



National Association of Conservation Districts

July 10, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
14th & Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts. Established under state law, conservation districts are units of state government charged with carrying out programs for the protection and management of natural resources at the local level. Conservation districts work with nearly millions of cooperating landowners and operators each year and provide assistance in managing and protecting private working lands in the United States.

Our members, local conservation districts, work with the Farm Service Agency to implement the Conservation Reserve Program. We review and approve plans, work with landowners to implement the requirements of their plans and we are committed to the success of this program. We support the varied environmental resource benefits that CRP creates – reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, improved wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration.

NACD believes that CRP should be targeted to the most environmentally sensitive lands and we feel USDA has been working in this direction with recent priorities on higher Environmental Benefit index scores for re-enrollment, and targeting environmentally sensitive areas in CREPs and continuous sign-up.

Producers that have land enrolled in CRP have met environmental criteria and have committed to remove this land from production, creating natural resource benefits. We do not believe that USDA should provide penalty free “early-outs” of CRP contracts. These contracts were entered into for a specific period, producing environmental and natural resource benefits in return for a payment from USDA.

NACD asks that you reject requests to provide penalty free “early outs” of CRP contracts.

Sincerely,

John Redding
President

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