts and payments to encourage enrollments and practices that may address particularly pressing environmental needs. CRP rules in 7 CFR Part 1410.50(b) provide explicitly for such agreements to further "specific conservation and environmental objectives of that State and the nation." Some States have already submitted CREP proposals and CCC hereby further invites other interested States to do the same.

CREP creates an opportunity where the resources of a State government and CRP can be targeted in a coordinated manner to cost-effectively address specific conservation and environmental objectives of that State and the nation in order to improve

water quality, erosion control, and wildlife habitat, including endangered species habitat, in specific geographic areas that have been adversely impacted by agricultural activities.

In order for a State's proposal to be considered for CREP, it should be directly related to mitigation of adverse agriculture-related environmental impacts and should document why program objectives cannot be met through other existing programs, in particular the general or continuous sign-ups under the CRP or other Department of Agriculture conservation programs.

Any proposed obligations beyond the term of any CRP contract, such as through long term agreements and/or permanent easements, would be between State government and the participant.

CCC encourages State governments to work closely with all interested groups within the State when developing options for obligations beyond the term of the CRP contract. It is CCC's experience that successful CREP agreements are the result of State governments, in preparing CREP proposals, working closely with all interested local parties including, but not limited to, farm, commodity, conservation, environmental, and landowner groups. Working with all interested local parties ensures the broad range of support needed for a successful CREP.

To ensure proper Federal/State cooperation, each proposal should specify the level of non-federal funding needed to fulfill objectives of the proposal. Normally, USDA expects that non-federal funding would be equal to at least 20 percent of the overall program-related costs of the CREP project. Examples of non-federal funding include, but are not limited to: funding of contract extensions or easements, cost-share assistance for conservation practices, and program monitoring costs. The CREP is anticipated to be initially limited to a maximum of 100,000 acres for each State, with possible expansion after the initial 100,000 acres are enrolled.

Submissions by a State should provide for a complete understanding of the proposal. To ensure consistency, each proposal should include: (1) an abstract; (2) a discussion of existing conditions; (3) an analysis of

agriculture-related adverse impacts; (4) project objectives; (5) project description; (6) proposals for the monitoring program; (7) a discussion of public support and ongoing public information that will accompany the project; (8) an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the project; and (9) any additional documentation to ensure compliance with any other laws, including environmental laws. A description of each of these criteria follows.

#### Abstract

A single page summary of the project should be provided to include: project name; description of the project area; summary of existing conditions and agricultural impacts to be addressed; brief description of the project; total area of the project (including a list of the counties in which the project is located); and estimated cost of the project.

#### Existing Conditions

A synopsis of relevant existing conditions should be provided to include: a brief description of the importance to the community of the resource to be protected; a detailed map outlining the geographic area of the project; a description of the various human activities and land uses within the project boundary (including a summary of such information within each watershed); a summary of agricultural activities within the project boundary/watershed; and a brief description of relevant environmental factors (precipitation, soils, geology, vegetation patterns, wildlife, Federally listed endangered and threatened species, air quality, and water resources).

#### Analysis of Agriculture-Related Environmental Impacts

An analysis of agriculture-related environmental impacts to be addressed by the project should be provided to include: magnitude of agricultural impacts on the environment; past and projected trends in agricultural impacts, including any scientific data that demonstrates such trends; nature of any public health-related agricultural impacts; and past and ongoing efforts to address agricultural impacts through other Federal and State conservation programs, such as the CRP.

#### Project Objectives

A list of project objectives should be provided to include specific and measurable objectives in addition to any general objectives.

#### Project Description

The description of the project should include the following: summary of the project; conservation practices to be adopted; number of acres proposed to be included in the project; length of time for project implementation; analysis of both Federal and non-Federal costs (including a justification for special incentive payments to be made); and an analysis of the likelihood that project objectives will be achieved. The project description should also address such process and interagency coordination questions as: how applicant eligibility determinations will be made; which agency will provide technical assistance; how the application process will be coordinated among agencies; and how contract oversight will be conducted.

#### Monitoring Program

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan should be provided to include: specific targets to be met in the accomplishment of project objectives; a description of the methods for collecting data to measure accomplishment of specific targets; the process for refinement of the project, if monitoring indicates that project objectives are not being met; and the identification of funding for the monitoring program. The proposal should identify the nature and funding sources for the preparation of annual reports to record and summarize the conclusions developed in the monitoring program.

#### Education, Outreach, and Public Support

A program for public participation should be presented that indicates: the level of public support for the proposal, among producers, conservation groups and other interested organizations, at the time the proposal is submitted; an analysis of the number of producers expected to enroll in the program; and the measures that will be taken for continued public involvement and education over the duration of the project.

#### Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Proposals should include a cost-effectiveness analysis which compares the cost and likelihood of accomplishing project goals under the CREP proposal versus other State and Federal programs, such as the general and continuous signups under CRP.

#### Compliance With Other Laws

The application should include adequate information and documentation to demonstrate compliance with any applicable laws.

Each proposal should be developed in conjunction with the State FSA office and the USDA-established "State Technical Committee." Following submittal to the Secretary of Agriculture, each proposal will be reviewed by an interagency team for consistency with overall program goals, magnitude of environmental benefits, likelihood that project benefits will be achieved and cost-effectiveness. The team is expected to make a recommendation for action to the Deputy Administrator within 60 days of receipt of a completed proposal. Further negotiation and discussion will follow as needed to implement the joint effort of the CCC and the State. To effectuate the joint agreement, a draft Memorandum of Agreement should be developed by the State based on discussions regarding the proposal. No agreement will be final until signed by authorized representatives of CCC and the State.

Signed at Washington, DC, on May 21, 1998.

**Keith Kelly,**

*Executive Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-010N]

#### International Standard-Setting Activities

**AGENCY:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice informs the public of the sanitary and phytosanitary standard-setting activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), in accordance with section 491 of the Trade Agreements Act of 1979, as amended, and the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, Pub. L. 103-465, 108 Stat. 4809, and seeks comments on standards currently under consideration and recommendations for new standards. It also lists other standard-setting activities of Codex, including commodity standards, guidelines, codes of practice, and revised texts. This notice covers the time periods from June 1, 1997, to May 31, 1998, and May 31, 1998, to June 1, 1999.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit written comments to: FSIS Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 102, Cotton