New Regs Discourage Farming Highly Erodible Land

COLLEGE PARK, Md. - Farmers have more reason than ever for retiring their highly erodible land during the August 4-15 signup period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), according to Pearlie S. Reed, Maryland state conservationist for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

Not only is more land eligible, new 1985 Farm Bill regulations make it tougher on farmers who continue to farm highly erodible land, he explained.

During pervious signups, land in capability classes II-V had to be eroding at three times the tolerable rate to be eligible for the CRP. This requirement has been changed to twice the tolerable rate if gully erosion is also present. This change increases the land eligible

in Maryland from 242,000 to 363,000

acres. Only 600 acres have been

enrolled in the program so far. Reed said that many of the farmers who were turned away from previous signups might now be eligible and urged them to check with their local SCS office.

Another incentive for retiring highly erodible land is the new

sodbuster legislation that denies federal farm program benefits to farmers who crop highly erodible land unless they begin applying a conservation plan by 1990 and complete it by 1995.

Under the conservation compliance provision, farmers must have a conservation plan for highly erodible land that is being cropped or they will be banned from participating in price and income land is accepted into the Consupports, disaster payments, crop insruance, Farmers Home Administration loans and guaranteed loans, Commodity Credit Corporation storage payments, farm storage security, and other programs which USDA offers payments related to commodity production, including the Conservation Reserve.

"Farmers whose highly erodible

servation Reserve will receive annual payments as well as financial help for installing conservation practices necessary to control erosion," Reed said. "And, they won't have to worry about losing other federal program benefits."

People are taking a more serious view of soil erosion both at the federal and state level, Reed said

He cited the Farm Bill provisions, as well as the state's critical areas legislation which requires a conservation plan for farmland within 1,000 feet of tidal waters, as examples.

"What these new laws are saying is that the public will no longer subsidize farmers who cause soil erosion on the one hand, then pay to clean it up on the other," he said.

Task Force Designates 'High-Risk' Rabies Area

HARRISBURG - A coordinated effort spearheaded by public and animal health officials at the state and local level is helping reduce the threat of rabies to domestic animals and the potential for human exposure, according to state Agriculture Secretary Richard E. Grubb.

"An interagency taskforce, including representatives from the Departments of Agriculture and Health and the Game Commission, has identified high risk areas in the state and encouraged local veterinary medical associations to establish low-cost pet vaccination

clinics in these areas," said Grubb. "Research by the taskforce indicates that more than 300 clinics will be conducted throughout the Commonwalth this year. Local veterinarians and clinic coordinators are to be commended for their continued work to prevent the spread of this virus," he added.

The taskforce has designated a 16-county region of southcentral Pennsylvania as a high-risk area and encouraged groups in the area

to organize clinics. They include: Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, Somerset and York. "The Taskforce has supplied information to groups outlining procedures useful in setting up clinics and offered to help publicize the events," said Grubb.

Up to date information on the

statewide rabies situation and potential rabies problems can be obtained through the Department of Health's toll-free hotline at 1-800-692-7254, which is staffed between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays. The Department also has an Emergency Answering Service, (717) 737-5349, for prompt medical referral assistance in the event of human contact with a potentially rabid animal.

ASCS Will Accept Late Acreage Reports

CREAMERY - Although July 15 was the last day for farmers to report their 1986 planted acres, some producers have not filed a crop report, according to Montgomery County ASCS director, Linda Treese.

'Late-filed acreage reports will be accepted as long as the farmer pays the cost of verifying the acreage and there is physical

evidence of production," Treese said. Late reports are subect to mandatory spot check, she said.

ASCS uses crop reports to determine program compliance and to document crop acreage bases. Before program participants receive price support loans, deficiency payments and other benefits, they are required to report crops and acreages planted, the uses to be made of these crops. and cropland acres to be devoted to the acreage conservation reserve.

"Crop certification is most important to farmers who are participating in the 1986 programs, because without an acreage report, farmers are not really participating." The ASCS official said the acreage report determines the level at which farmers are eligible for program payments and other benefits.

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