

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3823, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1223, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1508; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1423, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3576; Pub. L. 102-237, title II, §204(4), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1855, related to consultation with Secretary of the Interior, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §§323, 326, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 992, effective 90 days after Apr. 4, 1996.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 90 days after Apr. 4, 1996, see section 326 of Pub. L. 104-127, set out as an Effective Date of 1996 Amendment note under section 3821 of this title.

§ 3824. Fairness of compliance

If the actions of an unrelated person or public entity, outside the control of, and without the prior approval of, the landowner or tenant result in a change in the characteristics of cropland that would cause the land to be determined to be a wetland, the affected land shall not be considered to be wetland for purposes of this subchapter.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1224, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1424, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3576.)

SUBCHAPTER IV—AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION PROGRAM

PART I—COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

SUBPART A—GENERAL PROVISIONS

§ 3830. Comprehensive conservation enhancement program

(a) Establishment

(1) In general

During the 1996 through 2002 calendar years, the Secretary shall establish a comprehensive conservation enhancement program (referred to in this section as “CCEP”) to be implemented through contracts and the acquisition of easements to assist owners and operators of farms and ranches to conserve and enhance soil, water, and related natural resources, including grazing land, wetland, and wildlife habitat.

(2) Means

The Secretary shall carry out the CCEP by—

- (A) providing for the long-term protection of environmentally sensitive land; and
- (B) providing technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to—
 - (i) improve the management and operation of the farms and ranches; and
 - (ii) reconcile productivity and profitability with protection and enhancement of the environment.

(3) Programs

The CCEP shall consist of—

- (A) the conservation reserve program established under subpart B;
- (B) the wetlands reserve program established under subpart C; and
- (C) the environmental quality incentives program established under part IV of this subchapter.

(b) Administration

(1) In general

In carrying out the CCEP, the Secretary shall enter into contracts with owners and operators and acquire interests in land through easements from owners, as provided in this part and part IV of this subchapter.

(2) Prior enrollments

Acreage enrolled in the conservation reserve or wetlands reserve program prior to April 4, 1996, shall be considered to be placed into the CCEP.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1230, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1431(2), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3576; amended Pub. L. 103-66, title I, §1402(a), Aug. 10, 1993, 107 Stat. 332; Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §331, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 992; Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2006(b), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 237.)

AMENDMENTS

2002—Pub. L. 107-171, §2006(b)(1), substituted “Comprehensive conservation enhancement program” for “Environmental conservation acreage reserve program” in section catchline.

Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 107-171, §2006(b)(2), (4), substituted “a comprehensive conservation enhancement program” for “an environmental conservation acreage reserve program” and “CCEP” for “ECARP”.

Subsecs. (a)(2), (3), (b). Pub. L. 107-171, §2006(b)(4), substituted “CCEP” for “ECARP” wherever appearing.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 107-171, §2006(b)(3), struck out heading and text of subsec. (c). Text read as follows:

“(1) DESIGNATION.—The Secretary may designate watersheds, multistate areas, or regions of special environmental sensitivity as conservation priority areas that are eligible for enhanced assistance under this part and part IV of this subchapter.

“(2) ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may designate areas as conservation priority areas to assist, to the maximum extent practicable, agricultural producers within the conservation priority areas to comply with nonpoint source pollution requirements under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) and other Federal and State environmental laws and to meet other conservation needs.

“(3) PRODUCERS.—The Secretary may provide technical assistance, cost-share payments, and incentive payments to producers in a conservation priority area under this part and part IV of this subchapter based on—

“(A) the significance of the soil, water, wildlife habitat, and related natural resource problems in a watershed, multistate area, or region; and

“(B) the structural practices or land management practices that best address the problems, and that maximize environmental benefits for each dollar expended, as determined by the Secretary.”

1996—Pub. L. 104-127 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section consisted of subsecs. (a) to (c) requiring Secretary to establish and implement an Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program during 1991 through 1995 calendar years.

1993—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 103-66 struck out before period at end “to place in the Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program during the 1986 through 1995 calendar years a total of not less than 40,000,000 nor more than 45,000,000 acres”.

CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE

Pub. L. 106-224, title II, §211, June 20, 2000, 114 Stat. 406, as amended by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2503(b)(1)(B), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 269, provided that:

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall use \$40,000,000 of funds of the Commodity Credit Corpora-

tion to provide financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to—

“(1) address threats to soil, water, and related natural resources, including grazing land, wetland, and wildlife habitat;

“(2) comply with Federal and State environmental laws; and

“(3) make beneficial, cost-effective changes to cropping systems, grazing management, manure, nutrient, pest, or irrigation management, land uses, or other measures needed to conserve and improve soil, water, and related natural resources.

“(b) TYPE OF ASSISTANCE.—Assistance under this section may be made in the form of cost share payments or incentive payments, as determined by the Secretary.

“(c) AREAS.—The Secretary shall provide assistance under this section to areas that are not designated under section 1230(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985 ([former] 16 U.S.C. 3830(c)).”

FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM

Pub. L. 104-127, title III, § 388, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1020, directed Secretary of Agriculture to establish and carry out a farmland protection program, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2503(b)(1)(A), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 269.

[Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2503(b)(2), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 269, provided that: “The amendment made by paragraph (1)(A) [repealing section 388 of Pub. L. 104-127, formerly set out above] shall have no effect on any contract entered into under section 388 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 [Pub. L. 104-127] (16 U.S.C. 3830 note) that is in effect as of the date of enactment of this Act [May 13, 2002].”]

§ 3830a. Repealed. Pub. L. 107-171, title I, § 1613(j)(3), title II, § 2006(c), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 221, 237

Section, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1230A, as added Pub. L. 106-387, § 1(a) [title VII, § 755], Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549, 1549A-42, related to good faith reliance.

SUBPART B—CONSERVATION RESERVE

CODIFICATION

Subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, comprising this subpart, was originally designated in Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1509, by Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §§ 1431(1), 1432(1), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3576, 3577, and amended by Pub. L. 99-500, Oct. 18, 1986, 100 Stat. 1783, and Pub. L. 99-591, Oct. 30, 1986, 100 Stat. 3341; Pub. L. 99-641, Nov. 10, 1986, 100 Stat. 3556; Pub. L. 100-233, Jan. 6, 1988, 101 Stat. 1568; Pub. L. 100-387, Aug. 11, 1988, 102 Stat. 924; Pub. L. 101-512, Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1915; Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3359; Pub. L. 102-237, Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1818; Pub. L. 102-324, July 22, 1992, 106 Stat. 447; Pub. L. 102-552, Oct. 28, 1992, 106 Stat. 4102; Pub. L. 103-66, Aug. 10, 1993, 107 Stat. 312; Pub. L. 104-127, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 888; Pub. L. 106-78, Oct. 22, 1999, 113 Stat. 1135; Pub. L. 106-387, Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549; Pub. L. 107-76, Nov. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 704. Subchapter B is shown herein, however, as having been added by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 238, without reference to the intervening amendments because of the extensive revision of the subchapter's provisions by Pub. L. 107-171.

§ 3831. Conservation reserve

(a) In general

Through the 2012 fiscal year, the Secretary shall formulate and carry out a conservation reserve program under which land is enrolled through the use of contracts to assist owners and operators of land specified in subsection (b) of this section to conserve and improve the soil,

water, and wildlife resources of such land and to address issues raised by State, regional, and national conservation initiatives.

(b) Eligible land

The Secretary may include in the program established under this subpart—

(1) highly erodible cropland that—

(A)(i) if permitted to remain untreated could substantially reduce the agricultural production capability for future generations; or

(ii) cannot be farmed in accordance with a plan that complies with the requirements of subchapter II of this chapter; and

(B) the Secretary determines had a cropping history or was considered to be planted for 4 of the 6 years preceding the date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (except for land enrolled in the conservation reserve program as of that date);

(2) marginal pasture land converted to wetland or established as wildlife habitat prior to November 28, 1990;

(3) marginal pasture land to be devoted to appropriate vegetation, including trees, in or near riparian areas, or devoted to similar water quality purposes (including marginal pastureland converted to wetland or established as wildlife habitat);

(4) cropland that is otherwise ineligible if the Secretary determines that—

(A) if permitted to remain in agricultural production, the land would—

(i) contribute to the degradation of soil, water, or air quality; or

(ii) pose an on-site or off-site environmental threat to soil, water, or air quality;

(B) the land is a—

(i) newly-created, permanent grass sod waterway; or

(ii) a contour grass sod strip established and maintained as part of an approved conservation plan;

(C) the land will be devoted to newly established living snow fences, permanent wildlife habitat, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or filterstrips devoted to trees or shrubs;

(D) the land poses an off-farm environmental threat, or a threat of continued degradation of productivity due to soil salinity, if permitted to remain in production; or

(E) enrollment of the land would facilitate a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources of the agricultural operation of the producer; or

(5) the portion of land in a field not enrolled in the conservation reserve in a case in which more than 50 percent of the land in the field is enrolled as a buffer, if—

(A) the land is enrolled as part of the buffer; and

(B) the remainder of the field is—

(i) infeasible to farm; and

(ii) enrolled at regular rental rates.

(c) Planting status of certain land

For purposes of determining the eligibility of land to be placed in the conservation reserve es-

tablished under this subpart, land shall be considered to be planted to an agricultural commodity during a crop year if—

- (1) during the crop year, the land was devoted to a conserving use; or
- (2)(A) during the crop year or during any of the 2 years preceding the crop year, the land was enrolled in the water bank program; and
- (B) the contract of the owner or operator of the cropland expired or will expire in calendar year 2000, 2001, or 2002.

(d) Maximum enrollment

The Secretary may maintain up to 39,200,000 acres in the conservation reserve at any 1 time during the 2002 through 2009 fiscal years (including contracts extended by the Secretary pursuant to section 1437(c) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 3831 note; Public Law 101-624)). During fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012, the Secretary may maintain up to 32,000,000 acres in the conservation reserve at any 1 time.

(e) Duration of contract

(1) In general

For the purpose of carrying out this subpart, the Secretary shall enter into contracts of not less than 10, nor more than 15, years.

(2) Certain land

(A) In general

In the case of land devoted to hardwood trees, shelterbelts, windbreaks, or wildlife corridors under a contract entered into under this subpart after October 1, 1990, and land devoted to such uses under contracts modified under section 3835a of this title, the owner or operator of the land may, within the limitations prescribed under this section, specify the duration of the contract.

(B) Hardwood trees

In the case of land that is devoted to hardwood trees under a contract entered into under this subpart prior to October 1, 1990, the Secretary may extend the contract for a term of not to exceed 5 years, as agreed to by the owner or operator of such land and the Secretary.

(3) 1-year extension

In the case of a contract described in paragraph (1) the term of which expires during calendar year 2002, an owner or operator of land enrolled under the contract may extend the contract for 1 additional year.

(f) Conservation priority areas

(1) Designation

On application by the appropriate State agency, the Secretary shall designate watershed areas of the Chesapeake Bay Region, the Great Lakes Region, the Long Island Sound Region, and other areas of special environmental sensitivity as conservation priority areas.

(2) Eligible watersheds

Watersheds eligible for designation under this subsection shall include areas with actual and significant adverse water quality or habi-

tat impacts related to agricultural production activities.

(3) Expiration

Conservation priority area designation under this subsection shall expire after 5 years, subject to redesignation, except that the Secretary may withdraw a watershed's designation—

(A) on application by the appropriate State agency; or

(B) in the case of an area covered by this subsection, if the Secretary finds that the area no longer contains actual and significant adverse water quality or habitat impacts related to agricultural production activities.

(4) Duty of Secretary

In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary shall attempt to maximize water quality and habitat benefits in the watersheds described in paragraph (1) by promoting a significant level of enrollment of land within the watersheds in the program under this subpart by whatever means the Secretary determines are appropriate and consistent with the purposes of this subpart.

(g) Multi-year grasses and legumes

(1) In general

For purposes of this subpart, alfalfa and other multi-year grasses and legumes in a rotation practice, approved by the Secretary, shall be considered agricultural commodities.

(2) Cropping history

Alfalfa, when grown as part of a rotation practice, as determined by the Secretary, is an agricultural commodity subject to the cropping history criteria under subsection (b)(1)(B) for the purpose of determining whether highly erodible cropland has been planted or considered planted for 4 of the 6 years referred to in such subsection.

(h) Eligibility for consideration

On the expiration of a contract entered into under this subpart, the land subject to the contract shall be eligible to be considered for re-enrollment in the conservation reserve.

(i) Balance of natural resource purposes

In determining the acceptability of contract offers under this subpart, the Secretary shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, an equitable balance among the conservation purposes of soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1231, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 238; amended Pub. L. 109-148, div. B, title I, §107(a), Dec. 30, 2005, 119 Stat. 2750; Pub. L. 109-234, title III, §3022, June 15, 2006, 120 Stat. 478; Pub. L. 110-28, title IV, §4101, May 25, 2007, 121 Stat. 152; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§2101-2105, 2106(a)(2), (b)(1), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1028, 1029, 1031, 1032; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2101-2105, 2106(a)(2), (b)(1), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1756, 1757, 1759, 1760.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, referred to in subsec. (b)(1)(B), is

the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-246, which was approved June 18, 2008.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3831, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1231, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1509; Pub. L. 99-500, §101(a) [title VI, §643], Oct. 18, 1986, 100 Stat. 1783, 1783-36, and Pub. L. 99-591, §101(a) [title VI, §643], Oct. 30, 1986, 100 Stat. 3341, 3341-36; Pub. L. 99-641, title II, §205, Nov. 10, 1986, 100 Stat. 3563; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §§1432(2), 1447(a), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3577, 3605; Pub. L. 102-324, §1(a), July 22, 1992, 106 Stat. 447; Pub. L. 103-66, title I, §1402(b), Aug. 10, 1993, 107 Stat. 332; Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §332(a)(1), (b), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 994; Pub. L. 106-387, §1(a) [title XI, §1102(a)], Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549, 1549A-75; Pub. L. 107-76, title VII, §758(a), Nov. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 741, related to a conservation reserve program to be formulated and carried out by the Secretary through the 2002 calendar year, prior to the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 110-246, §2101, substituted “2012 fiscal year” for “2007 calendar year” and inserted “and to address issues raised by State, regional, and national conservation initiatives” before period at end.

Subsec. (b)(1)(B). Pub. L. 110-246, §2102(1), substituted “the date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008” for “May 13, 2002” and substituted semicolon for period at end.

Subsec. (b)(4)(C) to (E). Pub. L. 110-246, §2102(2), in subpar. (C) struck out “or” at end, in subpar. (D) substituted “or” for “and” at end, and in subpar. (E) inserted “or” at end.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 110-246, §2103, substituted “2009 fiscal years” for “2007 calendar years” and “(16 U.S.C.)” for “(16 U.S.C.)” and inserted at end “During fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012, the Secretary may maintain up to 32,000,000 acres in the conservation reserve at any 1 time.”

Subsec. (f)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2104, substituted “the Chesapeake Bay Region” for “the Chesapeake Bay Region (Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia)”.

Subsec. (g). Pub. L. 110-246, §2105, amended subsec. (g) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “For purposes of this subpart, alfalfa and other multi-year grasses and legumes in a rotation practice, approved by the Secretary, shall be considered agricultural commodities.”

Subsecs. (h) to (j). Pub. L. 110-246, §2106(a)(2), redesignated subsecs. (i) and (j) as (h) and (i), respectively, and struck out former subsec. (h) which related to pilot program for enrollment of wetland and buffer acreage in conservation reserve during 2002 through 2007 calendar years.

Subsec. (k). Pub. L. 110-246, §2106(b)(1), renumbered subsec. (k) as section 3831a of this title.

2007—Subsec. (k)(2). Pub. L. 110-28 substituted “The” for “During calendar year 2006, the”.

2006—Subsec. (k)(3)(G). Pub. L. 109-234 substituted “\$504,100,000” for “\$404,100,000”.

2005—Subsec. (k). Pub. L. 109-148 added subsec. (k).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

REGULATIONS

Pub. L. 106-387, §1(a) [title XI, §1105], Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549, 1549A-78, required the Secretary of Agri-

culture, as soon as practicable after Oct. 28, 2000, to promulgate regulations to implement the amendments by section 1(a) [title XI] of Pub. L. 106-387, amending former sections 3831 and 3832 of this title.

STUDY ON ECONOMIC EFFECTS

Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2101(b), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 252, provided that:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act [May 13, 2002], the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a report that describes the economic and social effects on rural communities resulting from the conservation reserve program established under subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.).

“(2) COMPONENTS.—The study under paragraph (1) shall include analyses of—

“(A) the impact that enrollments in the conservation reserve program have on rural businesses, civic organizations, and community services (such as schools, public safety, and infrastructure), particularly in communities with a large percentage of whole farm enrollments;

“(B) the effect that those enrollments have on rural population and beginning farmers (including a description of any connection between the rate of enrollment and the incidence of absentee ownership);

“(C)(i) the manner in which differential per acre payment rates potentially impact the types of land (by productivity) enrolled;

“(ii) changes to the per acre payment rates that may affect that impact; and

“(iii) the manner in which differential per acre payment rates could facilitate retention of productive agricultural land in agriculture; and

“(D) the effect of enrollment on opportunities for recreational activities (including hunting and fishing).”

STUDY OF IMPACT OF PILOT PROGRAM

Pub. L. 106-387, §1(a) [title XI, §1104], Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549, 1549A-78, required the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study of the impact of the pilot program established under former section 3831(h) of this title, as added by section 1(a) [title XI, §1102(a)] of Pub. L. 106-387, and to report on the results of the study to committees of Congress not later than Mar. 1, 2003.

STUDY OF LAND USE FOR EXPIRING CONTRACTS AND EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY

Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1437, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3584, required the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study of cropland subject to expiring conservation reserve contracts entered into prior to Nov. 28, 1990, and to report on the study to committees of Congress not later than Dec. 31, 1993, and authorized the Secretary, during calendar years 1996 to 2000, to extend up to 10 years contracts entered into under this subpart prior to Nov. 28, 1990, or to purchase long-term or permanent easements as provided for in part III of this subchapter, at the option of the owner or operator on land that the Secretary has determined under the study should remain in conserving uses.

EXISTING CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Pub. L. 99-263, Mar. 24, 1986, 100 Stat. 59, provided: “That the conservation reserve program shall not replace or reduce any existing conservation program.”

§ 3831a. Emergency forestry conservation reserve program

(a) Definitions

In this section:

(1) Merchantable timber

The term “merchantable timber” means timber on private nonindustrial forest land on

which the average tree has a trunk diameter of at least 6 inches measured at a point no less than 4.5 feet above the ground.

(2) Private nonindustrial forest land

The term “private nonindustrial forest land” includes State school trust land.

(b) Program

The Secretary shall carry out an emergency pilot program in States that the Secretary determines have suffered damage to merchantable timber in counties affected by hurricanes during the 2005 calendar year.

(c) Eligible acreage

(1) In general

Subject to paragraph (2) and the availability of funds under paragraph (7), an owner or operator may enroll private nonindustrial forest land in the conservation reserve under this section.

(2) Determination of damages

Eligibility for enrollment shall be limited to owners and operators of private nonindustrial forest land that have experienced a loss of 35 percent or more of merchantable timber in a county affected by hurricanes during the 2005 calendar year.

(3) Exemptions

Acreage enrolled in the conservation reserve under this section shall not count toward—

- (A) county acreage limitations described in section 3843(b)¹ of this title; or
- (B) the maximum enrollment described in section 3831(d) of this title.

(4) Duties of owners and operators

As a condition of entering into a contract under this section, during the term of the contract, the owner or operator of private nonindustrial forest land shall agree—

- (A) to restore the land, through site preparation and planting of similar species as existing prior to hurricane damages or to the maximum extent practicable with other native species, as determined by the Secretary; and
- (B) to establish temporary vegetative cover the purpose of which is to prevent soil erosion on the eligible acreage, as determined by the Secretary.

(5) Duties of the Secretary

(A) In general

In return for a contract entered into by an owner or operator of private nonindustrial forest land under this section, the Secretary shall provide, at the option of the landowner—

- (i) notwithstanding the limitation in section 3834(f)(1) of this title, a lump sum payment; or
- (ii) annual rental payments.

(B) Calculation of lump sum payment

The lump sum payment described in subparagraph (A)(i) shall be calculated using a net present value formula, as determined by

the Secretary, based on the total amount a producer would receive over the duration of the contract.

(C) Calculation of annual rental payments

The annual rental payment described in subparagraph (A)(ii) shall be equal to the average rental rate for conservation reserve contracts in the county in which the land is located.

(D) Rolling signup

The Secretary shall offer a rolling signup for contracts under this section.

(E) Duration of contracts

A contract entered into under this section shall have a term of 10 years.

(6) Balance of natural resources

In determining the acceptability of contract offers under this section, the Secretary shall consider an equitable balance among the purposes of soil erosion prevention, water quality improvement, wildlife habitat restoration, and mitigation of economic loss.

(7) Funding

The Secretary shall use \$504,100,000, to remain available until expended, of funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation to carry out this section.

(8) Determinations by Secretary

A determination made by the Secretary under this section shall be final and conclusive.

(9) Regulations

(A) In general

Not later than 90 days after December 30, 2005, the Secretary shall promulgate such regulations as are necessary to implement this section.

(B) Procedure

The promulgation of regulations and administration of this section shall be made without regard to—

- (i) the notice and comment provisions of section 553 of title 5;
- (ii) the Statement of Policy of the Secretary of Agriculture effective July 24, 1971 (36 Fed. Reg. 13804), relating to notices of proposed rulemaking and public participation in rulemaking; and
- (iii) chapter 35 of title 44 (commonly known as the “Paperwork Reduction Act”).

(C) Congressional review of agency rulemaking

In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall use the authority provided under section 808 of title 5.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1231A, as added and amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2106(b), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1032, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2106(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1760.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 3843 of this title, referred to in subsec. (c)(3)(A), was amended generally by Pub. L. 110-246,

¹ See References in Text note below.

title II, § 2707(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1805, and, as so amended, no longer contains provisions relating to county acreage limitations.

CODIFICATION

December 30, 2005, referred to in subsec. (c)(9)(A), was in the original “the date of enactment of this Act”, which was translated as meaning the date of enactment of Pub. L. 109–148, which enacted subsec. (k) of section 3831 of this title (now this section), to reflect the probable intent of Congress.

Pub. L. 110–234 and Pub. L. 110–246 both renumbered section 1231(k) of Pub. L. 99–198 as section 1231A of Pub. L. 99–198 and made identical amendments to such section. Pub. L. 110–234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110–246.

Section 3831(k) of this title, which was transferred and redesignated as this section and amended by Pub. L. 110–246, § 2106(b), was based on Pub. L. 99–198, title XII, § 1231(k), as added Pub. L. 109–148, div. B, title I, § 107(a), Dec. 30, 2005, 119 Stat. 2750; amended Pub. L. 109–234, title III, § 3022, June 15, 2006, 120 Stat. 478; Pub. L. 110–28, title IV, § 4101, May 25, 2007, 121 Stat. 152.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110–246, § 2106(b), transferred section 3831(k) of this title to this section, substituted “this section” for “this subsection” wherever appearing, redesignated pars. (1) to (3) as subsecs. (a) to (c), respectively, in subsec. (a) redesignated subpars. (A) and (B) as pars. (1) and (2), respectively, in subsec. (c) redesignated subpars. (A) to (I) as pars. (1) to (9), respectively, in par. (1) substituted “paragraph (2)” for “subparagraph (B)” and “paragraph (7)” for “subparagraph (G)”, in pars. (3) and (4) redesignated cls. (i) and (ii) as subpars. (A) and (B), respectively, in par. (3)(B) substituted “section 3831(d) of this title” for “subsection (d) of this section”, in par. (5) redesignated cls. (i) to (v) as subpars. (A) to (E), respectively, in subpar. (A) redesignated subcls. (I) and (II) as cls. (i) and (ii), respectively, in subpar. (B) substituted “subparagraph (A)(i)” for “clause (i)(I)”, in subpar. (C) substituted “subparagraph (A)(ii)” for “clause (i)(II)”, in par. (9) redesignated cls. (i) to (iii) as subpars. (A) to (C), respectively, and in subpar. (B) redesignated subcls. (I) to (III) as cls. (i) to (iii), respectively. See Codification note above.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110–234 by Pub. L. 110–246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110–234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110–246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3831b. Pilot program for enrollment of wetland and buffer acreage in conservation reserve

(a) Program required

(1) In general

During the 2008 through 2012 fiscal years, the Secretary shall carry out a program in each State under which the Secretary shall enroll eligible acreage described in subsection (b).

