

surplus property), and 1955.140 (sale in parcels).

7 CFR part 1956, subpart B, §§ 1956.57(f) (county committee review of debt settlement proposals), 1956.84 (approval or rejection), and 1956.96 (delinquent adjustment agreements).

7 CFR part 1962, subpart A, §§ 1962.34 (transfer of chattel security and assumption of debt), 1941.41(e) and (f), and 1941.46(g)(5) (release of liability).

7 CFR part 1965, subpart A, §§ 1965.12(a)(9) (subordination), 1962.26(f)(5)(i) (cash sales; release of liability), and 1965.27(b)(19), (f), and (g)(6) (transfer of real estate security).

7 CFR part 1980, subpart B, §§ 1980.114, 1980.115 (review of guaranteed loan applications), 1980.176 (e), (h), and (k) (special beginning farmers or rancher OL loan assistance), and 1980.191(b) (borrower training).

References in these regulations to the following requirements will not be carried out by the FSA county or area committees: the 5 or 15 day deadline for holding county committee meetings, the eligibility requirements that the applicant has the character, industry, and ability to carry out the proposed operations and will honestly endeavor to carry out its undertakings and obligations, and the provisions for 5-year eligibility certification. These policies were based on sections 332(e) and 333(2) of the CONACT that were abolished by section 227 of the Act. The outdated references will be removed by separate rule in the Federal Register.

The regulations at 7 CFR part 2054, subpart W concerning the employment, pay, and functions of FmHA county or area committees do not apply to county and area committees authorized under section 8(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act. The selection

and functions of FSA State, county, and area committees are governed by regulations at 7 CFR part 7 as consistent with section 227 of the Act.

Signed at Washington, D.C., on April 8, 1996.

Bruce R. Weber,

Acting Administrator, Farm Service Agency.

[FR Doc. 96-9201 Filed 4-12-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service will conduct public forums to gather ideas on ways to implement the conservation provisions of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 that will assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (the Department) in writing program guidance.

The public is invited to attend a meeting to provide brief oral comments. All are encouraged to provide detailed written comments concerning the implementation of FAIRA. Those who wish to speak at a meeting may make arrangements in advance by calling the State Conservationist who is listed as contact for the meeting. In addition, individuals may sign-up to speak at the forum, as time permits.

Written comments will be accepted at each of the forums. Comments must be postmarked or faxed by April 30 and addressed to: Paul W. Johnson, Chief, USDA/NRCS, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20250. FAX, (202) 720-1838.

The Department will conduct nine public forums. The forums will be in the following cities: Abilene, Texas; Columbus, Georgia, Longmont Colorado; Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, Sacramento, California; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Spokane, Washington; Springfield, Illinois; and Washington, DC.

DATES AND LOCATIONS: The nine forums will be held during Earth Week at the following locations on the dates listed:

Location	Date
Sheraton Berkshire Hotel, 1741 Paper Mill Road, Wyomissing, Pennsylvania 19610.	April 22.
Joint Center for Higher Education, Classroom Building Auditorium, North 665 Riverpoint Boulevard, Spokane, Washington.	April 22.
Howard Johnson Hotel, Nebraska Room, 3300 West Russell Street, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.	April 23.
Columbus Convention and Trade Center, Rooms 5, 6 and 7, 801 Front Street, Columbus, Georgia.	April 23.
USDA South Building, Jefferson Auditorium, 12th Street and Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC.	April 23.
Abilene Civic Center, 1100 N. 6th Street, Abilene, Texas.	April 24.
Image Gardens, 630 15th Street, Longmont, Colorado.	April 24.
The Red Lion Hotel (Not Inn), 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento, California.	April 25.
Illinois Building Auditorium, Illinois State Fairgrounds, 1101 East Sangamon Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.	April 26.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To obtain additional information about a specific forum, contact the following individual:

