

Utah Farm Service Agency

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USDA Extends Certain Conservation Reserve Program Contracts

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, May 11, 2009 – Lori Jones, Farm Program Specialist of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Utah announced today that FSA will offer certain producers the opportunity to modify and extend their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that are scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2009.

"USDA is committed to safeguarding the nation's natural resources and this program will help protect millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and enhance the quality of our water," said Jones.

According to Jones, FSA can only extend approximately 1.5 million acres out of a total 3.9 million acres expiring this year. This extension will ensure that FSA meets the statutory CRP acreage limitation of 32 million acres established in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

CRP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. Participants receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.

A general CRP signup is not scheduled during fiscal year 2009. However, producers may continue to enroll relatively small, highly-desirable acreages, including land that is not extended, into Continuous CRP. Continuous CRP includes such practices as filter strips and riparian buffers.

FSA will notify participants by letter beginning May 6, 2009. The sign-up for this voluntary extension will begin on May 18 and run through June 30, 2009. Farmers and ranchers may apply for this extension at their FSA county office. FSA administers CRP on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

CRP contracts with the highest environmental benefit or with the highest potential for soil erosion will be selected. CRP contracts can not exceed 15 years in the aggregate and chosen CRP contract holders will generally be offered a three to five year extension.

Producers electing to extend their contract period will receive their current contract rental rate. All or a portion of the acreage under contract may be included in an extension, but no new acreage may be added.

Through CRP, FSA enters into long term (10-15 year) contracts with agricultural producers to protect highly erodible and other environmentally-sensitive land. Participants convert enrolled land to grass, trees, wildlife habitats and other conservation uses. The program has reduced soil erosion by over 400 million tons, protected over 2 million acres of wetlands and resulted in buffers established on over 100,000 miles of streams and rivers.

For more information about CRP and other FSA programs, please visit your county FSA office or FSA online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.