(2) Participation among States

The Secretary shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that owners and operators in each State have an equitable opportunity to participate in the program established under this section.

(b) Eligible acreage

(1) Wetland and related land

Subject to subsections (c) and (d), an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve, pursuant to the program established under this section, land—

(A) that is wetland (including a converted wetland described in section 3822(b)(1)(A) of this title) that had a cropping history during at least 3 of the immediately preceding 10 crop years;

(B) on which a constructed wetland is to be developed that will receive flow from a row crop agriculture drainage system and is designed to provide nitrogen removal in addition to other wetland functions;

(C) that was devoted to commercial pond-raised aquaculture in any year during the period of calendar years 2002 through 2007; or

(D) that, after January 1, 1990, and before December 31, 2002, was—

(i) cropped during at least 3 of 10 crop years; and

(ii) subject to the natural overflow of a prairie wetland.

(2) Buffer acreage

Subject to subsections (c) and (d), an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve, pursuant to the program established under this section, buffer acreage that—

(A) with respect to land described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1)—

(i) is contiguous to such land¹

(ii) is used to protect such land; and

(iii) is of such width as the Secretary determines is necessary to protect such land, taking into consideration and accommodating the farming practices (including the straightening of boundaries to accommodate machinery) used with respect to the cropland that surrounds such land; and

(B) with respect to land described in subparagraph (D) of paragraph (1), enhances a wildlife benefit to the extent practicable in terms of upland to wetland ratios, as determined by the Secretary.

(c) Program limitations

(1) Acreage limitation

The Secretary may enroll in the conservation reserve, pursuant to the program established under this section, not more than—

(A) 100,000 acres in any State; and

(B) a total of 1,000,000 acres.

(2) Relationship to maximum enrollment

Subject to paragraph (3), any acreage enrolled in the conservation reserve under this section shall be considered acres maintained in the conservation reserve.

(3) Relationship to other enrolled acreage

Acreage enrolled in the conservation reserve under this section shall not affect for any fiscal year the quantity of—

(A) acreage enrolled to establish conservation buffers as part of the program announced on March 24, 1998 (63 Fed. Reg. 14109); or

(B) acreage enrolled into the conservation reserve enhancement program announced on May 27, 1998 (63 Fed. Reg. 28965).

(4) Review; potential increase in enrollment acreage

The Secretary shall conduct a review of the program established under this section with

¹ So in original. Probably should be followed by a semicolon.

respect to each State that has enrolled land in the conservation reserve pursuant to the program. As a result of the review, the Secretary may increase the number of acres that may be enrolled in a State under the program to not more than 200,000 acres, notwithstanding paragraph (1)(A).

(d) Owner or operator enrollment limitations

(1) Wetland and related land

(A) Wetlands and constructed wetlands

The maximum size of any land described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of subsection (b)(1) that an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve, pursuant to the program established under this section, shall be 40 contiguous acres.

(B) Flooded farmland

The maximum size of any land described in subparagraph (D) of subsection (b)(1) that an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve, pursuant to the program established under this section, shall be 20 contiguous acres.

(C) Coverage

All acres described in subparagraph (A) or (B), including acres that are ineligible for payment, shall be covered by the conservation contract.

(2) Buffer acreage

The maximum size of any buffer acreage described in subsection (b)(2) that an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve under this section shall be determined by the Secretary in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

(3) Tracts

Except for land described in subsection (b)(1)(C) and buffer acreage related to such land, the maximum size of any eligible acreage described in subsection (b)(1) in a tract of an owner or operator enrolled in the conservation reserve under this section shall be 40 acres.

(e) Duties of owners and operators

During the term of a contract entered into under the program established under this section, an owner or operator shall agree—

(1) to restore the hydrology of the wetland within the eligible acreage to the maximum extent practicable, as determined by the Secretary;

(2) to establish vegetative cover (which may include emerging vegetation in water and bottomland hardwoods, cypress, and other appropriate tree species) on the eligible acreage, as determined by the Secretary;

(3) to a general prohibition of commercial use of the enrolled land; and

(4) to carry out other duties described in section 3832 of this title.

(f) Duties of the Secretary

(1) In general

Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), in return for a contract entered into under this section, the Secretary shall—

(A) make payments to the owner or operator based on rental rates for cropland; and

(B) provide assistance to the owner or operator in accordance with sections 3833 and 3834 of this title.

(2) Contract offers and payments

The Secretary shall use the method of determination described in section 3834(c)(2)(B) of this title to determine the acceptability of contract offers and the amount of rental payments under this section.

(3) Incentives

The amounts payable to owners and operators in the form of rental payments under contracts entered into under this section shall reflect incentives that are provided to owners and operators to enroll filterstrips in the conservation reserve under section 3834 of this title.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1231B, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2106(a)(1), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1029, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2106(a)(1), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1757.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

Provisions similar to those comprising this section were contained in section 3831(h) of this title prior to repeal by Pub. L. 110-246.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Enactment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3832. Duties of owners and operators

(a) In general

Under the terms of a contract entered into under this subpart, during the term of the contract, an owner or operator of a farm or ranch shall agree—

(1) to implement a plan approved by the local conservation district (or in an area not located within a conservation district, a plan approved by the Secretary) for converting eligible land normally devoted to the production of an agricultural commodity on the farm or ranch to a less intensive use (as defined by the Secretary), such as pasture, permanent grass, legumes, forbs, shrubs, or trees, substantially in accordance with a schedule outlined in the plan;

(2) to place highly erodible cropland subject to the contract in the conservation reserve established under this subpart;

(3) not to use the land for agricultural purposes, except as permitted by the Secretary;

(4) to establish approved vegetative cover (which may include emerging vegetation in water), water cover for the enhancement of wildlife, or, where practicable, maintain existing cover on the land, except that—

(A) the water cover shall not include ponds for the purpose of watering livestock, irrigating crops, or raising fish for commercial purposes; and

(B) the Secretary shall not terminate the contract for failure to establish approved vegetative or water cover on the land if—

(i) the failure to plant the cover was due to excessive rainfall or flooding;

(ii) the land subject to the contract that could practicably be planted to the cover is planted to the cover; and

(iii) the land on which the owner or operator was unable to plant the cover is planted to the cover after the wet conditions that prevented the planting subsides;

(5) to undertake management on the land as needed throughout the term of the contract to implement the conservation plan;

(6) on a violation of a term or condition of the contract at any time the owner or operator has control of the land—

(A) to forfeit all rights to receive rental payments and cost sharing payments under the contract and to refund to the Secretary any rental payments and cost sharing payments received by the owner or operator under the contract, together with interest on the payments as determined by the Secretary, if the Secretary, after considering the recommendations of the soil conservation district and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, determines that the violation is of such nature as to warrant termination of the contract; or

(B) to refund to the Secretary, or accept adjustments to, the rental payments and cost sharing payments provided to the owner or operator, as the Secretary considers appropriate, if the Secretary determines that the violation does not warrant termination of the contract;

(7) on the transfer of the right and interest of the owner or operator in land subject to the contract—

(A) to forfeit all rights to rental payments and cost sharing payments under the contract; and

(B) to refund to the United States all rental payments and cost sharing payments received by the owner or operator, or accept such payment adjustments or make such refunds as the Secretary considers appropriate and consistent with the objectives of this subpart;

unless the transferee of the land agrees with the Secretary to assume all obligations of the contract, except that no refund of rental payments and cost sharing payments shall be required if the land is purchased by or for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the transferee and the Secretary agree to modifications to the contract, in a case in which the modifications are consistent with the objectives of the program, as determined by the Secretary;

(8) not to conduct any harvesting or grazing, nor otherwise make commercial use of the forage, on land that is subject to the contract, nor adopt any similar practice specified in the contract by the Secretary as a practice that would tend to defeat the purposes of the contract, except that the Secretary may permit, consistent with the conservation of soil, water

quality, and wildlife habitat (including habitat during nesting seasons for birds in the area)—

(A) managed harvesting (including the managed harvesting of biomass), except that in permitting managed harvesting, the Secretary, in coordination with the State technical committee—

(i) shall develop appropriate vegetation management requirements; and

(ii) shall identify periods during which managed harvesting may be conducted;

(B) harvesting and grazing or other commercial use of the forage on the land that is subject to the contract in response to a drought or other emergency;

(C) routine grazing or prescribed grazing for the control of invasive species, except that in permitting such routine grazing or prescribed grazing, the Secretary, in coordination with the State technical committee—

(i) shall develop appropriate vegetation management requirements and stocking rates for the land that are suitable for continued routine grazing; and

(ii) shall establish the frequency during which routine grazing may be conducted, taking into consideration regional differences such as—

(I) climate, soil type, and natural resources;

(II) the number of years that should be required between routine grazing activities; and

(III) how often during a year in which routine grazing is permitted that routine grazing should be allowed to occur; and

(D) the installation of wind turbines, except that in permitting the installation of wind turbines, the Secretary shall determine the number and location of wind turbines that may be installed, taking into account—

(i) the location, size, and other physical characteristics of the land;

(ii) the extent to which the land contains wildlife and wildlife habitat; and

(iii) the purposes of the conservation reserve program under this subpart;

(9) not to conduct any planting of trees on land that is subject to the contract unless the contract specifies that the harvesting and commercial sale of trees such as Christmas trees are prohibited, nor otherwise make commercial use of trees on land that is subject to the contract unless it is expressly permitted in the contract, nor adopt any similar practice specified in the contract by the Secretary as a practice that would tend to defeat the purposes of the contract, except that no contract shall prohibit activities consistent with customary forestry practice, such as pruning, thinning, or stand improvement of trees, on land converted to forestry use;

(10) not to adopt any practice specified by the Secretary in the contract as a practice that would tend to defeat the purposes of this subpart; and

(11) to comply with such additional provisions as the Secretary determines are desirable and are included in the contract to carry

out this subpart or to facilitate the practical administration of this subpart.

(b) Conservation plans

The plan referred to in subsection (a)(1) of this section—

(1) shall set forth—

(A) the conservation measures and practices to be carried out by the owner or operator during the term of the contract; and

(B) the commercial use, if any, to be permitted on the land during the term; and

(2) may provide for the permanent retirement of any existing cropland base and allotment history for the land.

(c) Foreclosure

(1) In general

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an owner or operator who is a party to a contract entered into under this subpart may not be required to make repayments to the Secretary of amounts received under the contract if the land that is subject to the contract has been foreclosed on and the Secretary determines that forgiving the repayments is appropriate in order to provide fair and equitable treatment.

(2) Resumption of control

(A) In general

This subsection shall not void the responsibilities of an owner or operator under the contract if the owner or operator resumes control over the land that is subject to the contract within the period specified in the contract.

(B) Contract

On the resumption of the control over the land by the owner or operator, the provisions of the contract in effect on the date of the foreclosure shall apply.

(d) Rental payment reduction for certain authorized uses of enrolled land

In the case of an authorized activity under subsection (a)(8) on land that is subject to a contract under this subpart, the Secretary shall reduce the rental payment otherwise payable under the contract by an amount commensurate with the economic value of the authorized activity.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1232, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 242; amended Pub. L. 108-7, div. N, title II, §212, Feb. 20, 2003, 117 Stat. 545; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§2107, 2108, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1032, 1033; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2107, 2108, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1760, 1761.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3832, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1232, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1509; Pub. L. 101-512, title I, Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1919; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §§1433, 1447(a), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3579, 3605; Pub. L. 102-237,

title II, §204(5), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1855; Pub. L. 102-552, title V, §516(a), Oct. 28, 1992, 106 Stat. 4136; Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §332(a)(2), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 994; Pub. L. 106-78, title VII, §§763, 769, Oct. 22, 1999, 113 Stat. 1173, 1174; Pub. L. 106-387, §1(a) [title VIII, §817, title XI, §1103], Oct. 28, 2000, 114 Stat. 1549, 1549A-58, 1549A-77; Pub. L. 107-76, title VII, §§758(b), 759(b)(2), Nov. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 741, related to duties of owners and operators, prior to the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a)(5) to (7). Pub. L. 110-246, §2107, added par. (5) and redesignated former pars. (5) and (6) as (6) and (7), respectively. Former par. (7) redesignated (8).

Subsec. (a)(8). Pub. L. 110-246, §2108(a), added par. (8) and struck out former par. (8) which related to prohibition against harvesting, grazing, or other commercial use of the forage, with exception authorizing Secretary to permit managed harvesting and grazing if appropriate requirements were developed and timeframes identified or in a drought or other emergency, and exception for the installation of wind turbines.

Pub. L. 110-246, §2107(1), redesignated par. (7) as (8). Former par. (8) redesignated (9).

Subsec. (a)(9) to (11). Pub. L. 110-246, §2107(1), redesignated pars. (8) to (10) as (9) to (11), respectively.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 110-246, §2108(b), added subsec. (d).

2003—Subsec. (a)(7)(A)(iii). Pub. L. 108-7 inserted before semicolon “, except that this clause shall not apply to the 2002 calendar year, and the Secretary shall repay the owner or operator (in a manner determined by the Secretary) for any reduction in rental payments made to the owner or operator as the result of the application of this clause to the 2002 calendar year”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3833. Duties of the Secretary

In return for a contract entered into by an owner or operator under section 3832 of this title, the Secretary shall—

(1) share the cost of carrying out the conservation measures and practices set forth in the contract for which the Secretary determines that cost sharing is appropriate and in the public interest; and

(2) for a period of years not in excess of the term of the contract, pay an annual rental payment in an amount necessary to compensate for—

(A) the conversion of highly erodible cropland normally devoted to the production of an agricultural commodity on a farm or ranch to a less intensive use; and

(B) the retirement of any cropland base and allotment history that the owner or operator agrees to retire permanently.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1233, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 245.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3833, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1233, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1511, related to duties of Secretary, prior to the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

§ 3834. Payments**(a) Timing**

The Secretary shall provide payment for obligations incurred by the Secretary under a contract entered into under this subpart—

(1) with respect to any cost-sharing payment obligation incurred by the Secretary, as soon as practicable after the obligation is incurred; and

(2) with respect to any annual rental payment obligation incurred by the Secretary—

(A) as soon as practicable after October 1 of each calendar year; or

(B) at the option of the Secretary, at any time prior to such date during the year that the obligation is incurred.

(b) Federal percentage of cost sharing payments**(1) In general**

In making cost sharing payments to an owner or operator under a contract entered into under this subpart, the Secretary shall pay 50 percent of the cost of establishing water quality and conservation measures and practices required under each contract for which the Secretary determines that cost sharing is appropriate and in the public interest.

(2) Limitation

The Secretary shall not make any payment to an owner or operator under this subpart to the extent that the total amount of cost sharing payments provided to the owner or operator from all sources would exceed 100 percent of the total cost of establishing measures and practices described in paragraph (1).

(3) Trees, windbreaks, shelterbelts, and wildlife corridors**(A) Applicability**

This paragraph applies to—

(i) land devoted to the production of hardwood trees, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or wildlife corridors under a contract entered into under this subpart after November 28, 1990;

(ii) land converted to such production under section 3835a of this title; and

(iii) land on which an owner or operator agrees to conduct thinning authorized by section 3832(a)(9) of this title, if the thinning is necessary to improve the condition of resources on the land.

(B) Payments**(i) Percentage**

In making cost share payments to an owner or operator of land described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall pay 50 percent of the reasonable and necessary costs incurred by the owner or operator for maintaining trees or shrubs, including the cost of replanting (if the trees or shrubs were lost due to conditions beyond the control of the owner or operator) or thinning.

(ii) Duration

The Secretary shall make payments as described in clause (i) for a period of not less than 2 years, but not more than 4 years, beginning on the date of—

(I) the planting of the trees or shrubs; or

(II) the thinning of existing stands to improve the condition of resources on the land.

(4) Hardwood tree planting

The Secretary may permit owners or operators that contract to devote at least 10 acres of land to the production of hardwood trees under this subpart to extend the planting of the trees over a 3-year period if at least 1/3 of the trees are planted in each of the first 2 years.

(5) Other Federal cost share assistance

An owner or operator shall not be eligible to receive or retain cost share assistance under this subsection if the owner or operator receives any other Federal cost share assistance with respect to the land under any other provision of law.

(c) Annual rental payments**(1) In general**

In determining the amount of annual rental payments to be paid to owners and operators for converting highly erodible cropland normally devoted to the production of an agricultural commodity to less intensive use, the Secretary may consider, among other things, the amount necessary to encourage owners or operators of highly erodible cropland to participate in the program established by this subpart.

(2) Method of determination

The amounts payable to owners or operators in the form of rental payments under contracts entered into under this subpart may be determined through—

(A) the submission of bids for such contracts by owners and operators in such manner as the Secretary may prescribe; or

(B) such other means as the Secretary determines are appropriate.

(3) Acceptance of contract offers**(A) Evaluation of offers**

In determining the acceptability of contract offers, the Secretary may take into consideration the extent to which enrollment of the land that is the subject of the contract offer would improve soil resources, water quality, or wildlife habitat or provide other environmental benefits.

(B) Establishment of different criteria in various States and regions

The Secretary may establish different criteria for determining the acceptability of contract offers in various States and regions of the United States based on the extent to which water quality or wildlife habitat may be improved or erosion may be abated.

(C) Local preference

In determining the acceptability of contract offers for new enrollments, the Secretary shall accept, to the maximum extent practicable, an offer from an owner or operator that is a resident of the county in which the land is located or of a contiguous county

if, as determined by the Secretary, the land would provide at least equivalent conservation benefits to land under competing offers.

(4) Hardwood tree acreage

In the case of acreage enrolled in the conservation reserve established under this subpart that is to be devoted to hardwood trees, the Secretary may consider bids for contracts under this subsection on a continuous basis.

(5) Rental rates

(A) Annual estimates

The Secretary (acting through the National Agricultural Statistics Service) shall conduct an annual survey of per acre estimates of county average market dryland and irrigated cash rental rates for cropland and pastureland in all counties or equivalent subdivisions within each State that have 20,000 acres or more of cropland and pastureland.

(B) Public availability of estimates

The estimates derived from the annual survey conducted under subparagraph (A) shall be maintained on a website of the Department of Agriculture for use by the general public.

(d) Cash or in-kind payments

(1) In general

Except as otherwise provided in this section, payments under this subpart—

(A) shall be made in cash or in commodities in such amount and on such time schedule as is agreed on and specified in the contract; and

(B) may be made in advance of determination of performance.

(2) Method of providing in-kind payments

If the payment to an owner or operator is made with in-kind commodities, the payment shall be made by the Commodity Credit Corporation—

(A) by delivery of the commodity involved to the owner or operator at a warehouse or other similar facility located in the county in which the highly erodible cropland is located or at such other location as is agreed to by the Secretary and the owner or operator;

(B) by the transfer of negotiable warehouse receipts; or

(C) by such other method, including the sale of the commodity in commercial markets, as is determined by the Secretary to be appropriate to enable the owner or operator to receive efficient and expeditious possession of the commodity.

(3) Cash payments

(A) Commodity Credit Corporation stocks

If stocks of a commodity acquired by the Commodity Credit Corporation are not readily available to make full payment in kind to the owner or operator, the Secretary may substitute full or partial payment in cash for payment in kind.

(B) Special conservation reserve enhancement program

Payments to an owner or operator under a special conservation reserve enhancement

program described in subsection (f)(4) of this section shall be in the form of cash only.

(e) Payments on death, disability, or succession

If an owner or operator that is entitled to a payment under a contract entered into under this subpart dies, becomes incompetent, is otherwise unable to receive the payment, or is succeeded by another person that renders or completes the required performance, the Secretary shall make the payment, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary and without regard to any other provision of law, in such manner as the Secretary determines is fair and reasonable in light of all of the circumstances.

(f) Payment limitation for rental payments

(1) In general

The total amount of rental payments, including rental payments made in the form of in-kind commodities, received by a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, under this subpart for any fiscal year may not exceed \$50,000.

(2) Repealed. Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2110(c)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1035, and Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2110(c)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1763

(3) Other payments

Rental payments received by an owner or operator shall be in addition to, and not affect, the total amount of payments that the owner or operator is otherwise eligible to receive under the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

(4) Special conservation reserve enhancement program

(A) In general

The provisions of this subsection that limit payments to any person or legal entity, and section 1305(d) of the Agricultural Reconciliation Act of 1987 (7 U.S.C. 1308 note; Public Law 100-203), shall not be applicable to payments received by a State, political subdivision, or agency thereof in connection with agreements entered into under a special conservation reserve enhancement program carried out by that entity that has been approved by the Secretary.

(B) Agreements

The Secretary may enter into such agreements for payments to States (including political subdivisions and agencies of States) that the Secretary determines will advance the purposes of this subpart.

(g) Other State or local assistance

In addition to any payment under this subpart, an owner or operator may receive cost share assistance, rental payments, or tax benefits from a State or subdivision thereof for enrolling land in the conservation reserve program.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1234, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 245; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§ 2109,

2110(a), (b)(1), (c), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1034, 1035; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2109, 2110(a), (b)(1), (c), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1762, 1763.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, referred to in subsec. (f)(3), is Pub. L. 107-171, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 134. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 7901 of Title 7, Agriculture, and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3834, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1234, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1511; Pub. L. 100-387, title III, §322, Aug. 11, 1988, 102 Stat. 950; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §§1434, 1447(a), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3581, 3605, related to payments for obligations, prior to the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 110-246, §2109, added par. (3) and struck out former par. (3) which related to the making of payments to an owner or operator of land devoted to the production of hardwood trees, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or wildlife corridors.

Subsec. (c)(3). Pub. L. 110-246, §2110(a), added par. (3) and struck out former par. (3). Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “In determining the acceptability of contract offers, the Secretary may—

“(A) take into consideration the extent to which enrollment of the land that is the subject of the contract offer would improve soil resources, water quality, wildlife habitat, or provide other environmental benefits; and

“(B) establish different criteria in various States and regions of the United States based on the extent to which water quality or wildlife habitat may be improved or erosion may be abated.”

Subsec. (c)(5). Pub. L. 110-246, §2110(b)(1), added par. (5).

Subsec. (f)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2110(c)(1), substituted “received by a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly,” for “made to a person”.

Subsec. (f)(2). Pub. L. 110-246, §2110(c)(2), struck out par. (2) which related to promulgation of regulations defining the term “person” as used in subsec. (f) and providing terms and conditions determined necessary to ensure a fair and reasonable application of the subsec. (f) limitation.

Subsec. (f)(4)(A). Pub. L. 110-246, §2110(c)(3), substituted “any person or legal entity” for “any person”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

FIRST SURVEY PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (c)(5)

Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2110(b)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1035, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2110(b)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1763, provided that: “The first survey required by paragraph (5) of section 1234(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3834(c)), as added by subsection (a), shall be conducted not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act [June 18, 2008].”

[Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical provisions. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.]

CONSERVATION RESEARCH APPLICATION

For provisions directing that enumerated provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 shall apply to the conservation reserve program under this subchapter with respect to rental payments to persons under contracts entered into after Dec. 22, 1987, with certain exceptions, see section 1305(d) of Pub. L. 100-203, set out as a note under section 1308 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3835. Contracts

(a) Ownership or operation requirements

(1) In general

Except as provided in paragraph (2), no contract shall be entered into under this subpart concerning land with respect to which the ownership has changed in the 1-year period preceding the first year of the contract period unless—

(A) the new ownership was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous owner;

(B) the new ownership was acquired before January 1, 1985;

(C) the Secretary determines that the land was acquired under circumstances that give adequate assurance that the land was not acquired for the purpose of placing the land in the program established by this subpart; or

(D) the ownership change occurred due to foreclosure on the land and the owner of the land immediately before the foreclosure exercises a right of redemption from the mortgage holder in accordance with State law.

(2) Exceptions

Paragraph (1) shall not—

(A) prohibit the continuation of an agreement by a new owner after an agreement has been entered into under this subpart; or

(B) require a person to own the land as a condition of eligibility for entering into the contract if the person—

(i) has operated the land to be covered by a contract under this section for at least 1 year preceding the date of the contract or since January 1, 1985, whichever is later; and

(ii) controls the land for the contract period.

(b) Sales or transfers

If, during the term of a contract entered into under this subpart, an owner or operator of land subject to the contract sells or otherwise transfers the ownership or right of occupancy of the land, the new owner or operator of the land may—

(1) continue the contract under the same terms or conditions;

(2) enter into a new contract in accordance with this subpart; or

(3) elect not to participate in the program established by this subpart.

(c) Modifications

(1) In general

The Secretary may modify a contract entered into with an owner or operator under this subpart if—

(A) the owner or operator agrees to the modification; and

(B) the Secretary determines that the modification is desirable—

- (i) to carry out this subpart;
- (ii) to facilitate the practical administration of this subpart;
- (iii) to facilitate a transition of land subject to the contract from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a beginning farmer or rancher or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher for the purpose of returning some or all of the land into production using sustainable grazing or crop production methods; or
- (iv) to achieve such other goals as the Secretary determines are appropriate, consistent with this subpart.

(2) Production of agricultural commodities

The Secretary may modify or waive a term or condition of a contract entered into under this subpart in order to permit all or part of the land subject to such contract to be devoted to the production of an agricultural commodity during a crop year, subject to such conditions as the Secretary determines are appropriate.

(d) Termination

(1) In general

The Secretary may terminate a contract entered into with an owner or operator under this subpart if—

- (A) the owner or operator agrees to the termination; and
- (B) the Secretary determines that the termination would be in the public interest.

(2) Notice to congressional committees

At least 90 days before taking any action to terminate under paragraph (1) all conservation reserve contracts entered into under this subpart, the Secretary shall provide to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate written notice of the action.

(e) Early termination by owner or operator

(1) Early termination

(A) In general

The Secretary shall allow a participant that entered into a contract under this subpart before January 1, 1995, to terminate the contract at any time if the contract has been in effect for at least 5 years.

(B) Liability for contract violation

The termination shall not relieve the participant of liability for a contract violation occurring before the date of the termination.

(C) Notice to Secretary

The participant shall provide the Secretary with reasonable notice of the desire of the participant to terminate the contract.

(2) Certain land excepted

The following land shall not be subject to an early termination of contract under this subsection:

- (A) Filterstrips, waterways, strips adjacent to riparian areas, windbreaks, and shelterbelts.

(B) Land with an erodibility index of more than 15.

(C) Other land of high environmental value (including wetland), as determined by the Secretary.

(3) Effective date

The contract termination shall become effective 60 days after the date on which the owner or operator submits the notice required under paragraph (1)(C).

(4) Prorated rental payment

If a contract entered into under this subpart is terminated under this subsection before the end of the fiscal year for which a rental payment is due, the Secretary shall provide a prorated rental payment covering the portion of the fiscal year during which the contract was in effect.

(5) Renewed enrollment

The termination of a contract entered into under this subpart shall not affect the ability of the owner or operator that requested the termination to submit a subsequent bid to enroll the land that was subject to the contract into the conservation reserve.

(6) Conservation requirements

If land that was subject to a contract is returned to production of an agricultural commodity, the conservation requirements under subchapters II and III of this chapter shall apply to the use of the land to the extent that the requirements are similar to those requirements imposed on other similar land in the area, except that the requirements may not be more onerous than the requirements imposed on other land.

(f) Transition option for certain farmers or ranchers

(1) Duties of the Secretary

In the case of a contract modification approved in order to facilitate the transfer, as described in subsection (c)(1)(B)(iii), of land to a beginning farmer or rancher or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher (in this subsection referred to as a “covered farmer or rancher”), the Secretary shall—

(A) beginning on the date that is 1 year before the date of termination of the contract—

(i) allow the covered farmer or rancher, in conjunction with the retired or retiring owner or operator, to make conservation and land improvements; and

(ii) allow the covered farmer or rancher to begin the certification process under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.);

(B) beginning on the date of termination of the contract, require the retired or retiring owner or operator to sell or lease (under a long-term lease or a lease with an option to purchase) to the covered farmer or rancher the land subject to the contract for production purposes;

(C) require the covered farmer or rancher to develop and implement a conservation plan;

(D) provide to the covered farmer or rancher an opportunity to enroll in the conservation stewardship program or the environmental quality incentives program by not later than the date on which the farmer or rancher takes possession of the land through ownership or lease; and

(E) continue to make annual payments to the retired or retiring owner or operator for not more than an additional 2 years after the date of termination of the contract, if the retired or retiring owner or operator is not a family member (as defined in section 1308-1(b)(3)(B)¹ of title 7) of the covered farmer or rancher.

(2) Reenrollment

The Secretary shall provide a covered farmer or rancher with the option to reenroll any applicable partial field conservation practice that—

(A) is eligible for enrollment under the continuous signup requirement of section 3831(h)(4)(B)¹ of this title; and

(B) is part of an approved conservation plan.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1235, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 249; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2111, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1035; Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2111, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1763.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, referred to in subsec. (f)(1)(A)(ii), is title XXI of Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3935, which is classified generally to chapter 94 (§ 6501 et seq.) of Title 7, Agriculture. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 6501 of Title 7 and Tables.

Section 1308-1 of title 7, referred to in subsec. (f)(1)(E), was amended by Pub. L. 110-246, title I, § 1603(d), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1736, and, as so amended, no longer contains a subsec. (b)(3)(B) or provisions defining “family member”.

Section 3831 of this title, referred to in subsec. (f)(2)(A), was amended by Pub. L. 110-246, title II, § 2106(a)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1759, and, as so amended, no longer contains a subsec. (h)(4)(B) or provisions relating to a continuous signup requirement.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3835, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1235, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1513; Pub. L. 100-233, title VIII, § 801, Jan. 6, 1988, 101 Stat. 1710; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, § 1447(a), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3605; Pub. L. 104-127, title III, § 332(c), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 994, related to contracts, prior to the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (c)(1)(B)(iii), (iv). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2111(a), added cl. (iii) and redesignated former cl. (iii) as (iv).

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2111(b), added subsec. (f).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the

date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

CONSERVATION RESERVE

Pub. L. 100-45, § 10, May 27, 1987, 101 Stat. 323, provided that: “Section 1235(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 [16 U.S.C. 3835(a)] should be reviewed by the Secretary of Agriculture to ensure that the provisions thereof relating to exceptions to the three-year ownership requirement with respect to eligibility for the conservation reserve are being implemented in a manner to encourage inclusion of producer-owned land in the conservation reserve. However, any such exception to the three-year requirement should be made only if the Secretary determines that the land involved (1) was not acquired for the purpose of placing the land in the conservation reserve or (2) otherwise meets the criteria for exceptions made under section 1235(a).”

§ 3835a. Conversion of land subject to contract to other conserving uses

(a) Conversion to trees

(1) In general

The Secretary shall permit an owner or operator that has entered into a contract under this subpart that is in effect on November 28, 1990, to convert areas of highly erodible cropland that are subject to the contract, and that are devoted to vegetative cover, from that use to hardwood trees, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or wildlife corridors.

(2) Terms

(A) Extension of contract

With respect to a contract that is modified under this section that provides for the planting of hardwood trees, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or wildlife corridors, if the original term of the contract was less than 15 years, the owner or operator may extend the contract to a term of not to exceed 15 years.

(B) Cost share assistance

The Secretary shall pay 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation measures and practices authorized under this subsection for which the Secretary determines the cost sharing is appropriate and in the public interest.

(b) Conversion to wetland

The Secretary shall permit an owner or operator that has entered into a contract under this subpart that is in effect on November 28, 1990, to restore areas of highly erodible cropland that are devoted to vegetative cover under the contract to wetland if—

(1) the areas are prior converted wetland;

(2) the owner or operator of the areas enters into an agreement to provide the Secretary with a long-term or permanent easement under subpart C covering the areas;

(3) there is a high probability that the prior converted area can be successfully restored to wetland status; and

(4) the restoration of the areas otherwise meets the requirements of subpart C.

(c) Limitation

The Secretary shall not incur, through a conversion under this section, any additional ex-

¹ See References in Text note below.

pense on the acres, including the expense involved in the original establishment of the vegetative cover, that would result in cost share for costs under this section in excess of the costs that would have been subject to cost share for the new practice had that practice been the original practice.

(d) Condition of contract

An owner or operator shall as a condition of entering into a contract under subsection (a) of this section participate in the Forest Stewardship Program established under section 2103a of this title.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1235A, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2101(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 251.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

Prior sections 3835a and 3836 were omitted in the general amendment of this subpart by Pub. L. 107-171.

Section 3835a, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1235A, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1435, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3582; amended Pub. L. 102-324, §1(b), July 22, 1992, 106 Stat. 447, related to conversion of land subject to contract to other conserving uses.

Section 3836, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1236, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1514; Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §§1436, 1447(a), Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3583, 3605; Pub. L. 107-76, title VII, §759(b)(1), Nov. 28, 2001, 115 Stat. 741, related to cropland base and allotment history.

A prior section 3836a, Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §387, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1020, related to Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2502(b), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 267. See section 3839bb-1 of this title.

SUBPART C—WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

§ 3837. Wetlands reserve program

(a) Establishment and purposes

(1) Establishment

The Secretary shall establish a wetlands reserve program to assist owners of eligible lands in restoring and protecting wetlands.

(2) Purposes

The purposes of the wetlands reserve program are to restore, protect, or enhance wetlands on private or tribal lands that are eligible under subsections (c) and (d).

(b) Enrollment conditions

(1) Maximum enrollment

The total number of acres enrolled in the wetlands reserve program shall not exceed 3,041,200 acres.

(2) Methods of enrollment

Subject to paragraph (3), the Secretary shall enroll acreage into the wetlands reserve program through the use of permanent easements, 30-year easements, restoration cost share agreements, or any combination of those options.

(3) Acreage owned by Indian tribes

In the case of acreage owned by an Indian tribe, the Secretary shall enroll acreage into the wetlands reserve program through the use of—

- (A) a 30-year contract (the value of which shall be equivalent to the value of a 30-year easement);

- (B) restoration cost-share agreements; or
- (C) any combination of the options described in subparagraphs (A) and (B).

(c) Eligibility

For purposes of enrolling land in the wetland reserve established under this subpart during the 1991 through 2012 fiscal years, private or tribal land shall be eligible to be placed into such reserve if the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior at the local level, determines that—

- (1) such land maximizes wildlife benefits and wetland values and functions;

- (2) such land is—

- (A) farmed wetland or converted wetland, together with the adjacent land that is functionally dependent on the wetlands, except that converted wetland with respect to which the conversion was not commenced prior to December 23, 1985, shall not be eligible to be enrolled in the program under this section; or

- (B) cropland or grassland that was used for agricultural production prior to flooding from the natural overflow of a closed basin lake or pothole, as determined by the Secretary, together (where practicable) with the adjacent land that is functionally dependent on the cropland or grassland; and

- (3) the likelihood of the successful restoration of such land and the resultant wetland values merit inclusion of such land in the program taking into consideration the cost of such restoration.

(d) Other eligible land

The Secretary may include in the wetland reserve established under this subpart, together with land that is eligible under subsection (c) of this section, land that maximizes wildlife benefits and that is—

- (1) farmed wetland and adjoining lands, enrolled in the conservation reserve, with the highest wetland functions and values, and that are likely to return to production after they leave the conservation reserve;

- (2) other wetland of an owner that would not otherwise be eligible if the Secretary determines that the inclusion of such wetland in such easement would significantly add to the functional value of the easement; or

- (3) riparian areas that link wetlands that are protected by easements or some other device or circumstance that achieves the same purpose as an easement.

(e) Ineligible land

The Secretary may not acquire easements on—

- (1) land that contains timber stands established under the conservation reserve under subpart B; or

- (2) pasture land established to trees under the conservation reserve under subpart B.

(f) Termination of existing contract

The Secretary may terminate or modify an existing contract entered into under section 3831(a) of this title if eligible land that is subject to such contract is transferred into the program established by this subpart.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1237, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, § 1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3584; amended Pub. L. 102-237, title II, § 204(6), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1855; Pub. L. 103-66, title I, § 1402(c), Aug. 10, 1993, 107 Stat. 333; Pub. L. 104-127, title III, § 333(a)-(c), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 995; Pub. L. 105-277, div. A, § 101(a) [title VII, § 752], Oct. 21, 1998, 112 Stat. 2681, 2681-32; Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §§ 2201, 2202, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 252; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§ 2201-2203(a), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1036, 1037; Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, §§ 2201-2203(a), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1764, 1765.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2201, amended subsec. (a) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The Secretary shall establish a wetlands reserve program to assist owners of eligible lands in restoring and protecting wetlands.”

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2202(1), added par. (1) and struck out former par. (1). Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The total number of acres enrolled in the wetlands reserve program shall not exceed 2,275,000 acres, of which, to the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall enroll 250,000 acres in each calendar year.”

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2202(2), substituted “Subject to paragraph (3), the Secretary” for “The Secretary”.

Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2202(3), added par. (3).

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2203(a)(1), in introductory provisions, substituted “1991 through 2012 fiscal years” for “1991 through 2007 calendar years” and “private or tribal land shall be eligible” for “land shall be eligible”.

Subsec. (c)(2). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2203(a)(2), added par. (2) and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “such land is farmed wetland or converted wetland, together with adjacent lands that are functionally dependent on such wetlands, except that converted wetlands where the conversion was not commenced prior to December 23, 1985, shall not be eligible to be enrolled in the program under this section; and”.

2002—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 107-171, § 2202(1), added subsec. (b) and struck out heading and text of former subsec. (b). Text read as follows:

“(1) MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT.—The total number of acres enrolled in the wetlands reserve program shall not exceed 975,000 acres.

“(2) METHODS OF ENROLLMENT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), effective beginning October 1, 1996, to the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall enroll into the wetlands reserve program—

“(i) 1/3 of the acres through the use of permanent easements;

“(ii) 1/3 of the acres through the use of 30-year easements; and

“(iii) 1/3 of the acres through the use of restoration cost-share agreements.

“(B) TEMPORARY EASEMENTS.—Effective beginning October 1, 1996, the Secretary shall not enroll acres in the wetlands reserve program through the use of new permanent easements until the Secretary has enrolled at least 75,000 acres in the program through the use of temporary easements.

“(C) For purposes of subparagraph (A), to the maximum extent practicable should be interpreted to mean that acceptance of wetlands reserve program bids may be in proportion to landowner interest expressed in program options.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 107-171, § 2201, substituted “2007” for “2002” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (g). Pub. L. 107-171, § 2202(2), struck out heading and text of subsec. (g). Text read as follows: “The Secretary shall enroll lands in the wetland reserve through the purchase of easements as provided for in section 3837a of this title.”

1998—Subsec. (b)(2)(C). Pub. L. 105-277 added subpar. (C).

1996—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104-127, § 333(a), added subsec. (b) and struck out heading and text of former subsec. (b). Text read as follows: “The Secretary shall enroll into the wetlands reserve program—

“(1) a total of not less than 330,000 acres by the end of the 1995 calendar year; and

“(2) a total of not less than 975,000 acres during the 1991 through 2000 calendar years.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 104-127, § 333(b), substituted “2002” for “2000” in introductory provisions, added par. (1), and redesignated former pars. (1) and (2) as (2) and (3), respectively.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 104-127, § 333(c), in introductory provisions, inserted “, land that maximizes wildlife benefits and that is” after “subsection (c) of this section” and, in par. (2), substituted “or” for “and” at end.

1993—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 103-66, § 1402(c)(1), added subsec. (b) and struck out former subsec. (b) “NUMBER OF ACRES” which read as follows: “To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall attempt to enroll into the wetlands reserve program, 1,000,000 acres of land during the 1991 through 1995 calendar years; except that the Secretary may not enroll more than 200,000 acres in 1991, 400,000 acres in the 1991 to 1992 period, 600,000 acres in the 1991 to 1993 period, 800,000 acres in the 1991 to 1994 period, and 1,000,000 acres in the 1991 to 1995 period.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 103-66, § 1402(c)(2), substituted “2000” for “1995”.

1991—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 102-237 substituted “subsection (c)” for “subsection (d)” in introductory provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

EFFECT OF 1996 AMENDMENTS ON EXISTING AGREEMENTS

Section 333(f) of Pub. L. 104-127 provided that: “The amendments made by this section [amending this section and sections 3837a and 3837c of this title] shall not affect the validity or terms of any agreements entered into by the Secretary of Agriculture under subchapter C of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3837 et seq.) before the date of enactment of this Act [Apr. 4, 1996] or any payments required to be made in connection with the agreements.”

§ 3837a. Easements and agreements

(a) In general

To be eligible to place land into the wetland reserve under this subpart, the owner of such land shall enter into an agreement with the Secretary—

(1) to grant an easement on such land to the Secretary;

(2) to implement a wetland easement conservation plan as provided for in this section;

(3) to create and record an appropriate deed restriction in accordance with applicable State law to reflect the easement agreed to under this subpart with respect to such lands; and

(4) to provide a written statement of consent to such easement signed by those holding a security interest in the land.

(b) Terms of easement

An owner granting an easement under subsection (a) of this section shall be required to provide for the restoration and protection of the functional values of wetland pursuant to a wetland easement conservation plan that—

(1) permits—

(A) repairs, improvements, and inspections on such land that are necessary to maintain existing public drainage systems if such land is subsequently restored to the condition required by the terms of the easement; and

(B) landowners to control public access on the easement areas while identifying access routes to be used for wetland restoration activities and management and easement monitoring;

(2) prohibits—

(A) the alteration of wildlife habitat and other natural features of such land, unless specifically permitted by the plan;

(B) the spraying of such land with chemicals or the mowing of such land, except where such spraying or mowing is permitted by the plan or is necessary—

(i) to comply with Federal or State noxious weed control laws;

(ii) to comply with a Federal or State emergency pest treatment program; or

(iii) to meet habitat needs of specific wildlife species; and

(C) any activities to be carried out on such participating landowner's or successor's land that is immediately adjacent to, and functionally related to, the land that is subject to the easement if such activities will alter, degrade, or otherwise diminish the functional value of the eligible land; and

(D) the adoption of any other practice that would tend to defeat the purposes of this subpart, as determined by the Secretary;

(3) provides for the efficient and effective restoration of the functional values of wetlands; and

(4) includes such additional provisions as the Secretary determines are desirable to carry out this subpart or to facilitate the practical administration thereof.

(c) Restoration plans

The development of a restoration plan, including any compatible use, under this section shall be made through the local Natural Resources Conservation Service representative, in consultation with the State technical committee.

(d) Compatible uses

Wetland reserve program lands may be used for compatible economic uses, including such activities as hunting and fishing, managed timber harvest, or periodic haying or grazing, if such use is specifically permitted by the plan and consistent with the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetlands resources for which the easement was established.

(e) Type and length of easement

A conservation easement granted under this section—

(1) shall be in a recordable form; and

(2) shall be for 30 years, permanent, or the maximum duration allowed under applicable State laws.

(f) Compensation

(1) Determination

Effective on the date of the enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, the Secretary shall pay as compensation for a conservation easement acquired under this subpart the lowest of—

(A) the fair market value of the land, as determined by the Secretary, using the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices or an area-wide market analysis or survey;

(B) the amount corresponding to a geographical cap, as determined by the Secretary in regulations; or

(C) the offer made by the landowner.

(2) Form of payment

Compensation for an easement shall be provided by the Secretary in the form of a cash payment, in an amount determined under paragraph (1) and specified in the easement agreement.

(3) Payment schedule for easements

(A) Easements valued at \$500,000 or less

For easements valued at \$500,000 or less, the Secretary may provide easement payments in not more than 30 annual payments.

(B) Easements in excess of \$500,000

For easements valued at more than \$500,000, the Secretary may provide easement payments in at least 5, but not more than 30 annual payments, except that, if the Secretary determines it would further the purposes of the program, the Secretary may make a lump sum payment for such an easement.

(4) Restoration agreement payment limitation

Payments made to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, pursuant to a restoration cost-share agreement under this subpart may not exceed, in the aggregate, \$50,000 per year.

(5) Enrollment procedure

Lands may be enrolled under this subpart through the submission of bids under a procedure established by the Secretary.

(g) Violation

On the violation of the terms or conditions of the easement or related agreement entered into under subsection (a) of this section, the easement shall remain in force and the Secretary may require the owner to refund all or part of any payments received by the owner under this subpart, together with interest thereon as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(h) Wetlands reserve enhancement program

(1) Program authorized

The Secretary may enter into 1 or more agreements with a State (including a political subdivision or agency of a State), nongovernmental organization, or Indian tribe to carry

out a special wetlands reserve enhancement program that the Secretary determines would advance the purposes of this subpart.

(2) Reserved rights pilot program

(A) Reservation of grazing rights

As part of the wetlands reserve enhancement program, the Secretary shall carry out a pilot program for land in which a landowner may reserve grazing rights in the warranty easement deed restriction if the Secretary determines that the reservation and use of the grazing rights—

- (i) is compatible with the land subject to the easement;
- (ii) is consistent with the long-term wetland protection and enhancement goals for which the easement was established; and
- (iii) complies with a conservation plan.

(B) Duration

The pilot program established under this paragraph shall terminate on September 30, 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237A, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3585; amended Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §333(d), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 996; Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2203, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 252; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§2204-2206, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1038, 1039; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2204-2206, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1766, 1767.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of the enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, referred to in subsec. (f)(1), is the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-246, which was approved June 18, 2008.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b)(2)(B). Pub. L. 110-246, §2204, struck out “or” at end of cl. (i), substituted “; or” for “; and” at end of cl. (ii), and added cl. (iii).

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 110-246, §2205, amended subsec. (f) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “Compensation for easements acquired by the Secretary under this subpart shall be made in cash in such amount as is agreed to and specified in the easement agreement, but not to exceed the fair market value of the land less the fair market value of such land encumbered by the easement. Lands may be enrolled through the submission of bids under a procedure established by the Secretary. Compensation may be provided in not less than 5, nor more than 30, annual payments of equal or unequal size, as agreed to by the owner and the Secretary.”

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 110-246, §2206, added subsec. (h).

2002—Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 107-171 struck out heading and text of subsec. (h). Text read as follows: “The Secretary may enroll land into the wetlands reserve program through an agreement that requires the landowner to restore wetlands on the land, if the agreement does not provide the Secretary with an easement.”