Location	Contact person	Phone	Address
Abilene, Texas	Harry W. Oneth	817-774-1214	NRCS State Conservationist, W.R. Poage Building, 101 South Mail Street, Temple, TX 76501-7682.
Columbus, Georgia	Earl Cosby	706-546-2275	NRCS State Conservationist, Federal Building, Box 13, 355 East Hancock Ave., Athens, GA 30601.
Longmont, Colorado	Duane L. Johnson	303-236-2886	NRCS State Conservationist, 655 Parfet Street, Room E200C, Lakewood, CO 80215-5517.
Wyomissing, Pennsylvania	Janet L. Oertly	717-782-2202	NRCS State Conservationist, One Credit Union Place, Suite 340, Harrisburg, PA 17110-2993.
Sacramento, California ..	Hershel R. Read	916-757-8215	NRCS State Conservationist, 2121-C 2nd Street, Davis, CA 95616.
Sioux Falls, South Dakota ..	Dean F. Fisher	605-352-1270	NRCS State Conservationist, Federal Building, 200 Fourth Street, SW., Huron, SD 57350-2475.
Spokane, Washington	Lynn A. Brown	509-353-2337	NRCS State Conservationist, Rock Pointe Tower II, Suite 450 W., 316 Boone Avenue, Spokane, WA 99201-2348.
Springfield, Illinois	Thomas W. Christensen	217-398-5267	NRCS State Conservationist, 1902 Fox Drive, Champaign, IL 61820-7335.
Washington, DC	Paul W. Johnson	202-720-1845	Chief, Natural Resources, Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013.

PROVIDING COMMENTS: The public is invited to attend a meeting to provide brief oral comments. All are encouraged to provide detailed written comments concerning the implementation of FAIRA. Those who wish to speak at a meeting may make arrangements in advance by calling the State Conservationist who is listed as contact for the meeting. In addition, individuals may sign-up to speak at the forum, as time permits.

Written comments will be accepted at each of the forums. Comments must be faxed or postmarked by April 30 and addressed to: Paul W. Johnson, Chief, USDA/NRCS, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20250. Fax 720-1838.

SUGGESTED AGENDA: The following agenda will be used at each of the nine forums:

- 8:30 Registration and speaker sign-up
 - 9:00 Welcome.—Briefing on the content of the FAIRA. Questions and clarifications
 - 10:00 Speaking Sessions by subject (listed below)
- Note: There will be a 5-minute time limit for each speaker.
- 12:00 Lunch on your own
 - 1:00 Speaking Sessions continue
 - 4:00 Scheduled adjournment.

Note: Meetings will continue until all registered speakers have had an opportunity to speak for the allotted time period.

Subjects That Will Be Covered During the Forums

1. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (new)
2. Swampbuster and wetlands provisions (modified)
3. Conservation Compliance (modified)
4. Farmland Protection Program (new)
5. Flood Risk Reduction Program (new)
6. Conservation Farm Option (new)
7. Conservation of Private Grazing Land Initiative (new)
8. Conservation Reserve Program (modified)
9. Emergency Watershed Protection Program (modified)
10. National Natural Resources Conservation Foundation (new)
11. State Technical Committees (broadened)
12. Wetland Memorandum of Agreement (modified)
13. Wetlands Reserve Program (modified)
14. Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (new)
15. Availability of farmers to be more flexible in planting. (new)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The United States Department of Agriculture (the Department), Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) will conduct public forums to gather ideas on ways to implement the conservation provisions of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIRA) that will assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (the Department) in writing program guidance.

The NRCS first visited the sites for these public forums in July and August of 1994 to listen to the public's comments on changes that were needed in the 1995 Farm bill to better understand the needs of the public served by programs related to conservation of natural resources. The Department considered the comments and suggestions received in the 1994 forums when developing its recommendations for the 1995 Farm Bill. After lengthy debate within the Congress, the 1996 Farm Bill was passed by the Congress and was cited as the "Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIRA). The President signed into law FAIRA on April 4, 1996. An overview of the FAIRA provisions is included with this notice.

To follow-up on the suggestions that were received in 1994 and to gather additional written suggestions on how best to implement these provisions, the NRCS will return to the sites of the 1994 public forums, plus hold an additional forum in Washington, D.C.

Overview of What We Heard in the 1994 Public Forums

Section 301: Definitions Applicable to Highly Erodible Cropland Conservation

Conservation compliance has reduced soil erosion significantly, though erosion remains a concern. Widespread support exists for the basic conservation compliance policy. However, many farmers want more flexibility in conservation plans. Some want a stricter more consistent soil loss standard.

Section 313: Good Faith Exemption

Farmers want payment reductions commensurate with violations.

Section 315: Development and Implementation of Conservation Plans and Conservation Systems

Some want a stricter, more consistent soil loss standard.

