



September 24, 2003

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK290-3-1

SUBJECT: INV - NRI - Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)

Purpose: To notify field offices of the CEAP and request assistance in completing the project.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2003

Background: The National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) data collectors (enumerators) will be collecting field level data for cultivated cropland and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land involved in the NRI-CEAP study. From October through December, NASS enumerators will be conducting farmer survey interviews for fields associated with National Resources Inventory (NRI) points in the study. NASS enumerators will gather data relative to conservation practices, CRP, cropping and tillage history, pesticide applications, livestock, manure applications, irrigation, field operations (type of tillage and equipment used), size of operation, and other field related activities.

ACTION REQUIRED BY: OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER, 2003

In order to properly support the NRI-CEAP effort and the principal partners (NRCS, NASS, FSA, and ARS) involved, we are requesting assistance from field office staff in completing the NRI-CEAP farmer questionnaire. The District Conservationist will be the primary contact.

NASS enumerators will be visiting NRCS Field Offices during the period from October to December, 2003, to obtain specific information about (1) whether or not the selected NRI point/field has a conservation plan; (2) what programs are associated with the conservation plan; (3) what year the conservation plan (plans) was originally approved; (4) what is the year of the most recent update to the plan; (5) what resource concerns are addressed by the plan; (6) what are the structural practices included in the plan. If no conservation plan exists for the point/field, then limited information will be requested on the Questionnaire.

Enumerator visits to NRCS Field Offices will occur concurrently with farmer interviews. Enumerators have been instructed by NASS to set up appointments for data collection prior to arriving at NRCS Field Office locations. The enumerators will be providing operator name, FSA Field and Tract number, and aerial photography to NRCS staff to help identify field locations and assist with accessing the proper Field Office records.

In order for NRCS Field Staff to comply with this effort, you will need to:

- Schedule time with the enumerators when they contact the field office
- Pull the conservation plan (plans) if one is available
- Assist the enumerator with specific information contained in the conservation plan

(MORE)

DIST: AO

Data Confidentiality

Concerns have been raised by NRCS NRI and Field Office staff regarding access to NRI location data and Field Office case files/records by NASS enumerators. The NRI-CEAP farmer survey data collection effort has been contracted through NASS for several reasons. (1) NASS has the legislative authority to conduct these kinds of survey (NRCS does not). (2) NASS has the staff, survey methodology, and the expertise (recognized experts in this field) to conduct a survey of this scope and magnitude and (3) data confidentiality is a cornerstone/foundation requirement of all of their surveys (even more restrictive than those imposed on PSU and point location information by the NRI).

NASS is not collecting data for NASS. NASS is collecting data for NRCS in support of the NRI-CEAP effort. Even though we are contracting them to do this work, they are still held to the same strict rules of data confidentiality that they would be for any of their projects. They have also been informed of the specific confidentiality issues surrounding the NRI and NRCS Field Office records. We have also approved the questionnaire and set of questions that they will be asking our Field Office staff. NRCS Field Office staff should have no reservations with providing the requested cooperator file information to NASS enumerators. All data collected by NASS is confidential information and the confidentiality concerns of both agencies have been addressed.

Attachment 1 is a brochure explaining the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP).

Attachment 2 is a list of counties, and the number of PSU's that will be assessed in each county.

Attachment 3 is an example of pages 34 and 35 of the questionnaire to give you an idea of programmatic information that is being requested.

If your county is not listed on Attachment 2, no assessment will be conducted in your office.

Your support for this very important initiative and the Agency partnership effort to quantify and estimate the outcomes and environmental benefits of our conservation programs is greatly appreciated.

/s/ (John Glover – Acting)

M. DARREL DOMINICK
State Conservationist

Attachments