1996—Pub. L. 104-127, §333(d)(1), inserted “and agreements” after “Easements” in section catchline.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 104-127, §333(d)(2), added subsec. (c) and struck out heading and text of former subsec. (c). Text read as follows:

“(1) PLANS.—The development of restoration plans under this section shall be made through the agreement of the local representative of the Soil Conservation Service and a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service. If agreement cannot be reached at the local level under the preceding sentence within a reasonable period of time, such plans shall be referred to the State Conservationist, who in developing such plans under this paragraph, shall consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

“(2) REPORT.—The State Conservationist and a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service shall report to their respective national offices concerning all plans developed under paragraph (1) at the State level as a result of an agreement not being reached at the local level.”

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 104-127, §333(d)(3), substituted “Compensation may be provided in not less than 5, nor more than 30, annual payments of equal or unequal size, as agreed to by the owner and the Secretary.” for “Compensation may be provided in not less than 5 nor more than 20 annual payments of either equal or unequal size, except in the case of a permanent easement, a single lump-sum payment may be provided, as agreed on by the owner and the Secretary.”

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 104-127, §333(d)(4), added subsec. (h).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

EFFECT OF 1996 AMENDMENTS ON EXISTING AGREEMENTS

Amendments made by section 333 of Pub. L. 104-127 not to affect validity or terms of agreements entered into by Secretary of Agriculture under this subpart before Apr. 4, 1996, or payments required to be made in connection with such agreements, see section 333(f) of Pub. L. 104-127, set out as a note under section 3837 of this title.

§ 3837b. Duties of owners

Under the terms of an agreement entered into under this subpart, an owner and operator of the land that is subject to an easement under this subpart shall agree to comply with the terms of the easement and related agreements and shall agree to the permanent retirement of any existing cropland base and allotment history for such land under any program administered by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237B, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3587.)

§ 3837c. Duties of Secretary

(a) In general

In return for the granting of an easement by an owner under this subpart, the Secretary shall—

- (1) share the cost of carrying out the establishment of conservation measures and practices, and the protection of the wetland functions and values, including necessary maintenance activities, as set forth in the plan to the extent that the Secretary determines that cost sharing is appropriate and in the public interest; and

- (2) provide necessary technical assistance to assist owners in complying with the terms and conditions of the easement and the plan.

(b) Cost-share and technical assistance**(1) Easements**

Effective beginning October 1, 1996, in making cost-share payments under subsection (a)(1) of this section, the Secretary shall—

(A) in the case of a permanent easement, pay the owner an amount that is not less than 75 percent, but not more than 100 percent, of the eligible costs; and

(B) in the case of a 30-year easement, pay the owner an amount that is not less than 50 percent, but not more than 75 percent, of the eligible costs.

(2) Restoration cost-share agreements

In making cost-share payments in connection with a restoration cost-share agreement entered into under section 3837a(h)¹ of this title, the Secretary shall pay the owner an amount that is not less than 50 percent, but not more than 75 percent, of the eligible costs.

(3) Technical assistance

The Secretary shall provide owners with technical assistance to assist owners in complying with the terms of easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

(c) Ranking of offers**(1) Conservation benefits and funding considerations**

When evaluating offers from landowners, the Secretary may consider—

(A) the conservation benefits of obtaining an easement or other interest in the land;

(B) the cost-effectiveness of each easement or other interest in eligible land, so as to maximize the environmental benefits per dollar expended; and

(C) whether the landowner or another person is offering to contribute financially to the cost of the easement or other interest in the land to leverage Federal funds.

(2) Additional considerations

In determining the acceptability of easement offers, the Secretary may take into consideration—

(A) the extent to which the purposes of the easement program would be achieved on the land;

(B) the productivity of the land; and

(C) the on-farm and off-farm environmental threats if the land is used for the production of agricultural commodities.

(d) Easement priority

In carrying out this subpart, to the extent practicable, taking into consideration costs and future agricultural and food needs, the Secretary shall give priority to obtaining permanent conservation easements before shorter term conservation easements and, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall place priority on acquiring easements based on the value of the easement for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237C, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104

Stat. 3587; amended Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §333(e), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 996; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2207, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1039; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2207, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1767.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 3837a(h) of this title, referred to in subsec. (b)(2), was repealed by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2203, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 252.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2207(1), inserted “including necessary maintenance activities,” after “values.”

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 110-246, §2207(2), added subsec. (c) and struck out former subsec. (c). Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “In determining the acceptability of easement offers, the Secretary may take into consideration—

“(1) the extent to which the purposes of the easement program would be achieved on the land;

“(2) the productivity of the land; and

“(3) the on-farm and off-farm environmental threats if the land is used for the production of agricultural commodities.”

1996—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104-127 added subsec. (b) and struck out heading and text of former subsec. (b). Text read as follows: “In making cost share payments under subsection (a)(1) of this section, the Secretary shall pay the owner an amount that is not less than 50 percent but not more than 75 percent of eligible costs with respect to an easement which is not permanent, and not less than 75 percent but not more than 100 percent of eligible costs with respect to a permanent easement.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

EFFECT OF 1996 AMENDMENTS ON EXISTING AGREEMENTS

Amendments made by section 333 of Pub. L. 104-127 not to affect validity or terms of agreements entered into by Secretary of Agriculture under this subpart before Apr. 4, 1996, or payments required to be made in connection with such agreements, see section 333(f) of Pub. L. 104-127, set out as a note under section 3837 of this title.

§ 3837d. Payments**(a) Time of payment**

The Secretary shall provide payment for obligations incurred by the Secretary under this subpart—

(1) with respect to any cost sharing obligation as soon as possible after the obligation is incurred; and

(2) with respect to any annual easement payment obligation incurred by the Secretary as soon as possible after October 1 of each calendar year.

(b) Payments to others

If an owner who is entitled to a payment under this subpart dies, becomes incompetent, is

¹ See References in Text note below.

otherwise unable to receive such payment, or is succeeded by another person who renders or completes the required performance, the Secretary shall make such payment, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary and without regard to any other provision of law, in such manner as the Secretary determines is fair and reasonable in light of all of the circumstances.

(c) Payment limitation

(1) In general

The total amount of payments that a person or legal entity may receive, directly or indirectly, under this subpart for any year may not exceed \$50,000, except such limitation shall not apply with respect to payments for perpetual or 30-year easements or under 30-year contracts.

(2) Regulations

The Secretary shall issue regulations prescribing such rules as the Secretary determines necessary to ensure a fair and reasonable application of the limitation contained in this subsection.

(3) Other payments

Easement payments received by an owner shall be in addition to, and not affect, the total amount of payments that such owner is otherwise eligible to receive under this Act, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, or the Agricultural Act of 1949 (7 U.S.C. 1421 et seq.).

(d) Exemption from automatic sequester

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no order issued under section 902 of title 2 shall affect any payment under this subpart.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237D, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3588; amended Pub. L. 105-277, div. A, §101(a) [title VII, §751], Oct. 21, 1998, 112 Stat. 2681, 2681-32; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§2208, 2209, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2208, 2209, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This Act, referred to in subsec. (c)(3), is Pub. L. 99-198, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1354, as amended, known as the Food Security Act of 1985. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1985 Amendment note set out under section 1281 of Title 7, Agriculture, and Tables.

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, referred to in subsec. (c)(3), is Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3359, as amended. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1990 Amendment note set out under section 1421 of Title 7 and Tables.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, referred to in subsec. (c)(3), is act Oct. 31, 1949, ch. 792, 63 Stat. 1051, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 35A (§1421 et seq.) of Title 7. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1421 of Title 7 and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2208, substituted “The total amount of payments that a person or legal entity may receive, directly or indirectly,” for “The total amount of easement payments made to a person” and inserted “or under 30-year contracts” before period at end.

Subsec. (c)(4). Pub. L. 110-246, §2209, struck out par. (4). Text read as follows: “The provisions of this subsection that limit payments to any person, and section 1305(d) of the Agricultural Reconciliation Act of 1987 (7 U.S.C. 1308 note), shall not be applicable to payments received by a State, political subdivision, or agency thereof in connection with agreements entered into under a special wetland and environmental easement enhancement program carried out by that entity that has been approved by the Secretary. The Secretary may enter into such agreements for payments to States, political subdivisions, or agencies thereof that the Secretary determines will advance the purposes of this subpart.”

1998—Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 105-277 inserted “or 30-year” after “perpetual”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3837e. Changes in ownership; agreement modification; termination

(a) Limitations

No easement shall be created under this subpart on land that has changed ownership during the preceding 7-year period unless—

(1) the new ownership was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous owner;

(2)(A) the ownership change occurred because of foreclosure on the land; and

(B) immediately before the foreclosure, the owner of the land exercises a right of redemption from the mortgage holder in accordance with State law; or

(3) the Secretary determines that the land was acquired under circumstances that give adequate assurances that such land was not acquired for the purposes of placing it in the program established by this subpart.

(b) Modification; termination

(1) Modification

The Secretary may modify an easement acquired from, or a related agreement with, an owner under this subpart if—

(A) the current owner agrees to such modification; and

(B) the Secretary determines that such modification is desirable—

(i) to carry out this subpart;

(ii) to facilitate the practical administration of this subpart; or

(iii) to achieve such other goals as the Secretary determines are appropriate and consistent with this subpart.

(2) Termination

(A) In general

The Secretary may terminate an easement created with an owner under this subpart if—

- (i) the current owner agrees to such termination; and
- (ii) the Secretary determines that such termination would be in the public interest.

(B) Notice

At least 90 days before taking any action to terminate under paragraph (A) all easements entered into under this subpart, the Secretary shall provide written notice of such action to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237E, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3589; amended Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2204, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 253; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2203(b), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1037; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2203(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1765.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 110-246, §2203(b), substituted “during the preceding 7-year period” for “in the preceding 12 months” in introductory provisions.

2002—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 107-171 added par. (2) and struck out former par. (2) which read as follows: “the new ownership was acquired before January 1, 1990; or”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3837f. Administration and funding**(a) Delegation of easement administration**

The Secretary may delegate any of the easement management, monitoring, and enforcement responsibilities of the Secretary to Federal or State agencies that have the appropriate authority, expertise, and resources necessary to carry out such delegated responsibilities.

(b) Regulations

Not later than 180 days after November 28, 1990, the Secretary shall issue such regulations as are necessary to carry out this subpart.

(c) Prairie Pothole Region survey and reallocation**(1) Survey**

The Secretary shall conduct a survey during fiscal year 2008 and each subsequent fiscal year for the purpose of determining interest and allocations for the Prairie Pothole Region to enroll eligible land described in section 3837(c)(2)(B) of this title.

(2) Annual adjustment

The Secretary shall make an adjustment to the allocation for an interested State for a fiscal year, based on the results of the survey conducted under paragraph (1) for the State during the previous fiscal year.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1237F, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1438, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3589; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2203(c), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1037; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2203(c), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1765.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 110-246, §2203(c), added subsec. (c).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

PART II—CONSERVATION SECURITY AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

SUBPART A—CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

§ 3838. Definitions

In this subpart:

(1) Base payment

The term “base payment” means an amount that is—

(A) determined in accordance with the rate described in section 3838c(b)(1)(A) of this title; and

(B) paid to a producer under a conservation security contract in accordance with clause (i) of subparagraph (C), (D), or (E) of section 3838c(b)(1) of this title, as appropriate.

(2) Beginning farmer or rancher

The term “beginning farmer or rancher” has the meaning given the term under section 1991(a) of title 7.

(3) Conservation practice

The term “conservation practice” means a conservation farming practice described in section 3838a(d)(4) of this title that—

(A) requires planning, implementation, management, and maintenance; and

(B) promotes 1 or more of the purposes described in section 3838a(a) of this title.

(4) Conservation security contract

The term “conservation security contract” means a contract described in section 3838a(e) of this title.

(5) Conservation security plan

The term “conservation security plan” means a plan described in section 3838a(c) of this title.

(6) Conservation security program

The term “conservation security program” means the program established under section 3838a(a) of this title.

(7) Enhanced payment

The term “enhanced payment” means the amount paid to a producer under a conserva-

tion security contract that is equal to the amount described in section 3838c(b)(1)(C)(iii) of this title.

(8) Nondegradation standard

The term “nondegradation standard” means the level of measures required to adequately protect, and prevent degradation of, 1 or more natural resources, as determined by the Secretary in accordance with the quality criteria described in handbooks of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(9) Producer

(A) In general

The term “producer” means an owner, operator, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper that—

- (i) shares in the risk of producing any crop or livestock; and
- (ii) is entitled to share in the crop or livestock available for marketing from a farm (or would have shared had the crop or livestock been produced).

(B) Hybrid seed growers

In determining whether a grower of hybrid seed is a producer, the Secretary shall not take into consideration the existence of a hybrid seed contract.

(10) Resource-conserving crop rotation

The term “resource-conserving crop rotation” means a crop rotation that—

- (A) includes at least 1 resource-conserving crop (as defined by the Secretary);
- (B) reduces erosion;
- (C) improves soil fertility and tilth;
- (D) interrupts pest cycles; and
- (E) in applicable areas, reduces depletion of soil moisture (or otherwise reduces the need for irrigation).

(11) Resource management system

The term “resource management system” means a system of conservation practices and management relating to land or water use that is designed to prevent resource degradation and permit sustained use of land, water, and other natural resources, as defined in accordance with the technical guide of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(12) Secretary

The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(13) Tier I conservation security contract

The term “Tier I conservation security contract” means a contract described in section 3838a(d)(5)(A) of this title.

(14) Tier II conservation security contract

The term “Tier II conservation security contract” means a contract described in section 3838a(d)(5)(B) of this title.

(15) Tier III conservation security contract

The term “Tier III conservation security contract” means a contract described in section 3838a(d)(5)(C) of this title.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2001(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 223.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3590, related to policy of Congress on water quality protection, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

REGULATIONS

Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2001(b), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 233, provided that: “Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this Act [May 13, 2002], the Secretary of Agriculture shall promulgate regulations implementing the amendment made by subsection (a) [enacting this subpart].”

§ 3838a. Conservation security program

(a) In general

The Secretary shall establish and, for each of fiscal years 2003 through 2011, carry out a conservation security program to assist producers of agricultural operations in promoting, as is applicable with respect to land to be enrolled in the program, conservation and improvement of the quality of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and any other conservation purposes, as determined by the Secretary.

(b) Eligibility

(1) Eligible producers

To be eligible to participate in the conservation security program (other than to receive technical assistance under section 3838c(g) of this title for the development of conservation security contracts), a producer shall—

(A) develop and submit to the Secretary, and obtain the approval of the Secretary of, a conservation security plan that meets the requirements of subsection (c)(1) of this section; and

(B) enter into a conservation security contract with the Secretary to carry out the conservation security plan.

(2) Eligible land

Except as provided in paragraph (3), private agricultural land (including cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture land, and rangeland), land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe (as defined by the Secretary), and forested land that is an incidental part of an agricultural operation shall be eligible for enrollment in the conservation security program.

(3) Exclusions

(A) Conservation reserve program

Land enrolled in the conservation reserve program under subpart B of part I of this subchapter shall not be eligible for enrollment in the conservation security program.

(B) Wetlands reserve program

Land enrolled in the wetlands reserve program established under subpart C of part I of this subchapter shall not be eligible for enrollment in the conservation security program.

(C) Grassland reserve program

Land enrolled in the grassland reserve program established under subpart D of this part shall not be eligible for enrollment in the conservation security program.

(D) Conversion to cropland

Land that is used for crop production after May 13, 2002, that had not been planted, considered to be planted, or devoted to crop production for at least 4 of the 6 years preceding May 13, 2002 (except for land enrolled in the conservation reserve program under subpart B of part I of this subchapter) or that has been maintained using long-term crop rotation practices, as determined by the Secretary, shall not be the basis for any payment under the conservation security program.

(4) Economic uses

The Secretary shall permit a producer to implement, with respect to all eligible land covered by a conservation security plan, economic uses that—

- (A) maintain the agricultural nature of the land; and
- (B) are consistent with the natural resource and conservation objectives of the conservation security program.

(c) Conservation security plans**(1) In general**

A conservation security plan shall—

- (A) identify the designated land and resources to be conserved under the conservation security plan;
- (B) describe the tier of conservation security contract, and the particular conservation practices to be implemented, maintained, or improved, in accordance with subsection (d) of this section on the land covered by the conservation security contract for the specified term; and
- (C) contain a schedule for the implementation, maintenance, or improvement of the conservation practices described in the conservation security plan during the term of the conservation security contract.

(2) Resource planning

The Secretary may assist producers that enter into conservation security contracts in developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy for improving and maintaining all natural resources of the agricultural operation of the producer.

(d) Conservation contracts and practices**(1) In general****(A) Establishment of tiers**

The Secretary shall establish, and offer to eligible producers, 3 tiers of conservation contracts under which a payment under this subpart may be received.

(B) Eligible conservation practices**(i) In general**

The Secretary shall make eligible for payment under a conservation security contract land management, vegetative, and structural practices.

(ii) Determination

In determining the eligibility of a practice described in clause (i), the Secretary shall require, to the maximum extent

practicable, that the lowest cost alternatives be used to fulfill the purposes of the conservation security plan, as determined by the Secretary.

(2) On-farm research and demonstration or pilot testing

With respect to land enrolled in the conservation security program, the Secretary may approve a conservation security plan that includes—

- (A) on-farm conservation research and demonstration activities; and
- (B) pilot testing of new technologies or innovative conservation practices.

(3) Use of handbook and guides; State and local conservation concerns**(A) Use of handbook and guides**

In determining eligible conservation practices and the criteria for implementing or maintaining the conservation practices under the conservation security program, the Secretary shall use the National Handbook of Conservation Practices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(B) State and local conservation priorities

The conservation priorities of a State or locality in which an agricultural operation is situated shall be determined by the State Conservationist, in consultation with—

- (i) the State technical committee established under subchapter VI of this chapter; and
- (ii) local agricultural producers and conservation working groups.

(4) Conservation practices

Conservation practices that may be implemented by a producer under a conservation security contract (as appropriate for the agricultural operation of a producer) include—

- (A) nutrient management;
- (B) integrated pest management;
- (C) water conservation (including through irrigation) and water quality management;
- (D) grazing, pasture, and rangeland management;
- (E) soil conservation, quality, and residue management;
- (F) invasive species management;
- (G) fish and wildlife habitat conservation, restoration, and management;
- (H) air quality management;
- (I) energy conservation measures;
- (J) biological resource conservation and regeneration;
- (K) contour farming;
- (L) strip cropping;
- (M) cover cropping;
- (N) controlled rotational grazing;
- (O) resource-conserving crop rotation;
- (P) conversion of portions of cropland from a soil-depleting use to a soil-conserving use, including production of cover crops;
- (Q) partial field conservation practices;
- (R) native grassland and prairie protection and restoration; and
- (S) any other conservation practices that the Secretary determines to be appropriate and comparable to other conservation practices described in this paragraph.

(5) Tiers

Subject to paragraph (6), to carry out this subsection, the Secretary shall establish the following 3 tiers of conservation contracts:

(A) Tier I conservation security contracts

A conservation security plan for land enrolled under a Tier I conservation security contract shall—

- (i) be for a period of 5 years; and
- (ii) include conservation practices appropriate for the agricultural operation, that, at a minimum (as determined by the Secretary)—

(I) address at least 1 significant resource of concern for the enrolled portion of the agricultural operation at a level that meets the appropriate nondegradation standard; and

(II) cover active management of conservation practices that are implemented or maintained under the conservation security contract.

(B) Tier II conservation security contracts

A conservation security plan for land enrolled under a Tier II conservation security contract shall—

- (i) be for a period of not less than 5 nor more than 10 years, as determined by the producer;

(ii) include conservation practices appropriate for the agricultural operation, that, at a minimum—

(I) address at least 1 significant resource of concern for the entire agricultural operation, as determined by the Secretary, at a level that meets the appropriate nondegradation standard; and

(II) cover active management of conservation practices that are implemented or maintained under the conservation security contract.

(C) Tier III conservation security contracts

A conservation security plan for land enrolled under a Tier III conservation security contract shall—

- (i) be for a period of not less than 5 nor more than 10 years, as determined by the producer; and

(ii) include conservation practices appropriate for the agricultural operation that, at a minimum—

(I) apply a resource management system that meets the appropriate nondegradation standard for all resources of concern of the entire agricultural operation, as determined by the Secretary; and

(II) cover active management of conservation practices that are implemented or maintained under the conservation security contract.

(6) Minimum requirements

The minimum requirements for each tier of conservation contracts implemented under paragraph (5) shall be determined and approved by the Secretary.

(e) Conservation security contracts**(1) In general**

On approval of a conservation security plan of a producer, the Secretary shall enter into a

conservation security contract with the producer to enroll the land covered by the conservation security plan in the conservation security program.

(2) Modification**(A) Optional modifications**

A producer may apply to the Secretary for a modification of the conservation security contract of the producer that is consistent with the purposes of the conservation security program.

(B) Other modifications**(i) In general**

The Secretary may, in writing, require a producer to modify a conservation security contract before the expiration of the conservation security contract if the Secretary determines that a change made to the type, size, management, or other aspect of the agricultural operation of the producer would, without the modification of the contract, significantly interfere with achieving the purposes of the conservation security program.

(ii) Participation in other programs

If appropriate payment reductions and other adjustments (as determined by the Secretary) are made to the conservation security contract of a producer, the producer may—

(I) simultaneously participate in—

(aa) the conservation security program;

(bb) the conservation reserve program under subpart B of part I of this subchapter; and

(cc) the wetlands reserve program under subpart C of part I of this subchapter; and

(II) may remove land enrolled in the conservation security program for enrollment in a program described in item (bb) or (cc) of subclause (I).

(3) Termination**(A) Optional termination**

A producer may terminate a conservation security contract and retain payments received under the conservation security contract, if—

(i) the producer is in full compliance with the terms and conditions (including any maintenance requirements) of the conservation security contract as of the date of the termination; and

(ii) the Secretary determines that termination of the contract would not defeat the purposes of the conservation security plan of the producer.

(B) Other termination

A producer that is required to modify a conservation security contract under paragraph (2)(B)(i) may, in lieu of modifying the contract—

(i) terminate the conservation security contract; and

(ii) retain payments received under the conservation security contract, if the pro-

ducer has fully complied with the terms and conditions of the conservation security contract before termination of the contract, as determined by the Secretary.

(4) Renewal

(A) In general

Except as provided in subparagraph (B), at the option of a producer, the conservation security contract of the producer may be renewed for an additional period of not less than 5 nor more than 10 years.

(B) Tier I renewals

In the case of a Tier I conservation security contract of a producer, the producer may renew the contract only if the producer agrees—

(i) to apply additional conservation practices that meet the nondegradation standard on land already enrolled in the conservation security program; or

(ii) to adopt new conservation practices with respect to another portion of the agricultural operation that address resource concerns and meet the nondegradation standard under the terms of the Tier I conservation security contract.

(f) Noncompliance due to circumstances beyond the control of producers

The Secretary shall include in the conservation security contract a provision, and may permit modification of a conservation security contract under subsection (e)(1) of this section, to ensure that a producer shall not be considered in violation of a conservation security contract for failure to comply with the conservation security contract due to circumstances beyond the control of the producer, including a disaster or related condition, as determined by the Secretary.

(g) Prohibition on conservation security program contracts; effect on existing contracts

(1) Prohibition

A conservation security contract may not be entered into or renewed under this subpart after September 30, 2008.

(2) Exception

This subpart, and the terms and conditions of the conservation security program, shall continue to apply to—

(A) conservation security contracts entered into on or before September 30, 2008; and

(B) any conservation security contract entered into after that date, but for which the application for the contract was received during the 2008 sign-up period.