Section 322: Delineation of Wetlands: Exemption to Program Ineligibility

Wetlands conservation remains a contentious issue among farmers. Confusion revolves around the definition and delineation of wetlands and how these issues effect private property rights. Consensus is that

standardization of wetland determinations is needed.

Section 331: Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program (ECARP)

A common theme of the participants was that voluntary, incentive-driven programs will accomplish more conservation of natural resources. Regulatory programs will result in only minimal change. Because many resource problems transcend human-drawn boundaries, a watershed approach is needed for conservation planning. This approach should be coupled with comprehensive farm planning that allows farmers to satisfy federal, state, and local requirements of the law. Watershed planning must use a bottom-up approach and allow all stakeholders to be involved in the process.

Section 332: Conservation Reserve Program

Nearly all forum participants suggested the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continue, though fewer acres might be accommodated for budget reasons. The program should be targeted for the most environmentally fragile acres, including highly erodible cropland, areas that threaten water quality, and critical wildlife habitats. Partial-field enrollments should be accommodated.

Section 333: Wetlands Reserve Program

Considerable support was expressed among farm and environmental interests for wetland protection and restoration.

Section 334: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

A common theme of the participants was that voluntary, incentive-driven programs will accomplish more conservation of natural resources. Regulatory programs will result in only minimal change. Because many resource problems transcend human-drawn boundaries, a watershed approach is needed for conservation planning. This approach should be coupled with comprehensive farm planning that allows farmers to satisfy federal, state, and local requirements of the law. Watershed planning must use a bottom-up approach and allow all stakeholders to be involved in the process.

Section 336: Repeal of Superseded Authorities

Nonpoint source water quality is a major issue. Farm and nonfarm interests linked much of the problem to agriculture. A common theme of the participants was that voluntary, incentive-driven programs will

accomplish more than a regulatory program. Because many resource problems transcend human-drawn boundaries, a watershed approach is needed for conservation planning.

Section 341. Conservation Funding

In regards to technical assistance from approved sources, the participants in the forums emphasize that partnerships are needed. Decentralized program administration will allow interests who know the problems best to deal with those problems; the question is accountability. However, USDA and NRCS were urged not to sacrifice important field-staff capabilities in the name of efficiency and partnerships.

Section 342. State Technical Committees

Decentralized program administration will allow interests who know the problems best to deal with those problems; the question is accountability. Far more common ground exists among agricultural, environmental, and consumer interests than is often perceived.

Section 352. Forestry Incentives Program

Private, nonindustrial forest land is essential to timber production to achievement of such environmental values as open space, wildlife habitat, recreation, and clean air and water. Forest health was a concern in the West, as was the impact of forest management on stream ecosystems. Support was expressed for the Stewardship Incentive Program, Forestry Incentive Program, and urban forestry programs. Tax laws must encourage sound forest management.

Section 387: Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Wildlife habitat on private land is disappearing. While habitat gains were achieved via the CRP and WRP, the future of these and other habitat programs, such as Water Bank, is uncertain. Cost-sharing and easements are solutions, as is emphasis on habitat enhancement in any green-payments program.

Section 391: Air Quality Research Oversight

Air and water pollution were the primary environmental concerns expressed by forum participants.

Section 388: Farmland Protection Program

Forum participants supported the purchase of conservation easements by the Secretary. Participants in California,

Colorado, and Pennsylvania expressed concern about the conversion of farmland to nonfarm uses and the associated environmental and social consequences include the loss of important agricultural productive capacity and open space and the inability of young people to enter farming. Tax credits and inheritance tax law reform are solutions, participants said.

Overview of the Provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill (FAIRA)

Sec. 301. Definitions Applicable to Highly Erodible Cropland Conservation

Defines conservation plan as applicable to highly erodible cropland and containing the decision of the person with respect to location, land use, tillage, and conservation system and schedule for implementation. The plan must be approved by the conservation district in consultation with the local committee and the Secretary, or by the Secretary. Defines a conservation system as conservation practices that are based on local conditions, available conservation technology, and standards and guidelines contained in the NRCS FOTG; and provides for cost effective and practical soil erosion reduction or improvement in soil conditions on a field or group of fields with highly erodible cropland. It also defines a field to include boundaries based on croplines, if they are not subject to change. The Section requires publication of USLE and WEQ in the Federal Register within 60 days of enactment. Modification of the equations is prohibited except following notice and comment in the Federal Register.

