

2012 Drought Overview

As drought conditions worsen in Indiana, NRCS has developed a plan to communicate information and resources to keep you informed about programs and services that can benefit you.

As of today, Indiana is the worst hit of the major corn and soybean states. Reports from every corner of the state indicate moderate to severe conditions comparable to the 1988 drought. Combined with days of heat stress, crops are quickly showing signs of failure. Areas in the Northeast and Southwest are the hardest hit and are considered severe. A number of areas in the state have received spotty precipitation (mainly in the Northwest and Southeast), but not enough to significantly improve growing conditions. Some of these areas where rain has fallen have also received high wind and hail damage.

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Many parts of Indiana are experiencing severe to extreme drought resulting in poor site conditions for the establishment and installation of conservation practices. Drought conditions may also have caused previously installed practices to fail.

The Conservation Programs Contracting Manual CPM 440 Parts 512 and 508 allow flexibility in managing contracts such as rescheduling practices that cannot be installed as originally planned and providing assistance for failed conservation practices.

Rescheduling Practices and Contract Reviews

If a practice was originally scheduled for completion in 2012, but cannot not be installed due to the drought, the practice may be delayed for installation in 2013. Landowners should work with their District Conservationist to complete and sign a CPA-13 to document this change.

For all easement programs, any practice scheduled to be installed in 2012 or earlier, that cannot be installed due to the drought, can be modified to 2013. The District Conservationist will include a memo with the modification request as justification for the change in the contract file.

Contract Cancellation

District Conservationists are encouraged to work with participants to use the program flexibilities described to avoid the need for contract cancellation.

The drought may force some producers to make critical changes to their operation. This may result in the participant requesting to cancel their EQIP/AWEP/WHIP contract. Drought falls under the Natural Disaster category as a basis to request contract cancellation where cost recovery may be waived. Participants requesting cancellation due to the drought must do so according to the standard cancellation procedures and include a written statement explaining how the drought has impacted their operation and why it will prevent them from implementing of the contract.



NRCS Drought Fact Sheets



Practice Substitution and Cover Crop Flexibilities

A major concern with the 2012 drought is the lack of available quality forage. Indiana NRCS has the flexibility to allow holders of Farm Bill contracts to graze cover crops (Practice 340) for forage due to the drought conditions. Cover Crops grazed for forage should be managed to maintain an appropriate grazing height.

Producers are responsible for checking that their crop insurance policy allows cover crops to be used for forage.



Crop Residue Management

The drought may cause some producers to manage crop residue differently than normal such as cutting corn for silage. District Conservationists must work with producers to ensure that changes in residue management are within the Highly Erodible Land (HEL) compliance provisions of the National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM). This policy allows for granting variances in the case of natural disasters. Producers interested in obtaining a variance should contact their local District Conservationist.

Failed Conservation Practices

Farm Bill participants may be in the process of ordering pasture seed, cover crop seed or tree stock for practices scheduled in contracts in the next few months. The producer must consider that if they order seed or tree saplings that NRCS cannot reimburse these costs unless the seed or trees are planted. If the participant and the planner feel that site conditions will not be suitable to begin ordering seed or trees, there is flexibility to reschedule the practice later in the contract.

If a practice such as (512) Forage and Biomass Planting is planted according to NRCS specifications within established seeding time frames, it does not have to be fully established for NRCS to certify the practice and make the program payment.

Conservation practices installed earlier in the year or practices currently being installed that subsequently fail due to the drought, may be reapplied with financial assistance. In either of these cases, the participant must sign a NRCS-CPA-153 in order to be able to add additional funds to the contract.

For easement programs, practices installed earlier in the year that failed due to the drought may be reapplied with program financial assistance, if available. For active contracts, a determination of scope of the practice will be completed per Part 514.54 (2). Those practices determined to be within scope may undergo a contract modification. Those practices determined to be out-of-scope will need a new Conservation Program contract for the specific practice using current year funds.

If the practice was installed under a contract agreement that is now considered complete, a new Conservation Program Contract will be needed to reinstall the practices using current year funds.