(3) Effect on payments

The Secretary shall make payments under this subpart with respect to conservation security contracts described in paragraph (2) during the remaining term of the contracts.

(4) Regulations

A contract described in paragraph (2) may not be administered under the regulations issued to carry out the conservation stewardship program.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238A, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2001(a), May 13, 2002, 116

Stat. 225; amended Pub. L. 109-171, title I, §1202(a), Feb. 8, 2006, 120 Stat. 5; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(b), (c), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1047, 1048; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(b), (c), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1775, 1776.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838a, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238A, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3590, defined terms for purposes of this part, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b)(3)(C). Pub. L. 110-246, §2301(c), substituted “subpart D” for “subpart C”.

Subsec. (g). Pub. L. 110-246, §2301(b), added subsec. (g). 2006—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 109-171 substituted “2011” for “2007”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838b. Duties of producers

Under a conservation security contract, a producer shall agree, during the term of the conservation security contract—

(1) to implement the applicable conservation security plan approved by the Secretary;

(2) to maintain, and make available to the Secretary at such times as the Secretary may request, appropriate records showing the effective and timely implementation of the conservation security plan;

(3) not to engage in any activity that would interfere with the purposes of the conservation security program; and

(4) on the violation of a term or condition of the conservation security contract—

(A) if the Secretary determines that the violation warrants termination of the conservation security contract—

(i) to forfeit all rights to receive payments under the conservation security contract; and

(ii) to refund to the Secretary all or a portion of the payments received by the producer under the conservation security contract, including any advance payments and interest on the payments, as determined by the Secretary; or

(B) if the Secretary determines that the violation does not warrant termination of the conservation security contract, to refund to the Secretary, or accept adjustments to, the payments provided to the producer, as the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238B, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2001(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 230.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838b, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238B, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990,

104 Stat. 3590, directed Secretary to formulate and carry out agricultural water quality protection program, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

§ 3838c. Duties of the Secretary

(a) Timing of payments

The Secretary shall make payments under a conservation security contract as soon as practicable after October 1 of each fiscal year.

(b) Annual payments

(1) Criteria for determining amount of payments

(A) Base payment

A base payment under this paragraph shall be (as determined by the Secretary)—

- (i) the average national per-acre rental rate for a specific land use during the 2001 crop year; or
- (ii) another appropriate rate for the 2001 crop year that ensures regional equity.

(B) Payments

A payment for a conservation practice under this paragraph shall be determined in accordance with subparagraphs (C) through (E).

(C) Tier I conservation security contracts

The payment for a Tier I conservation security contract shall consist of the total of the following amounts:

- (i) An amount equal to 5 percent of the applicable base payment for land covered by the contract.
- (ii) An amount that does not exceed 75 percent (or, in the case of a beginning farmer or rancher, 90 percent) of the average county costs of practices for the 2001 crop year that are included in the conservation security contract, as determined by the Secretary, including the costs of—
 - (I) the adoption of new management, vegetative, and land-based structural practices;
 - (II) the maintenance of existing land management and vegetative practices; and
 - (III) the maintenance of existing land-based structural practices that are approved by the Secretary but not already covered by a Federal or State maintenance requirement.

(iii) An enhanced payment that is determined by the Secretary in a manner that ensures equity across regions of the United States, if the producer—

- (I) implements or maintains multiple conservation practices that exceed minimum requirements for the applicable tier of participation (including practices that involve a change in land use, such as resource-conserving crop rotation, managed rotational grazing, or conservation buffer practices);
- (II) addresses local conservation priorities in addition to resources of concern for the agricultural operation;
- (III) participates in an on-farm conservation research, demonstration, or pilot project;

(IV) participates in a watershed or regional resource conservation plan that involves at least 75 percent of producers in a targeted area; or

(V) carries out assessment and evaluation activities relating to practices included in a conservation security plan.

(D) Tier II conservation security contracts

The payment for a Tier II conservation security contract shall consist of the total of the following amounts:

- (i) An amount equal to 10 percent of the applicable base payment for land covered by the conservation security contract.
- (ii) An amount that does not exceed 75 percent (or, in the case of a beginning farmer or rancher, 90 percent) of the average county cost of adopting or maintaining practices for the 2001 crop year that are included in the conservation security contract, as described in subparagraph (C)(ii).
- (iii) An enhanced payment that is determined in accordance with subparagraph (C)(iii).

(E) Tier III conservation security contracts

The payment for a Tier III conservation security contract shall consist of the total of the following amounts:

- (i) An amount equal to 15 percent of the base payment for land covered by the conservation security contract.
- (ii) An amount that does not exceed 75 percent (or, in the case of a beginning farmer or rancher, 90 percent) of the average county cost of adopting or maintaining practices for the 2001 crop year that are included in the conservation security contract, as described in subparagraph (C)(ii).
- (iii) An enhanced payment that is determined in accordance with subparagraph (C)(iii).

(2) Limitation on payments

(A) In general

Subject to paragraphs (1) and (3), the Secretary shall make an annual payment, directly or indirectly, to an individual or entity covered by a conservation security contract in an amount not to exceed—

- (i) in the case of a Tier I conservation security contract, \$20,000;
- (ii) in the case of a Tier II conservation security contract, \$35,000; or
- (iii) in the case of a Tier III conservation security contract, \$45,000.

(B) Limitation on base payments

In applying the payment limitation under each of clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A), an individual or entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments described in clause (i) of paragraph (1)(C), (1)(D), or (1)(E), as appropriate, in an amount that exceeds—

- (i) in the case of Tier I contracts, 25 percent of the applicable payment limitation; or
- (ii) in the case of Tier II contracts and Tier III contracts, 30 percent of the applicable payment limitation.

(C) Other USDA payments

A producer shall not receive payments under the conservation security program and any other conservation program administered by the Secretary for the same practices on the same land.

(D) Commensurate share

To be eligible to receive a payment under this subpart, an individual or entity shall make contributions (including contributions of land, labor, management, equipment, or capital) to the operation of the farm that are at least commensurate with the share of the proceeds of the operation of the individual or entity.

(3) Equipment or facilities

A payment to a producer under this subpart shall not be provided for—

(A) construction or maintenance of animal waste storage or treatment facilities or associated waste transport or transfer devices for animal feeding operations; or

(B) the purchase or maintenance of equipment or a non-land based structure that is not integral to a land-based practice, as determined by the Secretary.

(c) Minimum practice requirement

In determining a payment under subsection (b) of this section for a producer that receives a payment under another program administered by the Secretary that is contingent on complying with requirements under subchapter II or III of this chapter (relating to the use of highly erodible land or wetland), a payment under this subpart on land subject to those requirements shall be for practices only to the extent that the practices exceed minimum requirements for the producer under those subchapters, as determined by the Secretary.

(d) Regulations

The Secretary shall promulgate regulations that—

(1) provide for adequate safeguards to protect the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including provision for sharing payments, on a fair and equitable basis; and

(2) prescribe such other rules as the Secretary determines to be necessary to ensure a fair and reasonable application of the limitations established under subsection (b) of this section.

(e) Transfer or change of interest in land subject to conservation security contract**(1) In general**

Except as provided in paragraph (2), the transfer, or change in the interest, of a producer in land subject to a conservation security contract shall result in the termination of the conservation security contract.

(2) Transfer of duties and rights

Paragraph (1) shall not apply if, not later than 60 days after the date of the transfer or change in the interest in land, the transferee of the land provides written notice to the Secretary that all duties and rights under the conservation security contract have been transferred to, and assumed by, the transferee.

(f) Enrollment procedure

In entering into conservation security contracts with producers under this subpart, the Secretary shall not use competitive bidding or any similar procedure.

(g) Technical assistance

For each of fiscal years 2003 through 2007, the Secretary shall provide technical assistance to producers for the development and implementation of conservation security contracts, in an amount not to exceed 15 percent of amounts expended for the fiscal year.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238C, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2001(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 230.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838c, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238C, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3594, related to lands eligible for enrollment in water quality protection program, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

SUBPART B—CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior subpart B, consisting of sections 3838h to 3838j, was redesignated subpart C of this part by Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(1), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(1), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768.

§ 3838d. Definitions

In this subpart:

(1) Conservation activities**(A) In general**

The term “conservation activities” means conservation systems, practices, or management measures that are designed to address a resource concern.

(B) Inclusions

The term “conservation activities” includes—

(i) structural measures, vegetative measures, and land management measures, including agriculture drainage management systems, as determined by the Secretary; and

(ii) planning needed to address a resource concern.

(2) Conservation measurement tools

The term “conservation measurement tools” means procedures to estimate the level of environmental benefit to be achieved by a producer in implementing conservation activities, including indices or other measures developed by the Secretary.

(3) Conservation stewardship plan

The term “conservation stewardship plan” means a plan that—

(A) identifies and inventories resource concerns;

(B) establishes benchmark data and conservation objectives;

(C) describes conservation activities to be implemented, managed, or improved; and

(D) includes a schedule and evaluation plan for the planning, installation, and management of the new and existing conservation activities.

(4) Priority resource concern

The term “priority resource concern” means a resource concern that is identified at the State level, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, as a priority for a particular watershed or area of the State.

(5) Program

The term “program” means the conservation stewardship program established by this subpart.

(6) Resource concern

The term “resource concern” means a specific natural resource impairment or problem, as determined by the Secretary, that—

(A) represents a significant concern in a State or region; and

(B) is likely to be addressed successfully through the implementation of conservation activities by producers on land eligible for enrollment in the program.

(7) Stewardship threshold

The term “stewardship threshold” means the level of natural resource conservation and environmental management required, as determined by the Secretary using conservation measurement tools, to improve and conserve the quality and condition of a resource concern.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238D, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838d, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238D, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3595, related to technical assistance for water quality protection, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Enactment of this subpart and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838e. Conservation stewardship program

(a) Establishment and purpose

During each of fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the Secretary shall carry out a conservation stewardship program to encourage producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner—

(1) by undertaking additional conservation activities; and

(2) by improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities.

(b) Eligible land

(1) In general

Except as provided in subsection (c), the following land is eligible for enrollment in the program:

(A) Private agricultural land (including cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, and land used for agro-forestry).

(B) Agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

(C) Forested land that is an incidental part of an agricultural operation.

(D) Other private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed by enrolling the land in the program, as determined by the Secretary.

(2) Special rule for nonindustrial private forest land

Nonindustrial private forest land is eligible for enrollment in the program, except that not more than 10 percent of the annual acres enrolled nationally in any fiscal year may be nonindustrial private forest land.

(3) Agricultural operation

Eligible land shall include all acres of an agricultural operation of a producer, whether or not contiguous, that are under the effective control of the producer at the time the producer enters into a stewardship contract, and is operated by the producer with equipment, labor, management, and production or cultivation practices that are substantially separate from other agricultural operations, as determined by the Secretary.

(c) Exclusions

(1) Land enrolled in other conservation programs

Subject to paragraph (2), the following land is not be¹ eligible for enrollment in the program:

(A) Land enrolled in the conservation reserve program.

(B) Land enrolled in the wetlands reserve program.

(C) Land enrolled in the grassland reserve program.

(2) Conversion to cropland

Land used for crop production after the date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 that had not been planted, considered to be planted, or devoted to crop production for at least 4 of the 6 years preceding that date shall not be the basis for any payment under the program, unless the land does not meet the requirement because—

(A) the land had previously been enrolled in the conservation reserve program;

(B) the land has been maintained using long-term crop rotation practices, as determined by the Secretary; or

(C) the land is incidental land needed for efficient operation of the farm or ranch, as determined by the Secretary.

¹ So in original. The word “be” probably should not appear.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238E, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1041, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1769; amended Pub. L. 112-55, div. A, title VII, §716(b), Nov. 18, 2011, 125 Stat. 582.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, referred to in subsec. (c)(2), is the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-246, which was approved June 18, 2008.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838e, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238E, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3596, related to demonstration and pilot programs, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

AMENDMENTS

2011—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 112-55 substituted “2014” for “2012”.

§ 3838f. Stewardship contracts

(a) Submission of contract offers

To be eligible to participate in the conservation stewardship program, a producer shall submit to the Secretary for approval a contract offer that—

(1) demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that the producer, at the time of the contract offer, is meeting the stewardship threshold for at least one resource concern; and

(2) would, at a minimum, meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least 1 priority resource concern by the end of the stewardship contract by—

(A) installing and adopting additional conservation activities; and

(B) improving, maintaining, and managing conservation activities in place at the operation of the producer at the time the contract offer is accepted by the Secretary.

(b) Evaluation of contract offers

(1) Ranking of applications

In evaluating contract offers made by producers to enter into contracts under the program, the Secretary shall rank applications based on—

(A) the level of conservation treatment on all applicable priority resource concerns at the time of application, based to the maximum extent practicable on conservation measurement tools;

(B) the degree to which the proposed conservation treatment on applicable priority resource concerns effectively increases conservation performance, based to the maximum extent possible on conservation measurement tools;

(C) the number of applicable priority resource concerns proposed to be treated to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold by the end of the contract;

(D) the extent to which other resource concerns, in addition to priority resource concerns, will be addressed to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold by the end of the contract period; and

(E) the extent to which the actual and anticipated environmental benefits from the contract are provided at the least cost relative to other similarly beneficial contract offers.

(2) Prohibition

The Secretary may not assign a higher priority to any application because the applicant is willing to accept a lower payment than the applicant would otherwise be eligible to receive.

(3) Additional criteria

The Secretary may develop and use such additional criteria for evaluating applications to enroll in the program that the Secretary determines are necessary to ensure that national, State, and local conservation priorities are effectively addressed.

(c) Entering into contracts

After a determination that a producer is eligible for the program under subsection (a), and a determination that the contract offer ranks sufficiently high under the evaluation criteria under subsection (b), the Secretary shall enter into a conservation stewardship contract with the producer to enroll the land to be covered by the contract.

(d) Contract provisions

(1) Term

A conservation stewardship contract shall be for a term of 5 years.

(2) Provisions

The conservation stewardship contract of a producer shall—

(A) state the amount of the payment the Secretary agrees to make to the producer for each year of the conservation stewardship contract under section 3838g(e) of this title;

(B) require the producer—

(i) to implement during the term of the conservation stewardship contract the conservation stewardship plan approved by the Secretary;

(ii) to maintain, and make available to the Secretary at such times as the Secretary may request, appropriate records showing the effective and timely implementation of the conservation stewardship contract; and

(iii) not to engage in any activity during the term of the conservation stewardship contract on the eligible land covered by the contract that would interfere with the purposes of the conservation stewardship contract;

(C) permit all economic uses of the land that—

(i) maintain the agricultural nature of the land; and

(ii) are consistent with the conservation purposes of the conservation stewardship contract;

(D) include a provision to ensure that a producer shall not be considered in violation of the contract for failure to comply with the contract due to circumstances beyond the control of the producer, including a disaster or related condition, as determined by the Secretary; and

(E) include such other provisions as the Secretary determines necessary to ensure the purposes of the program are achieved.

(e) Contract renewal

At the end of an initial conservation stewardship contract of a producer, the Secretary may allow the producer to renew the contract for one additional five-year period if the producer—

- (1) demonstrates compliance with the terms of the existing contract; and
- (2) agrees to adopt new conservation activities, as determined by the Secretary.

(f) Modification

The Secretary may allow a producer to modify a stewardship contract if the Secretary determines that the modification is consistent with achieving the purposes of the program.

(g) Contract termination

(1) Voluntary termination

A producer may terminate a conservation stewardship contract if the Secretary determines that termination would not defeat the purposes of the program.

(2) Involuntary termination

The Secretary may terminate a contract under this subpart if the Secretary determines that the producer violated the contract.

(3) Repayment

If a contract is terminated, the Secretary may, consistent with the purposes of the program—

- (A) allow the producer to retain payments already received under the contract; or
- (B) require repayment, in whole or in part, of payments already received and assess liquidated damages.

(4) Change of interest in land subject to a contract

(A) In general

Except as provided in paragraph (B), a change in the interest of a producer in land covered by a contract under this part shall result in the termination of the contract with regard to that land.

(B) Transfer of duties and rights

Subparagraph (A) shall not apply if—

- (i) within a reasonable period of time (as determined by the Secretary) after the date of the change in the interest in land covered by a contract under the program, the transferee of the land provides written notice to the Secretary that all duties and rights under the contract have been transferred to, and assumed by, the transferee; and
- (ii) the transferee meets the eligibility requirements of the program.

(h) Coordination with organic certification

The Secretary shall establish a transparent means by which producers may initiate organic

certification under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et. seq.) while participating in a contract under this subpart.

(i) On-farm research and demonstration or pilot testing

The Secretary may approve a contract offer under this subpart that includes—

- (1) on-farm conservation research and demonstration activities; and
- (2) pilot testing of new technologies or innovative conservation practices.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238F, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1042, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1770.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, referred to in subsec. (h), is title XXI of Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3935, which is classified generally to chapter 94 (§6501 et seq.) of Title 7, Agriculture. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 6501 of Title 7 and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3838f, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238F, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1439, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3596, related to report to Congress, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §336(h), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007.

§ 3838g. Duties of the Secretary

(a) In general

To achieve the conservation goals of a contract under the conservation stewardship program, the Secretary shall—

- (1) make the program available to eligible producers on a continuous enrollment basis with 1 or more ranking periods, one of which shall occur in the first quarter of each fiscal year;
- (2) identify not less than 3 nor more than 5 priority resource concerns in a particular watershed or other appropriate region or area within a State; and
- (3) develop reliable conservation measurement tools for purposes of carrying out the program.

(b) Allocation to States

The Secretary shall allocate acres to States for enrollment, based—

- (1) primarily on each State's proportion of eligible acres under section 3838e(b)(1) of this title to the total number of eligible acres in all States; and
- (2) also on consideration of—
 - (A) the extent and magnitude of the conservation needs associated with agricultural production in each State;
 - (B) the degree to which implementation of the program in the State is, or will be, effective in helping producers address those needs; and
 - (C) other considerations to achieve equitable geographic distribution of funds, as determined by the Secretary.

(c) Specialty crop and organic producers

The Secretary shall ensure that outreach and technical assistance are available, and program specifications are appropriate to enable specialty crop and organic producers to participate in the program.

(d) Acreage enrollment limitation

During the period beginning on October 1, 2008, and ending on September 30, 2017, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable—

- (1) enroll in the program an additional 12,769,000 acres for each fiscal year; and
- (2) manage the program to achieve a national average rate of \$18 per acre, which shall include the costs of all financial assistance, technical assistance, and any other expenses associated with enrollment or participation in the program.

(e) Conservation stewardship payments**(1) Availability of payments**

The Secretary shall provide a payment under the program to compensate the producer for—

- (A) installing and adopting additional conservation activities; and
- (B) improving, maintaining, and managing conservation activities in place at the operation of the producer at the time the contract offer is accepted by the Secretary.

(2) Payment amount

The amount of the conservation stewardship payment shall be determined by the Secretary and based, to the maximum extent practicable, on the following factors:

- (A) Costs incurred by the producer associated with planning, design, materials, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training.
- (B) Income forgone by the producer.
- (C) Expected environmental benefits as determined by conservation measurement tools.

(3) Exclusions

A payment to a producer under this subsection shall not be provided for—

- (A) the design, construction, or maintenance of animal waste storage or treatment facilities or associated waste transport or transfer devices for animal feeding operations; or
- (B) conservation activities for which there is no cost incurred or income forgone to the producer.

(4) Timing of payments**(A) In general**

The Secretary shall make payments as soon as practicable after October 1 of each fiscal year for activities carried out in the previous fiscal year.

(B) Additional activities

The Secretary shall make payments to compensate producers for installation of additional practices at the time at which the practices are installed and adopted.

(f) Supplemental payments for resource-conserving crop rotations**(1) Availability of payments**

The Secretary shall provide additional payments to producers that, in participating in the program, agree to adopt resource-conserving crop rotations to achieve beneficial crop rotations as appropriate for the land of the producers.

(2) Beneficial crop rotations

The Secretary shall determine whether a resource-conserving crop rotation is a beneficial crop rotation eligible for additional payments under paragraph (1), based on whether the resource-conserving crop rotation is designed to provide natural resource conservation and production benefits.

(3) Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a payment described in paragraph (1), a producer shall agree to adopt and maintain beneficial resource-conserving crop rotations for the term of the contract.

(4) Resource-conserving crop rotation

In this subsection, the term “resource-conserving crop rotation” means a crop rotation that—

- (A) includes at least 1 resource conserving crop (as defined by the Secretary);
- (B) reduces erosion;
- (C) improves soil fertility and tilth;
- (D) interrupts pest cycles; and
- (E) in applicable areas, reduces depletion of soil moisture or otherwise reduces the need for irrigation.

(g) Payment limitations

A person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments under this subpart that, in the aggregate, exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into during any 5-year period, excluding funding arrangements with federally recognized Indian tribes or Alaska Native corporations, regardless of the number of contracts entered into under the program by the person or entity.

(h) Regulations

The Secretary shall promulgate regulations that—

- (1) prescribe such other rules as the Secretary determines to be necessary to ensure a fair and reasonable application of the limitations established under subsection (g); and
- (2) otherwise enable the Secretary to carry out the program.

(i) Data

The Secretary shall maintain detailed and segmented data on contracts and payments under the program to allow for quantification of the amount of payments made for—

- (1) the installation and adoption of additional conservation activities and improvements to conservation activities in place on the operation of a producer at the time the conservation stewardship offer is accepted by the Secretary;
- (2) participation in research, demonstration, and pilot projects; and

(3) the development and periodic assessment and evaluation of conservation plans developed under this subpart.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238G, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(2), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1045, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(2), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1773.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

SUBPART C—FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(1), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(1), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768, both redesignated subpart B of this part as subpart C. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234.

Section 2503(a) of Pub. L. 107-171, which directed that subchapter B (this subpart) be added at the end of chapter 2 of the Food Security Act of 1985, was executed by adding subchapter B after subchapter A of chapter 2 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (subpart A of this part) to reflect the probable intent of Congress and a prior amendment by section 2401 of Pub. L. 107-171, which had added subchapter C (subpart C of this part) at the end of chapter 2 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior subpart C, consisting of sections 3838n to 3838q, was redesignated subpart D of this part by Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2301(a)(1), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2301(a)(1), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768.

§ 3838h. Definitions

In this subpart:

(1) Eligible entity

The term “eligible entity” means—

(A) any agency of any State or local government or an Indian tribe (including a farmland protection board or land resource council established under State law); or

(B) any organization that—

(i) is organized for, and at all times since the formation of the organization has been operated principally for, 1 or more of the conservation purposes specified in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of section 170(h)(4)(A) of title 26;

(ii) is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of that title that is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of that title; and

(iii) is—

(I) described in paragraph (1) or (2) of section 509(a) of that title; or

(II) described in section 509(a)(3), and is controlled by an organization described in section 509(a)(2), of that title.

(2) Eligible land

(A) In general

The term “eligible land” means land on a farm or ranch that is subject to a pending offer for purchase from an eligible entity and—

(i) has prime, unique, or other productive soil;

(ii) contains historical or archaeological resources; or

(iii) the protection of which will further a State or local policy consistent with the purposes of the program.

(B) Inclusions

The term “eligible land” includes, on a farm or ranch—

(i) cropland;

(ii) rangeland;

(iii) grassland;

(iv) pasture land;

(v) forest land that—

(I) contributes to the economic viability of an agricultural operation; or

(II) serves as a buffer to protect an agricultural operation from development; and

(vi) land that is incidental to land described in clauses (i) through (v), if such land is necessary for the efficient administration of a conservation easement, as determined by the Secretary.

(3) Indian tribe

The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given the term in section 450b of title 25.