Subtitle B—Highly Erodible Land Conservation

Sec. 311. Program Ineligibility

Provides that contract payments under a production flexibility contract, marketing assistance loans, and any type of price support or payment, made available under the Agricultural Market Transition Act and the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act are subject to conservation compliance.

Sec. 312. Conservation Reserve Lands

Limits conservation requirements on lands that were included under a CRP contract, that is terminated or expires, to the same standards as applied to other highly erodible cropland in the area.

Sec. 313. Good Faith Exemption

Removes the 5 year interval for good faith exemption. Authorizes the

Secretary, under good faith, to allow a reasonable grace period, not to exceed 1 year, during which the person can implement measures and practices necessary to be considered actively applying the person's conservation plan. Allows the Secretary to determine the degree of penalty for a good faith violation dependent on the seriousness of violation.

Sec. 314. Expedited Procedures for Granting Variances From Conservation Plans

Directs the Secretary to establish expedited procedures for considering temporary variances concerning weather, pests, or disease. Requires the Secretary to make a decision on whether to grant a variance within a 30 day period beginning on the date of receipt of the request, otherwise the temporary variance shall be considered to be granted.

Sec. 315. Development and Implementation of Conservation Plans and Conservation Systems

Inserts a new Sec. 1213 in the Food Security Act of 1985 on HEL that establishes requirements for the development and implementation of conservation plans for conservation compliance purposes. These include:

- Requires the Secretary to insure that standards and guidelines in the FOTG permit a person to use a conservation system that is technically and economically feasible, based on local conditions, cost effective, and does not cause undue economic hardship.
- Stipulates how "substantial erosion reduction" will be calculated for purposes of conservation compliance.
- Provides that the measurement of residue consider residue in top 2 inches; provides for acceptance of producer residue measurements, including third party measurements; and provides a means for certification of third parties to perform residue measurements.
- Allows self certification for compliance at the time of application for benefits.
- Provides for technical assistance for conservation on lands other than HEL.
- Encourages on-farm research under a conservation plan for HEL.
- Allows the county or area committee to provide relief to a producer in cases of undue economic hardship.

See also Section 343 concerning publication of State technical guides.

Sec. 316. Investigation of Possible Compliance Deficiencies

Amends the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 FSA) by adding a new Sec.

1215 that directs USDA employees who observe a possible compliance violation while providing on-site technical assistance, to provide the responsible person, not later than 45 days after observing the possible violation, information on actions needed to comply with the plan and this subtitle. The information is in lieu of reporting the observation of a compliance violation. If corrective action is not fully implemented within one year after the responsible person receives the information, the Secretary may conduct a status review.

Sec. 317. Wind Erosion Estimation Pilot Project

Directs the Secretary to conduct a pilot project to review, and modify as appropriate, the use of wind erosion factors used under HEL requirements. The pilot project shall be for counties and producers that have 100 percent of their cropland determined to be HEL, have reasonable likelihood that use of wind erosion factors have resulted in an inequitable application of the HEL requirements, and if the use of the land classification system referred to in the original act may result in a more accurate delineation of the cropland. If the Secretary determines that a significant error has occurred in determining highly erodible cropland under the project, that Secretary shall, at the request of owners or operators of the cropland, conduct a new determination of the cropland using the most accurate available process.

Subtitle C—Wetland Conservation

Sec. 321. Program Ineligibility

Provides the Secretary discretionary authority to identify for person the programs for which eligibility to participate may be forfeited because of wetland conservation violations. Additionally, the Secretary may identify the amount program payments may be redirected because of program violations.

Sec. 322. Delineation of Wetlands; Exemptions to Program Ineligibility

Directs the Secretary to delineate, determine and certify all wetlands located on subject land on the farm and delineate them on a wetlands delineation map. Existing determinations are certified as to whether they are sufficient for the purpose of making a determination of ineligibility. Individuals carrying out activities that are inconsistent with the law, but based on information provided by NRCS, will not be penalized. Eliminates the abandonment provisions

for prior converted wetlands and changes the criteria for farmed wetlands and farmed wetlands pasture. Provides the Secretary with broad mitigation options. Directs the Secretary to grant persons who converted wetlands without intent to violate a reasonable period of time to restore or mitigate the functions and values of the wetland. Directs the Secretary to identify categorical minimal effects and provide training to employees in making minimal effect determinations. Allows persons who have converted a wetland to mitigate for the losses of functions and values. Grants the Secretary the authority to establish a pilot mitigation banking initiative.

