

Council on Food, Agriculture, and Resource Economics
November 5, 2007 Board Meeting
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FARM BILL ANALYSES

- Issues include:
 - Tax credits,
 - Specialty crops and conservation
 - Expansion of forestry conservation
 - Adjusted Gross Income limitations
 - Emphasis on beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers

FARM BILL RULE MAKING BENEFIT COST ASSESSMENTS

- This will be a major workload for the Agency over the next couple of years.

CONSERVATION EFFECTS ASSESSMENT PROJECT—

- *Ecology and Management of Scrub-shrub Birds in New England: A Comprehensive Review* released on August 30th.
- The CEAP survey data will be ready next summer.

NATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY DATA COLLECTION—

- NRCS is moving toward full implementation of the annual NRI

PROGRAM DATA—

- The NRCS program database, ProTracts, is expanding and becoming more accessible.
- Easement data to be available later this fiscal year.
- NRCS is working with ERS and NASS on integration of Environmental Quality Incentives Program data with ARMS data.

CONSERVATION PRACTICE COST PROJECT (PAYMENT SCHEDULE)

- NRCS has revamped its approach to determining payments for structural practices and incentive payments. Over time, this effort will result in an improved national database on conservation practice costs.

RENEWABLE ENERGY—

- NRCS continues to emphasize energy conserving conservation practices such as residue management, irrigation water management, and nutrient management.
- A study with the University of Tennessee is just being completed that investigates the effects on selected environmental parameters of increased bio-mass feedstock production for ethanol production.
- NRCS is helping farmers mitigate the effects of land use changes related to changes in commodity prices.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

- NRCS is investigating how market segmentation can be used to improve program delivery.

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

- Universities should watch for the request for proposals later this year. Areas of emphasis last year included:
 - Water Resources
 - Soil Resources
 - Atmospheric Resources:
 - Grazing Land and Forest Health
 - Market-based approaches
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Category 3.
 - Improved on-farm energy efficiency
 - Water management (Both Drainage Water and Irrigation Water)

MARKET-BASED INCENTIVES

- Wetland Reserve Program auction
- Greenhouse gas reporting through 1605(b)

NATIONAL COMMODITY CROP PRODUCTIVITY INDEX

- The NRCS National Soil Survey Center has developed a soil productivity index.