(4) Program

The term “program” means the farmland protection program established under section 3838i(a) of this title.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238H, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2503(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 267; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2401(a), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1048; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2401(a), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1776.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Par. (1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2401(a)(1), added par. (1) and struck out former par. (1). Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(A) any agency of any State or local government or an Indian tribe (including a farmland protection board or land resource council established under State law); or

“(B) any organization that—

“(i) is organized for, and at all times since the formation of the organization has been operated principally for, 1 or more of the conservation purposes specified in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of section 170(h)(4)(A) of title 26;

“(ii) is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of that title that is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of that title;

“(iii) is described in section 509(a)(2) of that title;

or

“(iv) is described in section 509(a)(3), and is controlled by an organization described in section 509(a)(2), of that title.”

Par. (2)(A). Pub. L. 110-246, §2401(a)(2)(A)(i), substituted “that is subject to a pending offer for purchase from an eligible entity and—” for “that—” in introductory provisions.

Par. (2)(A)(i) to (iii). Pub. L. 110-246, §2401(a)(2)(A)(ii), added cls. (i) to (iii) and struck out former cls. (i) and (ii) which read as follows:

“(i)(I) has prime, unique, or other productive soil; or
 “(II) contains historical or archaeological resources;
 and
 “(ii) is subject to a pending offer for purchase from an eligible entity.”

Par. (2)(B)(iv) to (vi). Pub. L. 110-246, §2401(a)(2)(B), added cls. (v) and (vi) and struck out former cl. (v) which read as follows: “forest land that is an incidental part of an agricultural operation, as determined by the Secretary.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838i. Farmland protection program

(a) Establishment

The Secretary shall establish and carry out a farmland protection program under which the Secretary shall facilitate and provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements or other interests in eligible land.

(b) Purpose

The purpose of the program is to protect the agricultural use and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land.

(c) Cost-share assistance

(1) Provision of assistance

The Secretary shall provide cost-share assistance to eligible entities for purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land.

(2) Federal share

The share of the cost provided by the Secretary for purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land shall not exceed 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement or other interest in eligible land.

(3) Non-Federal share

(A) Share provided by eligible entity

The eligible entity shall provide a share of the cost of purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land in an amount that is not less than 25 percent of the acquisition purchase price.

(B) Landowner contribution

As part of the non-Federal share of the cost of purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land, an eligible entity may include a charitable donation or qualified conservation contribution (as defined by section 170(h) of title 26) from the private landowner from which the conservation easement or other interest in land will be purchased.

(d) Determination of fair market value

Effective on the date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, the fair market value of the conservation easement or other interest in eligible land shall be deter-

mined on the basis of an appraisal using an industry approved method, selected by the eligible entity and approved by the Secretary.

(e) Bidding down prohibited

If the Secretary determines that 2 or more applications for cost-share assistance are comparable in achieving the purpose of the program, the Secretary shall not assign a higher priority to any 1 of those applications solely on the basis of lesser cost to the program.

(f) Condition on assistance

(1) Conservation plan

Any highly erodible cropland for which a conservation easement or other interest is purchased using cost-share assistance provided under the program shall be subject to a conservation plan that requires, at the option of the Secretary, the conversion of the cropland to less intensive uses.

(2) Contingent right of enforcement

The Secretary shall require the inclusion of a contingent right of enforcement for the Secretary in the terms of a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land that is purchased using cost-share assistance provided under the program.

(g) Agreements with eligible entities

(1) In general

The Secretary shall enter into agreements with eligible entities to stipulate the terms and conditions under which the eligible entity is permitted to use cost-share assistance provided under subsection (c).

(2) Length of agreements

An agreement under this subsection shall be for a term that is—

(A) in the case of an eligible entity certified under the process described in subsection (h), a minimum of five years; and

(B) for all other eligible entities, at least three, but not more than five years.

(3) Substitution of qualified projects

An agreement shall allow, upon mutual agreement of the parties, substitution of qualified projects that are identified at the time of the proposed substitution.

(4) Minimum requirements

An eligible entity shall be authorized to use its own terms and conditions, as approved by the Secretary, for conservation easements and other purchases of interests in land, so long as such terms and conditions—

(A) are consistent with the purposes of the program;

(B) permit effective enforcement of the conservation purposes of such easements or other interests; and

(C) include a limit on the impervious surfaces to be allowed that is consistent with the agricultural activities to be conducted.

(5) Effect of violation

If a violation occurs of a term or condition of an agreement entered into under this subsection—

(A) the agreement shall remain in force; and

(B) the Secretary may require the eligible entity to refund all or part of any payments received by the entity under the program, with interest on the payments as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(h) Certification of eligible entities

(1) Certification process

The Secretary shall establish a process under which the Secretary may—

(A) directly certify eligible entities that meet established criteria;

(B) enter into long-term agreements with certified entities, as authorized by subsection (g)(2)(A); and

(C) accept proposals for cost-share assistance to certified entities for the purchase of conservation easements or other interests in eligible land throughout the duration of such agreements.

(2) Certification criteria

In order to be certified, an eligible entity shall demonstrate to the Secretary that the entity will maintain, at a minimum, for the duration of the agreement—

(A) a plan for administering easements that is consistent with the purpose of this subpart;

(B) the capacity and resources to monitor and enforce conservation easements or other interests in land; and

(C) policies and procedures to ensure—

(i) the long-term integrity of conservation easements or other interests in eligible land;

(ii) timely completion of acquisitions of easements or other interests in eligible land; and

(iii) timely and complete evaluation and reporting to the Secretary on the use of funds provided by the Secretary under the program.

(3) Review and revision

(A) Review

The Secretary shall conduct a review of eligible entities certified under paragraph (1) every three years to ensure that such entities are meeting the criteria established under paragraph (2).

(B) Revocation

If the Secretary finds that the certified entity no longer meets the criteria established under paragraph (2), the Secretary may—

(i) allow the certified entity a specified period of time, at a minimum 180 days, in which to take such actions as may be necessary to meet the criteria; and

(ii) revoke the certification of the entity, if after the specified period of time, the certified entity does not meet the criteria established in paragraph (2).

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238I, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2503(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 268; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2401(b), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1049; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2401(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1777.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of enactment of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, referred to in subsec. (d), is the date

of enactment of Pub. L. 110-246, which was approved June 18, 2008.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2401(b), amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to establishment of farmland protection program, conservation plan requirement, and cost sharing.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838j. Farm viability program

(a) In general

The Secretary may provide to eligible entities identified by the Secretary grants for use in carrying out farm viability programs developed by the eligible entities and approved by the Secretary.

(b) Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this section such sums as are necessary for each of fiscal years 2002 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238J, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2503(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 269; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2402, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1051; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2402, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1779.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 110-246, §2402, substituted “2012” for “2007”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

SUBPART D—GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §§2301(a)(1), 2403, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1040, 1051, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §§2301(a)(1), 2403, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1768, 1779, both redesignated subpart C of this part as subpart D. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234.

Section 2401 of Pub. L. 107-171, which directed that subchapter C (this subpart) be added at the end of chapter 2 of the Food Security Act of 1985, was executed by adding subchapter C at the end of chapter 2 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (this part) to reflect the probable intent of Congress.

§ 3838n. Grassland reserve program**(a) Establishment and purpose**

The Secretary shall establish a grassland reserve program (referred to in this subpart as the “program”) for the purpose of assisting owners and operators in protecting grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible land through rental contracts, easements, and restoration agreements.

(b) Enrollment of acreage**(1) Acreage enrolled**

The Secretary shall enroll an additional 1,220,000 acres of eligible land in the program during fiscal years 2009 through 2012.

(2) Methods of enrollment

The Secretary shall enroll eligible land in the program through the use of:¹

- (A) a 10-year, 15-year, or 20-year rental contract;
- (B) a permanent easement; or
- (C) in a State that imposes a maximum duration for easements, an easement for the maximum duration allowed under the law of that State.

(3) Limitation

Of the total amount of funds expended under the program to acquire rental contracts and easements described in paragraph (2), the Secretary shall use, to the extent practicable—

- (A) 40 percent for rental contracts; and
- (B) 60 percent for easements.

(4) Enrollment of conservation reserve land**(A) Priority**

Upon expiration of a contract under subpart B of part I of this subchapter, the Secretary shall give priority for enrollment in the program to land previously enrolled in the conservation reserve program if—

- (i) the land is eligible land, as defined in subsection (c); and
- (ii) the Secretary determines that the land is of high ecological value and under significant threat of conversion to uses other than grazing.

(B) Maximum enrollment

The number of acres of land enrolled under the priority described in subparagraph (A) in a calendar year shall not exceed 10 percent of the total number of acres enrolled in the program in that calendar year.

(c) Eligible land defined

For purposes of the program, the term “eligible land” means private or tribal land that—

- (1) is grassland, land that contains forbs, or shrubland (including improved rangeland and pastureland) for which grazing is the predominant use;
- (2) is located in an area that has been historically dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrubland, and the land—
 - (A) could provide habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value if the land—

- (i) is retained in its current use; or
- (ii) is restored to a natural condition;

(B) contains historical or archaeological resources; or

(C) would address issues raised by State, regional, and national conservation priorities; or

(3) is incidental to land described in paragraph (1) or (2), if the incidental land is determined by the Secretary to be necessary for the efficient administration of a rental contract or easement under the program.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238N, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2401, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 258; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2403, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1051; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2403, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1779.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2403, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to establishment of a grassland reserve program, enrollment of a maximum of 2,000,000 acres of restored or improved grassland, rangeland, and pastureland, methods of enrollment, limitation on use of easements and rental agreements, and determination by Secretary of eligibility of land.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838o. Duties of owners and operators**(a) Rental contracts**

To be eligible to enroll eligible land in the program under a rental contract, the owner or operator of the land shall agree—

- (1) to comply with the terms of the contract and, when applicable, a restoration agreement;
- (2) to suspend any existing cropland base and allotment history for the land under another program administered by the Secretary; and
- (3) to implement a grazing management plan, as approved by the Secretary, which may be modified upon mutual agreement of the parties.

(b) Easements

To be eligible to enroll eligible land in the program through an easement, the owner of the land shall agree—

- (1) to grant an easement to the Secretary or to an eligible entity described in section 3838q of this title;
- (2) to create and record an appropriate deed restriction in accordance with applicable State law to reflect the easement;
- (3) to provide a written statement of consent to the easement signed by persons holding a security interest or any vested interest in the land;
- (4) to provide proof of unencumbered title to the underlying fee interest in the land that is the subject of the easement;

¹ So in original. The semicolon probably should be a dash.

(5) to comply with the terms of the easement and, when applicable, a restoration agreement;

(6) to implement a grazing management plan, as approved by the Secretary, which may be modified upon mutual agreement of the parties; and

(7) to eliminate any existing cropland base and allotment history for the land under another program administered by the Secretary.

(c) Restoration agreements

(1) When applicable

To be eligible for cost-share assistance to restore eligible land subject to a rental contract or an easement under the program, the owner or operator of the land shall agree to comply with the terms of a restoration agreement.

(2) Terms and conditions

The Secretary shall prescribe the terms and conditions of a restoration agreement by which eligible land that is subject to a rental contract or easement under the program shall be restored.

(3) Duties

The restoration agreement shall describe the respective duties of the owner or operator and the Secretary, including the Federal share of restoration payments and technical assistance.

(d) Terms and conditions applicable to rental contracts and easements

(1) Permissible activities

The terms and conditions of a rental contract or easement under the program shall permit—

(A) common grazing practices, including maintenance and necessary cultural practices, on the land in a manner that is consistent with maintaining the viability of grassland, forb, and shrub species appropriate to that locality;

(B) haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production, subject to appropriate restrictions during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are in significant decline or are conserved in accordance with Federal or State law, as determined by the State Conservationist;

(C) fire suppression, rehabilitation, and construction of fire breaks; and

(D) grazing related activities, such as fencing and livestock watering.

(2) Prohibitions

The terms and conditions of a rental contract or easement under the program shall prohibit—

(A) the production of crops (other than hay), fruit trees, vineyards, or any other agricultural commodity that is inconsistent with maintaining grazing land; and

(B) except as permitted under a restoration plan, the conduct of any other activity that would be inconsistent with maintaining grazing land enrolled in the program.

(3) Additional terms and conditions

A rental contract or easement under the program shall include such additional provisions

as the Secretary determines are appropriate to carry out or facilitate the purposes and administration of the program.

(e) Violations

On a violation of the terms or conditions of a rental contract, easement, or restoration agreement entered into under this section—

(1) the contract or easement shall remain in force; and

(2) the Secretary may require the owner or operator to refund all or part of any payments received under the program, with interest on the payments as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §12380, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2401, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 259; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2403, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1052; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2403, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1780.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2403, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to requirements relating to easements and agreements.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838p. Duties of Secretary

(a) Evaluation and ranking of applications

(1) Criteria

The Secretary shall establish criteria to evaluate and rank applications for rental contracts and easements under the program.

(2) Considerations

In establishing the criteria, the Secretary shall emphasize support for—

(A) grazing operations;

(B) plant and animal biodiversity; and

(C) grassland, land that contains forbs, and shrubland under the greatest threat of conversion to uses other than grazing.

(b) Payments

(1) In general

In return for the execution of a rental contract or the granting of an easement by an owner or operator under the program, the Secretary shall—

(A) make rental contract or easement payments to the owner or operator in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3); and

(B) make payments to the owner or operator under a restoration agreement for the Federal share of the cost of restoration in accordance with paragraph (4).

(2) Rental contract payments

(A) Percentage of grazing value of land

In return for the execution of a rental contract by an owner or operator under the pro-

gram, the Secretary shall make annual payments during the term of the contract in an amount, subject to subparagraph (B), that is not more than 75 percent of the grazing value of the land covered by the contract.

(B) Payment limitation

Payments made under 1 or more rental contracts to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, may not exceed, in the aggregate, \$50,000 per year.

(3) Easement payments

(A) In general

Subject to subparagraph (B), in return for the granting of an easement by an owner under the program, the Secretary shall make easement payments in an amount not to exceed the fair market value of the land less the grazing value of the land encumbered by the easement.

(B) Method for determination of compensation

In making a determination under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall pay as compensation for a¹ easement acquired under the program the lowest of—

(i) the fair market value of the land encumbered by the easement, as determined by the Secretary, using—

(I) the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices; or

(II) an area-wide market analysis or survey;

(ii) the amount corresponding to a geographical cap, as determined by the Secretary in regulations; or

(iii) the offer made by the landowner.

(C) Schedule

Easement payments may be provided in up to 10 annual payments of equal or unequal amount, as agreed to by the Secretary and the owner.

(4) Restoration agreement payments

(A) Federal share of restoration

The Secretary shall make payments to an owner or operator under a restoration agreement of not more than 50 percent of the costs of carrying out measures and practices necessary to restore functions and values of that land.

(B) Payment limitation

Payments made under 1 or more restoration agreements to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, may not exceed, in the aggregate, \$50,000 per year.

(5) Payments to others

If an owner or operator who is entitled to a payment under the program dies, becomes incompetent, is otherwise unable to receive the payment, or is succeeded by another person who renders or completes the required performance, the Secretary shall make the payment, in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary and without regard to

any other provision of law, in such manner as the Secretary determines is fair and reasonable in light of all the circumstances.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238P, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2401, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 261; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2403, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1054; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2403, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1782.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2403, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to: in subsec. (a), duty of Secretary to make payments to an owner; in subsec. (b), amount of payments; in subsec. (c), Federal share of restoration; and in subsec. (d), payments to others.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3838q. Delegation of duty

(a) Authority to delegate

The Secretary may delegate a duty under the program—

(1) by transferring title of ownership to an easement to an eligible entity to hold and enforce; or

(2) by entering into a cooperative agreement with an eligible entity for the eligible entity to own, write, and enforce an easement.

(b) Eligible entity defined

In this section, the term “eligible entity” means—

(1) an agency of State or local government or an Indian tribe; or

(2) an organization that—

(A) is organized for, and at all times since the formation of the organization has been operated principally for, one or more of the conservation purposes specified in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of section 170(h)(4)(A) of title 26;

(B) is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of that title that is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of that title; and

(C) is described in—

(i) paragraph (1) or (2) of section 509(a) of that title; or

(ii) in section 509(a)(3) of that title, and is controlled by an organization described in section 509(a)(2) of that title.

(c) Transfer of title of ownership

(1) Transfer

The Secretary may transfer title of ownership to an easement to an eligible entity to hold and enforce, in lieu of the Secretary, subject to the right of the Secretary to conduct periodic inspections and enforce the easement, if—

¹ So in original. Probably should be “an”.

(A) the Secretary determines that the transfer will promote protection of grassland, land that contains forbs, or shrubland;

(B) the owner authorizes the eligible entity to hold or enforce the easement; and

(C) the eligible entity agrees to assume the costs incurred in administering and enforcing the easement, including the costs of restoration or rehabilitation of the land as specified by the owner and the eligible entity.

(2) Application

An eligible entity that seeks to hold and enforce an easement shall apply to the Secretary for approval.

(3) Approval by Secretary

The Secretary may approve an application described in paragraph (2) if the eligible entity—

(A) has the relevant experience necessary, as appropriate for the application, to administer an easement on grassland, land that contains forbs, or shrubland;

(B) has a charter that describes a commitment to conserving ranchland, agricultural land, or grassland for grazing and conservation purposes; and

(C) has the resources necessary to effectuate the purposes of the charter.

(d) Cooperative agreements

(1) Authorized; terms and conditions

The Secretary shall establish the terms and conditions of a cooperative agreement under which an eligible entity shall use funds provided by the Secretary to own, write, and enforce an easement, in lieu of the Secretary.

(2) Minimum requirements

At a minimum, the cooperative agreement shall—

(A) specify the qualification of the eligible entity to carry out the entity's responsibilities under the program, including acquisition, monitoring, enforcement, and implementation of management policies and procedures that ensure the long-term integrity of the easement protections;

(B) require the eligible entity to assume the costs incurred in administering and enforcing the easement, including the costs of restoration or rehabilitation of the land as specified by the owner and the eligible entity;

(C) specify the right of the Secretary to conduct periodic inspections to verify the eligible entity's enforcement of the easement;

(D) subject to subparagraph (E), identify a specific project or a range of projects to be funded under the agreement;

(E) allow, upon mutual agreement of the parties, substitution of qualified projects that are identified at the time of substitution;

(F) specify the manner in which the eligible entity will evaluate and report the use of funds to the Secretary;

(G) allow the eligible entity flexibility to develop and use terms and conditions for easements, if the Secretary finds the terms

and conditions consistent with the purposes of the program and adequate to enable effective enforcement of the easements;

(H) if applicable, allow an eligible entity to include a charitable donation or qualified conservation contribution (as defined by section 170(h) of title 26) from the landowner from which the easement will be purchased as part of the entity's share of the cost to purchase an easement; and

(I) provide for a schedule of payments to an eligible entity, as agreed to by the Secretary and the eligible entity.

(3) Cost sharing

(A) In general

As part of a cooperative agreement with an eligible entity under this subsection, the Secretary may provide a share of the purchase price of an easement under the program.

(B) Minimum share by eligible entity

The eligible entity shall be required to provide a share of the purchase price at least equivalent to that provided by the Secretary.

(C) Priority

The Secretary may accord a higher priority to proposals from eligible entities that leverage a greater share of the purchase price of the easement.

(4) Violation

If an eligible entity violates the terms or conditions of a cooperative agreement entered into under this subsection—

(A) the cooperative agreement shall remain in force; and

(B) the Secretary may require the eligible entity to refund all or part of any payments received by the eligible entity under the program, with interest on the payments as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(e) Protection of Federal investment

When delegating a duty under this section, the Secretary shall ensure that the terms of an easement include a contingent right of enforcement for the Department.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1238Q, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2401, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 262; amended Pub. L. 108-447, div. A, title VII, §797, Dec. 8, 2004, 118 Stat. 2852; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2403, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1055; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2403, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1783.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2403, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to delegation to private organizations.

2004—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 108-447, §797(1), substituted “transfer title of ownership to an easement under this subpart to” for “permit” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 108-447, §797(2), added subsec. (d) and struck out heading and text of former subsec. (d).

Text consisted of pars. (1) and (2) relating to reassignment of easements to new private organizations or the Secretary.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

PART III—ENVIRONMENTAL EASEMENT PROGRAM

§ 3839. Environmental easement program

(a) Establishment

The Secretary shall, during the 1991 through 1995 calendar years, formulate and carry out an environmental easement program (hereafter in this part referred to as the “easement program”) in accordance with this part, through the acquisition of permanent easements or easements for the maximum term permitted under applicable State law from willing owners of eligible farms or ranches in order to ensure the continued long-term protection of environmentally sensitive lands or reduction in the degradation of water quality on such farms or ranches through the continued conservation and improvement of soil and water resources.

(b) Eligibility; termination

(1) In general

The Secretary may acquire easements under this section on land placed in the conservation reserve under this subchapter (other than such land that is likely to continue to remain out of production and that does not pose an off-farm environmental threat), land under the Water Bank Act [16 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.], or other cropland that—

- (A) contains riparian corridors;
- (B) is an area of critical habitat for wildlife, especially threatened or endangered species; or
- (C) contains other environmentally sensitive areas, as determined by the Secretary, that would prevent a producer from complying with other Federal, State, or local environmental goals if commodities were to be produced on such land.

(2) Ineligible land

The Secretary may not acquire easements on—

- (A) land that contains timber stands established under the conservation reserve under this subchapter; or
- (B) pasture land established to trees under the conservation reserve under this subchapter.

(3) Termination of existing contract

The Secretary may terminate or modify any existing contract entered into under section 3831(a) of this title if eligible land that is subject to such contract is transferred into the program established by this part.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1239, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1440, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3597; amended Pub. L. 102-237, title II, §204(7), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1855.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Water Bank Act, referred to in subsec. (b)(1), is Pub. L. 91-559, Dec. 19, 1970, 84 Stat. 1468, as amended,

which is classified generally to chapter 29 (§1301 et seq.) of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1301 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

1991—Subsec. (b)(1)(A). Pub. L. 102-237 substituted a semicolon for comma after “corridors”.

§ 3839a. Duties of owners; components of plan

(a) Duties of owners

(1) Plan

In conjunction with the creation of an easement on any lands under this part, the owner of the farm or ranch wherein such lands are located must agree to implement a natural resource conservation management plan under subsection (b) of this section approved by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) Agreement

In return for the creation of an easement on any lands under this part, the owner of the farm or ranch wherein such lands are located must agree to the following:

(A) To the creation and recordation of an appropriate deed restriction in accordance with applicable State law to reflect the easement agreed to under this part with respect to such lands.

(B) To provide a written statement of consent to such easement signed by those holding a security interest in the land.

(C) To comply with such additional provisions as the Secretary determines are desirable and are included in the easement to carry out this part or to facilitate the practical administration thereof.

(D) To specify the location of any timber harvesting on land subject to the easement. Harvesting and commercial sales of Christmas trees and nuts shall be prohibited on such land, except that no such easement or related agreement shall prohibit activities consistent with customary forestry practices, such as pruning, thinning, or tree stand improvement on lands converted to forestry uses.

(E) To limit the production of any agricultural commodity on such lands only to production for the benefit of wildlife.

(F) Not to conduct any harvesting or grazing, nor otherwise make commercial use of the forage, on land that is subject to the easement unless specifically provided for in the easement or related agreement.

(G) Not to adopt any other practice that would tend to defeat the purposes of this part, as determined by the Secretary.