Sec. 323. Consultation and Cooperation Requirements

Section 1223 of the Food Security Act of 1985 is repealed. Therefore, the requirements of consulting with the Secretary of Interior on wetland determinations and actions is repealed.

Sec. 324. Application of Program Ineligibility to Affiliated Persons

The provision adds a new Sec. 1223 that requires that any reduction in benefits to persons due to a violation of wetland conservation requirements will be reduced among each affiliated person proportionate to the interests held by the affiliated person.

Sec. 325. Clarification of Definition of Agricultural Lands in Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Defines agricultural lands for purposes of the wetlands MOA to include cropland, pastureland, native pasture, rangelands, and other lands used to support the production of livestock; and tree farms.

Sec. 326. Effective Date

Directs that the wetland conservation subtitle and amendments made by the subtitle would become effective 90 days after enactment.

Subtitle D—Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program

Sec. 331. Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program (ECARP)

Establishes ECARP as the broad umbrella encompassing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). ECARP is authorized for the 1996 through 2002 calendar years. Authorizes the Secretary to designate watersheds, multistate areas, or regions of special environmental sensitivity as conservation priority areas that are eligible for enhanced assistance

under CRP, WRP, and EQIP. Assistance in conservation priority areas is to help agricultural producers comply with non-point source pollution requirements of the Clean Water Act and other Federal and State environmental laws and to meet other conservation needs. Assistance may be based on the significance of the soil, water, wildlife habitat, and related natural resource problems in a watershed, area, or region, and practices that best address the problems, and that maximize environmental benefits per dollar expended, as determined by the Secretary.

Sec. 332. Conservation Reserve Program

Extends CRP until 2002 with authority for new enrollments to replace acres leaving the program. The Secretary may maintain up to 36.4 million acres at any one time. Authorizes a CRP participant who entered into a contract before January 1, 1995, to terminate the contract not less than 60 days after notifying the Secretary, provided the contract has been in effect for at least 5 years. Lands not subject to an early termination of contract are: filterstrips, waterways, strips by riparian areas, windbreaks, shelterbelts, lands with an EI of more than 15, and other lands of high environmental value (including wetlands), as determined by the Secretary. The land included in the terminated contract cannot have higher conservation requirements than those for similar lands in the area.

Sec. 333. Wetlands Reserve Program

Extends WRP until 2002 with an enrollment cap of 975,000 acres. Requires that, to the extent practicable, a balance of permanent easements, 30-year easements and voluntary restoration agreements be achieved in calendar years 1997 through 2002; eliminates lump sum easement payment option; and establishes a State Technical Committee role in restoration planning.

Sec. 334. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Establishes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP combines functions of four conservation programs (which are repealed) and maximizes environmental benefits per dollar expended. Directs the Secretary during FY 96 through FY 2002 to provide technical assistance, cost share and incentive payments and educational assistance to operators who enter into contracts of five to ten years with the Secretary. Requires producers to submit a plan containing appropriate conservation measures as a requirement

for a contract. Directs the Secretary to use a competitive offer system for operators to receive cost sharing payments for implementing structural practices. Tenants would be required to obtain the concurrence of the owner before the offer is accepted by the Secretary. Cost sharing payments under EQIP shall not exceed 75 percent of the projected cost of the practice, taking into consideration any payment from a state or local government. Operators of large confined livestock operations are not eligible for cost sharing on the construction of structural animal waste management facilities. However, they are eligible for incentive payments and technical assistance. Total amount of cost share and incentive payments to any person under the program may not exceed:

\$10,000 for any fiscal year for a one year contract; or

\$50,000 for any multiyear contract.

The Secretary may exceed the annual payment amount on a case by case basis if needed to achieve the purposes of EQIP and if consistent with maximizing environmental benefits per dollar expended. Authorizes the Secretary to request assistance of state agencies as well as other governmental or private resources to assist in providing technical assistance for the development and implementation of conservation practices.

