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## **USDA Announces CRP General Sign-up**

Hamilton Square, NJ - February 1, 2012 — The Farm Service Agency (FSA) New Jersey State Executive Director, Paul J. Hlubik, today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will conduct a four-week Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up. This CRP sign-up will begin on March 12, 2012 and end on April 6, 2012. CRP has a 25-year legacy of successfully protecting the nation's natural resources, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. Producers with expiring contracts and producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP. Producers also are encouraged to look into CRP's other enrollment opportunities offered on a continuous, non-competitive, sign-up basis.

Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) collects data for each of the EBI factors based on the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion; and
- Cost.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or go online at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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