(3) Violation

On the violation of the terms or conditions of the easement or related agreement entered into under this section, the easement shall remain in force and the Secretary may require the owner to refund all or part of any payments received by the owner under this part, together with interest thereon as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(b) Components of plan

The natural resource conservation management plan referred to in subsection (a)(1) of this section (hereafter referred to as the “plan”)—

(1) shall set forth—

(A) the conservation measures and practices to be carried out by the owner of the land subject to the easement; and

(B) the commercial use, if any, to be permitted on such land during the term of the easement; and

(2) shall provide for the permanent retirement of any existing cropland base and allotment history for such land under any program administered by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1239A, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1440, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3597.)

§ 3839b. Duties of Secretary

In return for the granting of an easement by an owner under this part, the Secretary shall—

(1) share the cost of carrying out the establishment of conservation measures and practices set forth in the plan for which the Secretary determines that cost sharing is appropriate and in the public interest;

(2) pay for a period not to exceed 10 years annual easement payments in the aggregate not to exceed the lesser of—

(A) \$250,000; or

(B) the difference in the value of the land with and without an easement;

(3) provide necessary technical assistance to assist owners in complying with the terms and conditions of the easement and the plan; and

(4) permit the land to be used for wildlife activities, including hunting and fishing, if such use is permitted by the owner.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1239B, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1440, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3598.)

§ 3839c. Payments**(a) Time of payment**

The Secretary shall provide payment for obligations incurred by the Secretary under this part—

(1) with respect to any cost sharing obligation as soon as possible after the obligation is incurred; and

(2) with respect to any annual easement payment obligation incurred by the Secretary as soon as possible after October 1 of each calendar year.

(b) Cost sharing payments

In making cost sharing payments to owners under this part, the Secretary may pay up to 100 percent of the cost of establishing conservation measures and practices pursuant to this part.

(c) Easement payments; acceptability of offers**(1) Determination of amount**

The Secretary shall determine the amount payable to owners in the form of easement payments under this part, and in making such determination may consider, among other

things, the amount necessary to encourage owners to participate in the easement program.

(2) Acceptability of offers

In determining the acceptability of easement offers, the Secretary may take into consideration—

(A) the extent to which the purposes of the easement program would be achieved on the land;

(B) the productivity of the land; and

(C) the on-farm and off-farm environmental threats if the land is used for the production of agricultural commodities.

(d) Form of payment

Except as otherwise provided in this section, payments under this part—

(1) shall be made in cash in such amount and at such time as is agreed on and specified in the easement or related agreement; and

(2) may be made in advance of a determination of performance.

(e) Payments to others

If an owner who is entitled to a payment under this part dies, becomes incompetent, is otherwise unable to receive such payment, or is succeeded by another person who renders or completes the required performance, the Secretary shall make such payment, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary and without regard to any other provision of law, in such manner as the Secretary determines is fair and reasonable in light of all of the circumstances.

(f) Payment limitation**(1) In general**

The total amount of easement payments made to a person under this part for any year may not exceed \$50,000.

(2) Regulations

The Secretary shall issue regulations prescribing such rules as the Secretary determines necessary to ensure a fair and reasonable application of the limitation contained in this subsection.

(3) Other payments

Easement payments received by an owner shall be in addition to, and not affect, the total amount of payments that such owner is otherwise eligible to receive under this Act, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, or the Agricultural Act of 1949 (7 U.S.C. 1421 et seq.).

(4) State environmental enhancement

The provisions of this subsection that limit payments to any person, and section 1305(d) of the Agricultural Reconciliation Act of 1987 (7 U.S.C. 1308 note), shall not be applicable to payments received by a State, political subdivision, or agency thereof in connection with agreements entered into under an environmental easement enhancement program carried out by that entity that has been approved by the Secretary. The Secretary may enter into such agreements for payments to States, political subdivisions, or agencies thereof that

the Secretary determines will advance the purposes of this part.

(g) Exemption from automatic sequester

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no order issued under section 902 of title 2 shall affect any payment under this part.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1239C, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1440, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3599.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This Act, referred to in subsec. (f)(3), is Pub. L. 99-198, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1354, as amended, known as the Food Security Act of 1985. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1985 Amendment note set out under section 1281 of Title 7, Agriculture, and Tables.

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, referred to in subsec. (f)(3), is Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3359, as amended. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1990 Amendment note set out under section 1421 of Title 7 and Tables.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, referred to in subsec. (f)(3), is act Oct. 31, 1949, ch. 792, 63 Stat. 1051, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 35A (§1421 et seq.) of Title 7. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1421 of Title 7 and Tables.

Section 1305(d) of the Agricultural Reconciliation Act of 1987, referred to in subsec. (f)(4), is section 1305(d) of Pub. L. 100-203, which is set out as a note under section 1308 of Title 7.

§ 3839d. Changes in ownership; modification of easement

(a) Limitations

No easement shall be created under this part on land that has changed ownership in the preceding 12 months unless—

(1) the new ownership was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous owner;

(2) the new ownership was acquired before January 1, 1990; or

(3) the Secretary determines that the land was acquired under circumstances that give adequate assurances that such land was not acquired for the purposes of placing it in the program established by this part.

(b) Modification; termination

(1) Modification

The Secretary may modify an easement acquired from, or a related agreement with, an owner under this part if—

(A) the current owner of the land agrees to such modification; and

(B) the Secretary determines that such modification is desirable—

(i) to carry out this part;

(ii) to facilitate the practical administration of this part; or

(iii) to achieve such other goals as the Secretary determines are appropriate and consistent with this part.

(2) Termination

(A) In general

The Secretary may terminate an easement created with an owner under this part if—

(i) the current owner of the land agrees to such termination; and

(ii) the Secretary determines that such termination would be in the public interest.

(B) Notice

At least 90 days before taking any action to terminate under subparagraph (A) all easements entered into under this part, the Secretary shall provide written notice of such action to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1239D, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XIV, §1440, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3600.)

PART IV—ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

CODIFICATION

Chapter 4 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, comprising this part, was originally added to Pub. L. 99-198 by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 996. Chapter 4 is shown herein, however, as having been added by Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 253, because of the extensive revision of the chapter's provisions by Pub. L. 107-171. Such revision did not contain a chapter heading, which was subsequently added by Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2501(b), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1058, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2501(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1786. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234.

§ 3839aa. Purposes

The purposes of the environmental quality incentives program established by this part are to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals, and to optimize environmental benefits, by—

(1) assisting producers in complying with local, State, and national regulatory requirements concerning—

(A) soil, water, and air quality;

(B) wildlife habitat; and

(C) surface and ground water conservation;

(2) avoiding, to the maximum extent practicable, the need for resource and regulatory programs by assisting producers in protecting soil, water, air, and related natural resources and meeting environmental quality criteria established by Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies;

(3) providing flexible assistance to producers to install and maintain conservation practices that sustain food and fiber production while—

(A) enhancing soil, water, and related natural resources, including grazing land, forestland, wetland, and wildlife; and

(B) conserving energy;

(4) assisting producers to make beneficial, cost effective changes to production systems (including conservation practices related to organic production), grazing management, fuels management, forest management, nutrient management associated with livestock, pest or irrigation management, or other practices on agricultural and forested land; and

(5) consolidating and streamlining conservation planning and regulatory compliance processes to reduce administrative burdens on producers and the cost of achieving environmental goals.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1240, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 253; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2501(a), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1057; Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2501(a), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1785.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1240, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, § 334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 996, related to purposes, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, § 2501(a)(1), inserted “, forest management,” after “agricultural production” in introductory provisions.

Pars. (3), (4). Pub. L. 110-246, § 2501(a)(2), added pars. (3) and (4) and struck out former pars. (3) and (4) which read as follows:

“(3) providing flexible assistance to producers to install and maintain conservation practices that enhance soil, water, related natural resources (including grazing land and wetland), and wildlife while sustaining production of food and fiber;

“(4) assisting producers to make beneficial, cost effective changes to cropping systems, grazing management, nutrient management associated with livestock, pest or irrigation management, or other practices on agricultural land; and”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-1. Definitions

In this part:

(1) Eligible land

(A) In general

The term “eligible land” means land on which agricultural commodities, livestock, or forest-related products are produced.

(B) Inclusions

The term “eligible land” includes the following:

- (i) Cropland.
- (ii) Grassland.
- (iii) Rangeland.
- (iv) Pasture land.
- (v) Nonindustrial private forest land.
- (vi) Other agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed through a contract under the program, as determined by the Secretary.

(2) National organic program

The term “national organic program” means the national organic program established

under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et. seq.).

(3) Organic system plan

The term “organic system plan” means an organic plan approved under the national organic program.

(4) Payment

The term “payment” means financial assistance provided to a producer for performing practices under this part, including compensation for—

- (A) incurred costs associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training; and
- (B) income forgone by the producer.

(5) Practice

The term “practice” means 1 or more improvements and conservation activities that are consistent with the purposes of the program under this part, as determined by the Secretary, including—

- (A) improvements to eligible land of the producer, including—
 - (i) structural practices;
 - (ii) land management practices;
 - (iii) vegetative practices;
 - (iv) forest management; and
 - (v) other practices that the Secretary determines would further the purposes of the program; and
- (B) conservation activities involving the development of plans appropriate for the eligible land of the producer, including—
 - (i) comprehensive nutrient management planning; and
 - (ii) other plans that the Secretary determines would further the purposes of the program under this part.

(B) conservation activities involving the development of plans appropriate for the eligible land of the producer, including—

- (i) comprehensive nutrient management planning; and
- (ii) other plans that the Secretary determines would further the purposes of the program under this part.

(6) Program

The term “program” means the environmental quality incentives program established by this part.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1240A, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 253; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2502, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1058; Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2502, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1786.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, referred to in par. (2), is title XXI of Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3935, which is classified generally to chapter 94 (§ 6501 et seq.) of Title 7, Agriculture. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 6501 of Title 7 and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-1, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1240A, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, § 334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 997, related to definitions of terms, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2502, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section defined “beginning farmer or rancher”, “eligible land”, “land management practice”, “livestock”, “practice”, and “structural practice”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-2. Establishment and administration**(a) Establishment**

During each of the 2002 through 2014 fiscal years, the Secretary shall provide payments to producers that enter into contracts with the Secretary under the program.

(b) Practices and term**(1) Practices**

A contract under the program may apply to the performance of one or more practices.

(2) Term

A contract under the program shall have a term that—

(A) at a minimum, is equal to the period beginning on the date on which the contract is entered into and ending on the date that is one year after the date on which all practices under the contract have been implemented; but

(B) not to exceed 10 years.

(c) Bidding down

If the Secretary determines that the environmental values of two or more applications for payments are comparable, the Secretary shall not assign a higher priority to the application only because it would present the least cost to the program.

(d) Payments**(1) Availability of payments**

Payments are provided to a producer to implement one or more practices under the program.

(2) Limitation on payment amounts

A payment to a producer for performing a practice may not exceed, as determined by the Secretary—

(A) 75 percent of the costs associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training;

(B) 100 percent of income foregone by the producer; or

(C) in the case of a practice consisting of elements covered under subparagraphs (A) and (B)—

(i) 75 percent of the costs incurred for those elements covered under subparagraph (A); and

(ii) 100 percent of income foregone for those elements covered under subparagraph (B).

(3) Special rule involving payments for foregone income

In determining the amount and rate of payments under paragraph (2)(B), the Secretary

may accord great significance to a practice that, as determined by the Secretary, promotes—

(A) residue management;

(B) nutrient management;

(C) air quality management;

(D) invasive species management;

(E) pollinator habitat;

(F) animal carcass management technology; or

(G) pest management.

(4) Increased payments for certain producers**(A) In general**

Notwithstanding paragraph (2), in the case of a producer that is a limited resource, socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher or a beginning farmer or rancher, the Secretary shall increase the amount that would otherwise be provided to a producer under this subsection—

(i) to not more than 90 percent of the costs associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training; and

(ii) to not less than 25 percent above the otherwise applicable rate.

(B) Advance payments

Not more than 30 percent of the amount determined under subparagraph (A) may be provided in advance for the purpose of purchasing materials or contracting.

(5) Financial assistance from other sources

Except as provided in paragraph (6), any payments received by a producer from a State or private organization or person for the implementation of one or more practices on eligible land of the producer shall be in addition to the payments provided to the producer under this subsection.

(6) Other payments

A producer shall not be eligible for payments for practices on eligible land under the program if the producer receives payments or other benefits for the same practice on the same land under another program under this subchapter.

(e) Modification or termination of contracts**(1) Voluntary modification or termination**

The Secretary may modify or terminate a contract entered into with a producer under the program if—

(A) the producer agrees to the modification or termination; and

(B) the Secretary determines that the modification or termination is in the public interest.

(2) Involuntary termination

The Secretary may terminate a contract under the program if the Secretary determines that the producer violated the contract.

(f) Allocation of funding

For each of fiscal years 2002 through 2012, 60 percent of the funds made available for payments under the program shall be targeted at practices relating to livestock production.

(g) Funding for federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations

The Secretary may enter into alternative funding arrangements with federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations (including their affiliated membership organizations) if the Secretary determines that the goals and objectives of the program will be met by such arrangements, and that statutory limitations regarding contracts with individual producers will not be exceeded by any Tribal or Native Corporation member.

(h) Water conservation or irrigation efficiency practice

(1) Availability of payments

The Secretary may provide payments under this subsection to a producer for a water conservation or irrigation practice.

(2) Priority

In providing payments to a producer for a water conservation or irrigation practice, the Secretary shall give priority to applications in which—

(A) consistent with the law of the State in which the eligible land of the producer is located, there is a reduction in water use in the operation of the producer; or

(B) the producer agrees not to use any associated water savings to bring new land, other than incidental land needed for efficient operations, under irrigated production, unless the producer is participating in a watershed-wide project that will effectively conserve water, as determined by the Secretary.

(i) Payments for conservation practices related to organic production

(1) Payments authorized

The Secretary shall provide payments under this subsection for conservation practices, on some or all of the operations of a producer, related—

(A) to organic production; and

(B) to the transition to organic production.

(2) Eligibility requirements

As a condition for receiving payments under this subsection, a producer shall agree—

(A) to develop and carry out an organic system plan; or

(B) to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan and the purposes of this part.

(3) Payment limitations

Payments under this subsection to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, may not exceed, in the aggregate, \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 during any 6-year period. In applying these limitations, the Secretary shall not take into account payments received for technical assistance.

(4) Exclusion of certain organic certification costs

Payments may not be made under this subsection to cover the costs associated with or-

ganic certification that are eligible for cost-share payments under section 6523 of title 7.

(5) Termination of contracts

The Secretary may cancel or otherwise nullify a contract to provide payments under this subsection if the Secretary determines that the producer—

(A) is not pursuing organic certification; or

(B) is not in compliance with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.).

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240B, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 254; amended Pub. L. 108-447, div. A, title VII, §794(a), Dec. 8, 2004, 118 Stat. 2852; Pub. L. 109-171, title I, §1203(a), Feb. 8, 2006, 120 Stat. 6; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2503, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1059; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2503, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1787; Pub. L. 112-55, div. A, title VII, §716(c), Nov. 18, 2011, 125 Stat. 582.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, referred to in subsec. (i)(5)(B), is title XXI of Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3935, which is classified generally to chapter 94 (§6501 et seq.) of Title 7, Agriculture. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 6501 of Title 7 and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-2, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240B, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 998, related to establishment and administration of environmental quality incentives program, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2011—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 112-55 substituted “2014” for “2012”.

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2503, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section consisted of subsecs. (a) to (h) relating to provision of cost-share payments and incentive payments, application and term of a contract, bidding down, payment amounts, incentive payments, modification or termination of contracts, allocation of funding for fiscal years 2002 through 2007, and funding for federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

2006—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 109-171 substituted “2010” for “2007”.

2004—Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 108-447 added subsec. (h).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-3. Evaluation of applications

(a) Evaluation criteria

The Secretary shall develop criteria for evaluating applications that will ensure that na-

tional, State, and local conservation priorities are effectively addressed.

(b) Prioritization of applications

In evaluating applications under this part, the Secretary shall prioritize applications—

- (1) based on their overall level of cost-effectiveness to ensure that the conservation practices and approaches proposed are the most efficient means of achieving the anticipated environmental benefits of the project;
- (2) based on how effectively and comprehensively the project addresses the designated resource concern or resource concerns;
- (3) that best fulfill the purpose of the environmental quality incentives program specified in section 3839aa(1) of this title; and
- (4) that improve conservation practices or systems in place on the operation at the time the contract offer is accepted or that will complete a conservation system.

(c) Grouping of applications

To the greatest extent practicable, the Secretary shall group applications of similar crop or livestock operations for evaluation purposes or otherwise evaluate applications relative to other applications for similar farming operations.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240C, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 256; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2504, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1062; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2504, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1790.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-3, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240C, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1000, related to evaluation of offers and payments, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2504, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “In evaluating applications for cost-share payments and incentive payments, the Secretary shall accord a higher priority to assistance and payments that—

- “(1) encourage the use by producers of cost-effective conservation practices; and
- “(2) address national conservation priorities.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-4. Duties of producers

To receive payments under the program, a producer shall agree—

- (1) to implement an environmental quality incentives program plan (including a comprehensive nutrient management plan, if applicable) that describes conservation and environmental purposes to be achieved through 1 or

more practices that are approved by the Secretary;

(2) not to conduct any practices on the farm, ranch, or forest land that would tend to defeat the purposes of the program;

(3) on the violation of a term or condition of the contract at anytime the producer has control of the land—

(A) if the Secretary determines that the violation warrants termination of the contract—

- (i) to forfeit all rights to receive payments under the contract; and
- (ii) to refund to the Secretary all or a portion of the payments received by the owner or operator under the contract, including any interest on the payments, as determined by the Secretary; or

(B) if the Secretary determines that the violation does not warrant termination of the contract, to refund to the Secretary, or accept adjustments to, the payments provided to the owner or operator, as the Secretary determines to be appropriate;

(4) on the transfer of the right and interest of the producer in land subject to the contract, unless the transferee of the right and interest agrees with the Secretary to assume all obligations of the contract, to refund all payments received under the program, as determined by the Secretary;

(5) to supply information as required by the Secretary to determine compliance with the program plan and requirements of the program; and

(6) to comply with such additional provisions as the Secretary determines are necessary to carry out the program plan.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240D, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 256; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2505, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1062; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2505, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1790.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-4, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240D, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1000, related to duties of producers, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2505(1), struck out “technical assistance, cost-share payments, or incentive” before “payments” in introductory provisions.

Par. (2). Pub. L. 110-246, §2505(2), substituted “farm, ranch, or forest land” for “farm or ranch”.

Par. (4). Pub. L. 110-246, §2505(3), struck out “cost-share payments and incentive” before “payments”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-5. Environmental quality incentives program plan

(a) Plan of operations

To be eligible to receive payments under the program, a producer shall submit to the Secretary for approval a plan of operations that—

(1) specifies practices covered under the program;

(2) includes such terms and conditions as the Secretary considers necessary to carry out the program, including a description of the purposes to be met by the implementation of the plan;

(3) in the case of a confined livestock feeding operation, provides for development and implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan, if applicable; and

(4) in the case of forest land, is consistent with the provisions of a forest management plan that is approved by the Secretary, which may include—

(A) a forest stewardship plan described in section 2103a of this title;

(B) another practice plan approved by the State forester; or

(C) another plan determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(b) Avoidance of duplication

The Secretary shall—

(1) consider a plan developed in order to acquire a permit under a water or air quality regulatory program as the equivalent of a plan of operations under subsection (a), if the plan contains elements equivalent to those elements required by a plan of operations; and

(2) to the maximum extent practicable, eliminate duplication of planning activities under the program under this part and comparable conservation programs.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240E, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 256; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2506, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1063; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2506, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1791.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-5, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240E, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1001, related to environmental quality incentives program plan, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 110-246, §2506(a)(1), (2), substituted “Plan of operations” for “In general” in heading and struck out “cost-share payments or incentive” before “payments” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (a)(4). Pub. L. 110-246, §2506(a)(3)-(5), added par. (4).

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 110-246, §2506(b), amended subsec. (b) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, eliminate duplication of planning activities under the program under this part and comparable conservation programs.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-6. Duties of the Secretary

To the extent appropriate, the Secretary shall assist a producer in achieving the conservation and environmental goals of a program plan by—

(1) providing payments for developing and implementing 1 or more practices, as appropriate; and

(2) providing the producer with information and training to aid in implementation of the plan.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240F, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 257; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2507, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1063; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2507, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1791.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-6, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240F, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1001, related to duties of Secretary, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Par. (1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2507, struck out “cost-share payments or incentive” before “payments”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-7. Limitation on payments

(a) Limitation

Subject to subsection (b), a person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, cost-share or incentive payments under this part that, in the aggregate, exceed \$300,000 for all contracts entered into under this part by the person or entity during any six-year period,¹ (excluding funding arrangements with federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations under section 3839aa-2(h)² of this title) regardless of the number of contracts entered into under this part by the person or entity.

(b) Waiver authority

In the case of contracts under this part for projects of special environmental significance (including projects involving methane digesters), as determined by the Secretary, the Secretary may—

(1) waive the limitation otherwise applicable under subsection (a); and

¹ So in original. The comma probably should follow “title”).

² See References in Text note below.

(2) raise the limitation to not more than \$450,000 during any six-year period.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240G, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 257; amended Pub. L. 108-447, div. A, title VII, §794(b), Dec. 8, 2004, 118 Stat. 2852; Pub. L. 109-171, title I, §1203(b), Feb. 8, 2006, 120 Stat. 6; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2508, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1063; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2508, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1791.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 3839aa-2 of this title, referred to in subsec. (a), was amended generally by Pub. L. 110-246, title II, §2503, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1787, and, as so amended, provisions relating to funding arrangements with federally recognized Native American Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations, which formerly appeared in subsec. (h), are contained in subsec. (g).

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-7, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240G, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1001, related to limitation on payments, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2508, designated existing provisions as subsec. (a), inserted heading, substituted “Subject to subsection (b), a person or legal entity” for “An individual or entity” and “\$300,000” for “\$450,000”, substituted “the person” for “the individual” in two places, and added subsec. (b).

2006—Pub. L. 109-171 substituted “any six-year period” for “the period of fiscal years 2002 through 2007”.

2004—Pub. L. 108-447 inserted “(excluding funding arrangements with federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations under section 3839aa-2(h) of this title)” after “2007,”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-8. Conservation innovation grants and payments

(a) Competitive grants for innovative conservation approaches

(1) Grants

Out of the funds made available to carry out this part, the Secretary may pay the cost of competitive grants that are intended to stimulate innovative approaches to leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production or forest resource management, through the program.

(2) Use

The Secretary may provide grants under this subsection to governmental and non-governmental organizations and persons, on a competitive basis, to carry out projects that—

(A) involve producers who are eligible for payments or technical assistance under the program;

(B) leverage Federal funds made available to carry out the program under this part with matching funds provided by State and local governments and private organizations to promote environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production;

(C) ensure efficient and effective transfer of innovative technologies and approaches demonstrated through projects that receive funding under this section, such as market systems for pollution reduction and practices for the storage of carbon in soil; and

(D) provide environmental and resource conservation benefits through increased participation by producers of specialty crops.

(b) Air quality concerns from agricultural operations

(1) Implementation assistance

The Secretary shall provide payments under this subsection to producers to implement practices to address air quality concerns from agricultural operations and to meet Federal, State, and local regulatory requirements. The funds shall be made available on the basis of air quality concerns in a State and shall be used to provide payments to producers that are cost effective and reflect innovative technologies.

