



General & Continuous CRP

Management Considerations for CRP Prior to Contract Start Date



OVERVIEW

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. Once the CRP offer is accepted and contract approved, the landowner has 12 months to successfully establish the practice but may request an extension from FSA if circumstances prevent completion. However, the date of the application may result in an offer accepted at a time of year that is not conducive to the design and establishment of practices. Crops growing may impede access to the environmentally sensitive areas, seed availability may be limited, or seeding and planting windows may have passed. This can result in delayed implementation and the potential for increased risk of weed encroachment or additional erosion if the sensitive areas remain fallow.

General CRP sign-ups occur each fiscal year, but contracts do not start until October 1 of the following fiscal year. This leaves several months between applications being offered enrollment, and the contract starting. If land offered for enrollment during this timeframe is not actively cropped or protected, weed encroachment and erosion could arise.

CRP POLICY

For continuous CRP offered acres that are not currently enrolled in CRP, the producer may choose to defer the effective start date of the new CRP contract for *up to six months* after the offer is approved. This is a good option to consider when the application occurs in spring or summer, when crops may be established, the spring seeding window is already open or has passed, and seed or tree seedling availability is limited. Deferring the application until fall or early winter allows time for engineering design, site preparation, and may potentially increase the availability of plant material to be purchased.

General CRP contracts begin on October 1 of the fiscal year following offer acceptance. The participant has 12 months to implement planned practices. In both General and Continuous signups, participants are encouraged to take steps to improve implementation success once the contract begins.

OPTIONS TO MAXIMIZE IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS OF DEFERRED EFFECTIVE START ACRES

- If crops are not already established, and the area will be cropped, consider planting soybeans in future CRP. The weed control in the soybeans aids in site preparation, and soybean stubble is much easier to plant into than corn stubble. If the future CRP area cannot be planted to soybeans, consider planting a temporary cover or cover crop to reduce erosion and suppress weed growth.
- If the area to be enrolled will not be cropped prior to the start date, consider planting a temporary cover (cover crop) to reduce erosion and suppress weed growth.
- If crops were planted on the area to be enrolled, once harvested, consider planting with a temporary cover (cover crop) to protect the area from erosion or weeds until permanent seeding can be implemented. Dormant seeding is preferred when wildflowers are part of the mix, and nurse crops such as oats or annual ryegrass may work well. Notify the District Conservationist when crops are harvested if a site needs to be surveyed for engineering practices.
- If possible, purchase seed for planting in the fall or winter for the greatest availability (see seeding list provided by NRCS).
- Native warm season grasses and wildflowers can be dormant, or frost seeded December 1- March 1. This is a good time to plant these species to maximize forb establishment. Dormant and frost seeding are not recommended for floodplain areas.
- Any weeds or existing cover present on the enrolled areas should be completely controlled prior to seeding grasses and forbs or planting trees. See the NRCS 315 Herbaceous Weed Control – Site Preparation Specification Sheet for information on preparing an area for planting.