Sec. 335. Conservation Farm Option (CFO)

Establishes a conservation farm option pilot program for eligible producers of wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice. Under the pilot program, producers that have contract acreage under production flexibility contracts, are provided an option of a 10 year CFO contract as a single annual payment equivalent to the amount of the combined payments under CRP, WRP and EQIP. The pilot CFO program is intended to address the conservation of soil, water, and related resources, water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and similar conservation purposes. Funding increases from \$7.5 million in FY 1997 to \$62.5 million in FY 2002. Funding is from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Sec. 336. Repeal of Superseded Authorities

The language repeals Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP), Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP), Colorado River Salinity Control Program (CRSCP), and the Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP) and makes conforming amendments to replace these existing cost sharing

programs with EQIP. The language for repeal of current programs includes transition language that allows USDA to use GPCP, ACP, CRSCP, and WQIP authorities to achieve EQIP purposes while rules are developed. After 180 days, EQIP rules must be in effect in order to obligate additional EQIP resources. The authority for certain water resource studies was repealed for housekeeping purposes and does not limit USDA from conducting the studies under other existing authorities.

Subtitle E—Conservation Funding and Administration

Sec. 341. Conservation Funding

Replaces the current subtitle E of the Food Security Act of 1985 with two new sections. The new Sec. 1241 directs that for each of fiscal years 1996 through 2002, the Secretary shall use funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to carry out the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Funding from CCC for EQIP is \$130 million for fiscal year 1996 and \$200 million for each of the fiscal years 1997 through 2002 for providing technical assistance, cost share payments, incentive payments, and education, with 50 percent for assistance targeted at practices relating to livestock production.

The new Sec. 1242 directs the Secretary, to the extent practical, to avoid duplication in conservation plans developed under HEL, CRP, WRP, and EQIP. CRP and WRP enrollment in any county is limited to 25 percent of the cropland. Not more than 10 percent of the cropland in a county may be subject to an easement acquired under the CRP and WRP (except for shelterbelts and windbreaks), unless the Secretary determines that the action would not adversely affect the local economy of a county and the operators in the county are having difficulties complying with HEL requirements. Requires the Secretary to provide safeguards for the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including sharing of payments under CRP, WRP, and EQIP. In the preparation of a conservation compliance plan or other plan required for assistance from USDA, the Secretary shall permit producers to obtain technical assistance from approved sources, as determined by the Secretary, other than NRCS. If the Secretary rejects a technical determination made by such a source, the basis of the Secretary's determination must be supported by documented evidence. Requires the Secretary to issue regulations for CRP

and WRP within 90 days after enactment.

Sec. 342. State Technical Committees

Expands membership on State Technical Committees to include agricultural producers with conservation expertise, non-profit organizations with demonstrable conservation expertise, others knowledgeable about conservation techniques, and agri-business. Requires public notice of meetings, and allows for public attendance at meetings related to conservation issues. Assigns certain additional responsibilities to State Technical Committees.

Sec. 343. Public Notice for Revisions to State Technical Guides

Requires public notice and comment for future revisions in NRCS state technical guides as used for HEL, wetland conservation, and CRP requirements.

Subtitle F—National Natural Resources Conservation Foundation

Sec. 351. Through Sec. 360 National Natural Resources Conservation Foundation

Establishes a National Natural Resources Conservation Foundation to promote solutions to natural resources conservation issues. Authorized to promote partnerships, accept gifts, make grants, and conduct research and demonstrations. May not enforce regulations. Administered by a nine member Board of Trustees.

Subtitle G—Forestry

Sec. 371. Office of International Forestry

Authorizes to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 1996 through 2002 such sums as are necessary to carry out the [authorized purposes of the Office of International Forestry.]

Sec. 372. Cooperative Work for Protection, Management, and Improvement of National Forest System

Authorizes cooperative work for the protection, management, and improvement of the National Forest System and permits payments for such work to be made from any appropriation of the Forest Service that is available for similar work if reimbursement is made by the cooperator in the same fiscal year. Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop rules to protect the interests of the Forest Service in cooperative work agreements.

Sec. 352. Forestry Incentives Program

Reauthorizes the Forestry Incentives Program through the year 2002.

Sec. 374. Optional State Grants for Forest Legacy Program

Provides the Secretary with authority to make, at the request of a participating State, grants to the State to carry out the Forest Legacy Program in that State.