(2) Funding

Of the funds made available to carry out this part, the Secretary shall carry out this subsection using \$37,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240H, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 257; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2509, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1064; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2509, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1792.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 3839aa-8, Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240H, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §334, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1002, related to temporary administration of environmental quality incentives program, prior to the general amendment of this part by Pub. L. 107-171.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2509, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to conservation innovation grants.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839aa-9. Agricultural water enhancement program

(a) Definitions

In this section:

(1) Agricultural water enhancement activity

The term “agricultural water enhancement activity” includes the following activities carried out with respect to agricultural land:

(A) Water quality or water conservation plan development, including resource condition assessment and modeling.

(B) Water conservation restoration or enhancement projects, including conversion to the production of less water-intensive agricultural commodities or dryland farming.

(C) Water quality or quantity restoration or enhancement projects.

(D) Irrigation system improvement and irrigation efficiency enhancement.

(E) Activities designed to mitigate the effects of drought.

(F) Related activities that the Secretary determines will help achieve water quality or water conservation benefits on agricultural land.

(2) Partner

The term “partner” means an entity that enters into a partnership agreement with the Secretary to carry out agricultural water enhancement activities on a regional basis, including—

(A) an agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of such producers;

(B) a State or unit of local government; or

(C) a federally recognized Indian tribe.

(3) Partnership agreement

The term “partnership agreement” means an agreement between the Secretary and a partner.

(4) Program

The term “program” means the agricultural water enhancement program established under subsection (b).

(b) Establishment of program

Beginning in fiscal year 2009, the Secretary shall carry out, in accordance with this section and using such procedures as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, an agricultural water enhancement program as part of the environmental quality incentives program to promote ground and surface water conservation and improve water quality on agricultural lands—

(1) by entering into contracts with, and making payments to, producers to carry out agricultural water enhancement activities; or

(2) by entering into partnership agreements with partners, in accordance with subsection (c), on a regional level to benefit working agricultural land.

(c) Partnership agreements**(1) Agreements authorized**

The Secretary may enter into partnership agreements to meet the objectives of the program described in subsection (b).

(2) Applications

An application to the Secretary to enter into a partnership agreement under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A description of the geographical area to be covered by the partnership agreement.

(B) A description of the agricultural water quality or water conservation issues to be addressed by the partnership agreement.

(C) A description of the agricultural water enhancement objectives to be achieved through the partnership.

(D) A description of the partners collaborating to achieve the project objectives and the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of each partner.

(E) A description of the program resources, including payments the Secretary is requested to make.

(F) Such other such elements as the Secretary considers necessary to adequately evaluate and competitively select applications for partnership agreements.

(3) Duties of partners

A partner under a partnership agreement shall—

(A) identify producers participating in the project and act on their behalf in applying for the program;

(B) leverage funds provided by the Secretary with additional funds to help achieve project objectives;

(C) conduct monitoring and evaluation of project effects; and

(D) at the conclusion of the project, report to the Secretary on project results.

(d) Agricultural water enhancement activities by producers

The Secretary shall select agricultural water enhancement activities proposed by producers according to applicable requirements under the environmental quality incentives program.

(e) Agricultural water enhancement activities by partners**(1) Competitive process**

The Secretary shall conduct a competitive process to select partners. In carrying out the process, the Secretary shall make public the criteria used in evaluating applications.

(2) Authority to give priority to certain proposals

The Secretary may give a higher priority to proposals from partners that—

(A) include high percentages of agricultural land and producers in a region or other appropriate area;

(B) result in high levels of applied agricultural water quality and water conservation activities;

(C) significantly enhance agricultural activity;

(D) allow for monitoring and evaluation; and

(E) assist producers in meeting a regulatory requirement that reduces the economic scope of the producer’s operation.

(3) Priority to proposals from States with water quantity concerns

The Secretary shall give a higher priority to proposals from partners that—

(A) include the conversion of agricultural land from irrigated farming to dryland farming;

(B) leverage Federal funds provided under the program with funds provided by partners; and

(C) assist producers in States with water quantity concerns, as determined by the Secretary.

(4) Administration

In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary shall—

(A) accept qualified applications—

(i) directly from partners applying on behalf of producers; or

(ii) from producers applying through a partner as part of a regional agricultural water enhancement project; and

(B) ensure that resources made available for regional agricultural water enhancement activities are delivered in accordance with applicable program rules.

(f) Areas experiencing exceptional drought

Notwithstanding the purposes described in section 3839aa of this title, the Secretary shall consider as an eligible agricultural water enhancement activity the use of a water impoundment to capture surface water runoff on agricultural land if the agricultural water enhancement activity—

(1) is located in an area that is experiencing or has experienced exceptional drought conditions during the previous two calendar years; and

(2) will capture surface water runoff through the construction, improvement, or maintenance of irrigation ponds or small, on-farm reservoirs.

(g) Waiver authority

To assist in the implementation of agricultural water enhancement activities under the program, the Secretary shall waive the applicability of the limitation in section 1308-3a(b)(2)(B) of title 7 for participating producers if the Secretary determines that the waiver is necessary to fulfill the objectives of the program.

(h) Payments under program

(1) In general

The Secretary shall provide appropriate payments to producers participating in agricultural water enhancement activities in an amount determined by the secretary¹ to be necessary to achieve the purposes of the program described in subsection (b).

(2) Payments to producers in States with water quantity concerns

The Secretary shall provide payments for a period of five years to producers participating in agricultural water enhancement activities under proposals described in subsection (e)(3) in an amount sufficient to encourage producers to convert from irrigated farming to dryland farming.

(i) Consistency with State law

Any agricultural water enhancement activity conducted under the program shall be conducted in a manner consistent with State water law.

¹ So in original. Probably should be “Secretary”.

(j) Funding

(1) Availability of funds

In addition to funds made available to carry out this part under section 3841(a) of this title, the Secretary shall carry out the program using, of the funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation—

(A) \$73,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 and 2010;

(B) \$74,000,000 for fiscal year 2011; and

(C) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2012 and each fiscal year thereafter.

(2) Limitation on administrative expenses

None of the funds made available for regional agricultural water conservation activities under the program may be used to pay for the administrative expenses of partners.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, § 1240I, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, § 2301, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 257; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2510, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1064; Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2510, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1792.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, § 2510, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to ground and surface water conservation.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

TRANSITION PROVISIONS

Pub. L. 110-234, title II, § 2903(b), May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1091, and Pub. L. 110-246, § 4(a), title II, § 2903(b), June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1819, provided that: “During the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act [June 18, 2008] and ending on September 30, 2008, the Secretary of Agriculture shall continue to carry out the ground and surface water conservation program under section 1240I of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-9), as in effect before the amendment made by section 2510, using the terms, conditions, and funds available to the Secretary to carry out such program on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.”

[Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical provisions. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.]

PART V—OTHER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

§ 3839bb. Conservation of private grazing land

(a) Purpose

It is the purpose of this section to authorize the Secretary to provide a coordinated technical, educational, and related assistance program to conserve and enhance private grazing land resources and provide related benefits to all citizens of the United States by—

(1) establishing a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local grazing con-

servation program for management of private grazing land;

(2) strengthening technical, educational, and related assistance programs that provide assistance to owners and managers of private grazing land;

(3) conserving and improving wildlife habitat on private grazing land;

(4) conserving and improving fish habitat and aquatic systems through grazing land conservation treatment;

(5) protecting and improving water quality;

(6) improving the dependability and consistency of water supplies;

(7) identifying and managing weed, noxious weed, and brush encroachment problems on private grazing land; and

(8) integrating conservation planning and management decisions by owners and managers of private grazing land, on a voluntary basis.

(b) Definitions

In this section:

(1) Department

The term “Department” means the Department of Agriculture.

(2) Private grazing land

The term “private grazing land” means private, State-owned, tribally-owned, and any other non-federally owned rangeland, pastureland, grazed forest land, and hay land.

(3) Secretary

The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(c) Private grazing land conservation assistance

(1) Assistance to grazing landowners and others

Subject to the availability of appropriations for this section, the Secretary shall establish a voluntary program to provide technical, educational, and related assistance to owners and managers of private grazing land and public agencies, through local conservation districts, to enable the landowners, managers, and public agencies to voluntarily carry out activities that are consistent with this section, including—

(A) maintaining and improving private grazing land and the multiple values and uses that depend on private grazing land;

(B) implementing grazing land management technologies;

(C) managing resources on private grazing land, including—

(i) planning, managing, and treating private grazing land resources;

(ii) ensuring the long-term sustainability of private grazing land resources;

(iii) harvesting, processing, and marketing private grazing land resources; and

(iv) identifying and managing weed, noxious weed, and brush encroachment problems;

(D) protecting and improving the quality and quantity of water yields from private grazing land;

(E) maintaining and improving wildlife and fish habitat on private grazing land;

(F) enhancing recreational opportunities on private grazing land;

(G) maintaining and improving the aesthetic character of private grazing land;

(H) identifying the opportunities and encouraging the diversification of private grazing land enterprises; and

(I) encouraging the use of sustainable grazing systems, such as year-round, rotational, or managed grazing.

(2) Program elements

(A) Funding

If funding is provided to carry out this section, it shall be provided through a specific line-item in the annual appropriations for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(B) Technical assistance and education

Personnel of the Department trained in pasture and range management shall be made available under the program to deliver and coordinate technical assistance and education to owners and managers of private grazing land, at the request of the owners and managers.

(d) Grazing technical assistance self-help

(1) Findings

Congress finds that—

(A) there is a severe lack of technical assistance for farmers and ranchers that graze livestock;

(B) Federal budgetary constraints preclude any significant expansion, and may force a reduction of, current levels of technical support; and

(C) farmers and ranchers have a history of cooperatively working together to address common needs in the promotion of their products and in the drainage of wet areas through drainage districts.

(2) Establishment of grazing demonstration

In accordance with paragraph (3), the Secretary may establish 2 grazing management demonstration districts at the recommendation of the grazing land conservation initiative steering committee.

(3) Procedure

(A) Proposal

Within a reasonable time after the submission of a request of an organization of farmers or ranchers engaged in grazing, the Secretary shall propose that a grazing management district be established.

(B) Funding

The terms and conditions of the funding and operation of the grazing management district shall be proposed by the producers.

(C) Approval

The Secretary shall approve the proposal if the Secretary determines that the proposal—

(i) is reasonable;

(ii) will promote sound grazing practices; and

(iii) contains provisions similar to the provisions contained in the beef promotion

and research order issued under section 2903 of title 7 in effect on April 4, 1996.

(D) Area included

The area proposed to be included in a grazing management district shall be determined by the Secretary on the basis of an application by farmers or ranchers.

(E) Authorization

The Secretary may use authority under the Agricultural Adjustment Act (7 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), reenacted with amendments by the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, to operate, on a demonstration basis, a grazing management district.

(F) Activities

The activities of a grazing management district shall be scientifically sound activities, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with a technical advisory committee composed of ranchers, farmers, and technical experts.

(e) Authorization of appropriations

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$60,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2002 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240M, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §335, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1002; amended Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2502(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 264; Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2601, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1068; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2601, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1796.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Agricultural Adjustment Act, referred to in subsec. (d)(3)(E), is title I of act May 12, 1933, ch. 25, 48 Stat. 31, as amended, which is classified generally to chapter 26 (§601 et seq.) of Title 7, Agriculture. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 601 of Title 7 and Tables.

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 110-246, §2601, substituted “2012” for “2007”.

2002—Pub. L. 107-171 amended section catchline and text generally. Prior to amendment, section required the Secretary to establish conservation farm option pilot programs for producers of wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839bb-1. Wildlife habitat incentive program

(a) In general

The Secretary, in consultation with the State technical committees established under section 3861 of this title, shall establish within the Natural Resources Conservation Service a program

to be known as the wildlife habitat incentive program (referred to in this section as the “program”) for the development of wildlife habitat on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and tribal lands.

(b) Cost-share payments

(1) In general

Under the program, the Secretary shall make cost-share payments to owners of lands referred to in subsection (a) to develop—

- (A) upland wildlife habitat;
- (B) wetland wildlife habitat;
- (C) habitat for threatened and endangered species;
- (D) fish habitat; and
- (E) other types of wildlife habitat approved by the Secretary, including habitat developed on pivot corners and irregular areas.

(2) Increased cost share for long-term agreements

(A) In general

In a case in which the Secretary enters into an agreement or contract to protect and restore plant and animal habitat that has a term of at least 15 years, the Secretary may provide cost-share payments in addition to amounts provided under paragraph (1).

(B) Funding limitation

The Secretary may use, for a fiscal year, not more than 25 percent of funds made available under section 3841(a)(7) of this title for the fiscal year to carry out contracts and agreements described in subparagraph (A).

(c) Regional equity

In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that regional issues of concern relating to wildlife habitat are addressed in an appropriate manner.

(d) Priority for certain conservation initiatives

In carrying out this section, the Secretary may give priority to projects that would address issues raised by State, regional, and national conservation initiatives.

(e) Payment limitation

Payments made to a person or legal entity, directly or indirectly, under the program may not exceed, in the aggregate, \$50,000 per year.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240N, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2502(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 266; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2602, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1068; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2602, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1796.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 110-246, §2602(a)(1), inserted “for the development of wildlife habitat on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and tribal lands” before period at end.

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 110-246, §2602(a)(2), substituted “owners of lands referred to in subsection (a)” for “landowners” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (b)(1)(E). Pub. L. 110-246, §2602(b), inserted “, including habitat developed on pivot corners and irregular areas” before period at end.

Subsec. (b)(2)(B). Pub. L. 110-246, §2602(c), substituted “25 percent” for “15 percent”.

Subsecs. (d), (e). Pub. L. 110-246, §2602(d), added subsecs. (d) and (e).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839bb-2. Grassroots source water protection program

(a) In general

The Secretary shall establish a national grassroots water protection program to more effectively use onsite technical assistance capabilities of each State rural water association that, as of May 13, 2002, operates a wellhead or groundwater protection program in the State.

(b) Authorization of appropriations

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240O, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2502(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 267; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2603, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1068; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2603, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1796.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 110-246, §2603, substituted “\$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012” for “\$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2002 through 2007”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839bb-3. Great Lakes basin program for soil erosion and sediment control

(a) Program authorized

The Secretary may carry out the Great Lakes basin program for soil erosion and sediment control (referred to in this section as the “program”), including providing assistance to implement the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes.

(b) Consultation and cooperation

The Secretary shall carry out the program in consultation with the Great Lakes Commission created by Article IV of the Great Lakes Basin Compact (82 Stat. 415) and in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary of the Army.

(c) Assistance

In carrying out the program, the Secretary may—

(1) provide project demonstration grants, provide technical assistance, and carry out information and educational programs to improve water quality in the Great Lakes basin by reducing soil erosion and improving sediment control; and

(2) establish a priority for projects and activities that—

(A) directly reduce soil erosion or improve sediment control;

(B) reduce soil loss in degraded rural watersheds; or

(C) improve water quality for downstream watersheds.

(d) Authorization of appropriations

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out the program \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240P, as added Pub. L. 107-171, title II, §2502(a), May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 267; amended Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2604, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1068; Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2604, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1796.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 made identical amendments to this section. The amendments by Pub. L. 110-234 were repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-246, §2604, amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to: in subsec. (a), authorization to carry out the Great Lakes basin program for soil erosion and sediment control in consultation with the Great Lakes Commission and in cooperation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary of the Army; in subsec. (b), provision of assistance and prioritization of projects; and, in subsec. (c), appropriations for fiscal years 2002 through 2007.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as an Effective Date note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839bb-4. Chesapeake Bay watershed

(a) Chesapeake Bay watershed defined

In this section, the term “Chesapeake Bay watershed” means all tributaries, backwaters, and side channels, including their watersheds, draining into the Chesapeake Bay.

(b) Establishment and purpose

The Secretary shall assist producers in implementing conservation activities on agricultural lands in the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the purposes of—

(1) improving water quality and quantity in the Chesapeake Bay watershed; and

(2) restoring, enhancing, and preserving soil, air, and related resources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

(c) Conservation activities

The Secretary shall deliver the funds made available to carry out this section through applicable programs under this subchapter to assist producers in enhancing land and water resources—

(1) by controlling erosion and reducing sediment and nutrient levels in ground and surface water; and

(2) by planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating habitat conservation, restoration, and enhancement measures where there is significant ecological value if the lands are—

- (A) retained in their current use; or
- (B) restored to their natural condition.

(d) Agreements

(1) In general

The Secretary shall—

- (A) enter into agreements with producers to carry out the purposes of this section; and
- (B) use the funds made available to carry out this section to cover the costs of the program involved with each agreement.

(2) Special considerations

In entering into agreements under this subsection, the Secretary shall give special consideration to, and begin evaluating, applications with producers in the following river basins:

- (A) The Susquehanna River.
- (B) The Shenandoah River.
- (C) The Potomac River (including North and South Potomac).
- (D) The Patuxent River.

(e) Duties of the Secretary

In carrying out the purposes in this section, the Secretary shall—

- (1) where available, use existing plans, models, and assessments to assist producers in implementing conservation activities; and
- (2) proceed expeditiously with the implementation of any agreement with a producer that is consistent with State strategies for the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

(f) Consultation

The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate Federal agencies, shall ensure conservation activities carried out under this section complement Federal and State programs, including programs that address water quality, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

(g) Sense of Congress regarding Chesapeake Bay Executive Council

It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should be a member of the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council, and is authorized to do so under section 590a(3) of this title.

(h) Funding

(1) Availability

Of the funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Secretary shall use, to the maximum extent practicable—

- (A) \$23,000,000 for fiscal year 2009;
- (B) \$43,000,000 for fiscal year 2010;
- (C) \$72,000,000 for fiscal year 2011; and
- (D) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2012.

(2) Duration of availability

Funds made available under paragraph (1) shall remain available until expended.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240Q, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2605, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat.

1069, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2605, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1797.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Enactment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

§ 3839bb-5. Voluntary public access and habitat incentive program

(a) Establishment

The Secretary shall establish a voluntary public access program under which States and tribal governments may apply for grants to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wild-life-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing under programs administered by the States and tribal governments.

(b) Applications

In submitting applications for a grant under the program, a State or tribal government shall describe—

- (1) the benefits that the State or tribal government intends to achieve by encouraging public access to private farm and ranch land for—
 - (A) hunting and fishing; and
 - (B) to the maximum extent practicable, other recreational purposes; and
- (2) the methods that will be used to achieve those benefits.

(c) Priority

In approving applications and awarding grants under the program, the Secretary shall give priority to States and tribal governments that propose—

- (1) to maximize participation by offering a program the terms of which are likely to meet with widespread acceptance among land-owners;
- (2) to ensure that land enrolled under the State or tribal government program has appropriate wildlife habitat;
- (3) to strengthen wildlife habitat improvement efforts on land enrolled in a special conservation reserve enhancement program described in section 3834(f)(4) of this title by providing incentives to increase public hunting and other recreational access on that land;
- (4) to use additional Federal, State, tribal government, or private resources in carrying out the program; and
- (5) to make available to the public the location of land enrolled.

(d) Relationship to other laws

(1) No preemption

Nothing in this section preempts a State or tribal government law, including any State or tribal government liability law.

(2) Effect of inconsistent opening dates for migratory bird hunting

The Secretary shall reduce by 25 percent the amount of a grant otherwise determined for a State under the program if the opening dates for migratory bird hunting in the State are not consistent for residents and non-residents.

(e) Regulations

The Secretary shall promulgate such regulations as are necessary to carry out this section.

(f) Funding

Of the funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Secretary shall use, to the maximum extent practicable, \$50,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012.

(Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, §1240R, as added Pub. L. 110-234, title II, §2606, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat. 1070, and Pub. L. 110-246, §4(a), title II, §2606, June 18, 2008, 122 Stat. 1664, 1798.)

CODIFICATION

Pub. L. 110-234 and Pub. L. 110-246 enacted identical sections. Pub. L. 110-234 was repealed by section 4(a) of Pub. L. 110-246.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Enactment of this section and repeal of Pub. L. 110-234 by Pub. L. 110-246 effective May 22, 2008, the date of enactment of Pub. L. 110-234, see section 4 of Pub. L. 110-246, set out as a note under section 8701 of Title 7, Agriculture.

SUBCHAPTER V—FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

CODIFICATION

Subtitle E of title XII of the Food Security Act, comprising this subchapter, was originally enacted by Pub. L. 99-198, title XII, Dec. 23, 1985, 99 Stat. 1514, and amended by Pub. L. 101-624, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 3359; Pub. L. 102-237, Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1818; Pub. L. 102-552, Oct. 28, 1992, 106 Stat. 4102; and Pub. L. 104-66, Dec. 21, 1995, 109 Stat. 707. Subtitle E was shown herein, however, as having been added by Pub. L. 104-127, title III, §341, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1007, without reference to the intervening amendments because of the extensive revision of the subtitle's provisions by Pub. L. 104-127. Subsequently, subtitle E was amended by Pub. L. 107-171 to add new sections 3841, 3842, and 3844 and to repeal former sections 3841 and 3842.

§ 3841. Commodity Credit Corporation

(a) In general

For each of fiscal years 2002 through 2012 (and fiscal year 2014 in the case of the programs specified in paragraphs (3)(B), (4), (6), and (7)), the Secretary shall use the funds, facilities, and authorities of the Commodity Credit Corporation to carry out the following programs under subchapter IV (including the provision of technical assistance):

(1) The conservation reserve program under subpart B of part I, including to the maximum extent practicable—

(A) \$100,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 to provide cost share payments under paragraph (3) of section 3834(b) of this title in connection with thinning activities conducted on land described in subparagraph (A)(iii) of such paragraph; and

(B) \$25,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 to carry out section 3835(f)

of this title to facilitate the transfer of land subject to contracts from retired or retiring owners and operators to beginning farmers or ranchers and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.

(2) The wetlands reserve program under subpart C of part I.

(3)(A) CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM.—The conservation security program under subpart A of part II, using such sums as are necessary to administer contracts entered into before September 30, 2008.

(B) CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.—The conservation stewardship program under subpart B of part II.

(4) The farmland protection program under subpart C of part II, using, to the maximum extent practicable—

(A) \$97,000,000 in fiscal year 2008;

(B) \$121,000,000 in fiscal year 2009;

(C) \$150,000,000 in fiscal year 2010;

(D) \$175,000,000 in fiscal year 2011; and

(E) \$200,000,000 in each of fiscal years 2012 through 2014.

(5) The grassland reserve program under subpart D of part II.

(6) The environmental quality incentives program under part IV, using, to the maximum extent practicable—

(A) \$1,200,000,000 in fiscal year 2008;

(B) \$1,337,000,000 in fiscal year 2009;

(C) \$1,450,000,000 in fiscal year 2010;

(D) \$1,588,000,000 in fiscal year 2011; and

(E) \$1,750,000,000 in each of fiscal years 2012 through 2014.

(7) The wildlife habitat incentives program under section 3839bb-1 of this title, using, to the maximum extent practicable—

(A) \$15,000,000 in fiscal year 2002;

(B) \$30,000,000 in fiscal year 2003;

(C) \$60,000,000 in fiscal year 2004; and

(D) \$85,000,000 in each of fiscal years 2005 through 2014.

(b) Technical assistance

Effective for fiscal year 2005 and each subsequent fiscal year, Commodity Credit Corporation funds made available for each of the programs specified in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (a) of this section—

(1) shall be available for the provision of technical assistance for the programs for which funds are made available; and

(2) shall not be available for the provision of technical assistance for conservation programs specified in subsection (a) of this section other than the program for which the funds were made available.

(c) Relationship to other law

The use of Commodity Credit Corporation funds under subsection (b) of this section to provide technical assistance shall not be considered an allotment or fund transfer from the Commodity Credit Corporation for purposes of the limit on expenditures for technical assistance imposed by section 7141 of title 15.

(d) Regional equity

(1) Priority funding to promote equity

Before April 1 of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall give priority for funding under the