Subtitle H—Miscellaneous Conservation Provisions

Sec. 381. Conservation Activities of Commodity Credit Corporation

Amends the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act by adding, as a specific purpose for CCC, the carrying out of conservation of environmental functions specifically authorized by law. The amendments becomes effective on January 1, 1997.

Sec. 382. Floodplain Easements

Adds authority to acquire floodplain easement for the Emergency Watershed Protection Programs.

Sec. 383. Resource Conservation & Development Program

Reauthorizes the RC&D program through 2002.

Sec. 384. Repeal of Report Requirements

Repeals current legal requirements for printing a specified number of soil survey reports.

Sec. 385. Flood Risk Reduction

Authorizes the Secretary to enter into a contract with a producer on a farm who has acreage under a production flexibility contract that is frequently flooded. A producer must agree to terminate any contract acreage and production flexibility contract, forgo loans for contract commodities, oilseeds, and ELS cotton, not apply for crop insurance issued or reinsured by USDA, comply with applicable HEL and wetlands compliance requirements, not apply for any conservation program payments from USDA, not apply for disaster program benefits, and refund the payments, with interest, if the terms of the contract are violated or if the producer transfers the property to another person who violates the contract. Producers would receive, from CCC funding, not more than the sum of 95 percent of contract payments under Title I (Agricultural Market Transition Program). Requires that funds for production flexibility payments be reduced by an amount equal to that amount which produces forgo under this provision. Subject to advance appropriations, the Secretary may make additional payments to an eligible producer to offset other estimated Federal government outlays on frequently flooded land. Authorizes to

be appropriated necessary sums for this added payment.

Sec. 386. Conservation of Private Grazing Land

Provides authority and emphasis for a grazing lands program within USDA to promote conservation and enhancement of natural resources on such private lands. If funding is provided, it will be through NRCS.

Sec. 387. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Directs the Secretary, in consultation with State Technical Committees, to establish, under the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a wildlife habitat incentives program to provide cost sharing for landowners to apply practices to develop upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other types of wildlife habitat. To carry out the program, a total of \$50 million shall be made available for fiscal years 1996 through 2002 from funds available to carry out the Conservation Reserve Program.

Sec. 388. Farmland Protection Program

Under the farmland protection program, the Secretary is directed to purchase conservation easements or other interests in between 170,000 and 340,000 acres of land with prime, unique or other productive soil that is subject to a pending offer from a state or local government to limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Funding for the program, from the Commodity Credit Corporation, shall not exceed \$35 million.

Sec. 391. Agricultural Air Quality Research Oversight

Encourages the Secretary to strengthen research efforts related to agricultural air quality. Directs the Secretary to ensure intergovernmental cooperation in research activities related to agricultural air quality and to avoid duplication of activities. The Secretary shall ensure that the results of any research related to agricultural air quality conducted by Federal agencies not report erroneous data with respect to agricultural air quality. Directs the Chief of NRCS to establish a task force to address agricultural air quality issues. The composition of the task force shall include employees of the Department of Agriculture, industry representatives, and other experts in the fields of agricultural and air quality. The task force shall advise the Secretary in his role of providing oversight and coordination related to agricultural air quality.

Subtitle D—Miscellaneous Rural Development Provisions

Sec. 791. Interest Rate Formula

Amends both the Bankhead Jones Farm Tenant Act and the Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act to allow the Secretary to reestablish interest rate for RC&D loan and watershed loan programs.

Sec. 794. Fund for Rural America

Establishes an account labeled the Fund for Rural America and directs that \$100 million be transferred from the Treasury on January 1, 1997, October 1, 1998, and October 1, 1999 to the fund. Specifies the purposes of the fund to be rural development and research. Research includes grants to conserve and enhance natural resources. The Secretary is authorized to use a third of the funds for rural development, a third for competitive research, and a third for either at the discretion of the Secretary.

Sec. 922. Student Internship Programs

Defines a student intern to be a person employed by USDA to assist scientific, professional, administrative, and technical employees of the Department, and be a student in good standing at an institution of higher learning and pursuing a course of study related to the field employed in by USDA. Authorizes use of funds to pay lodging, subsistence, and transportation expenses of a student intern at the agency.

Paul W. Johnson,

Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. 96-9278 Filed 4-12-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Open Meeting**

AGENCY: Sanctuaries and Reserves Division (SRD), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Open Meeting.

SUMMARY: NOAA will conduct a meeting of the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine