



Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

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Farm Service  
Agency

**TO:** All FSA State Executive Directors and NRCS State Conservationists

Farm Programs

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**SUBJECT:** Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - Maintaining Beehives on CRP Acreage

This memo is to remind you that locating beehives on CRP land is a permissible practice.

Pollinators are essential to the production of an estimated one-third of the human diet and to the reproduction of at least 80 percent of flowering plants. Insect-pollinated agricultural commodities result in significant income for agricultural producers and account for over \$20 billion in annual U.S. agricultural production. Honeybees, the predominant animal pollinator for United States agriculture, require an ample and diverse supply of pollen and nectar to thrive.

CRP provides millions of acres of vital habitat for honeybees, and has since 1986. CRP is viewed by numerous stakeholders in the pollinator community as providing essential habitat in a landscape that has been rapidly changing often in ways that depleted habitat well suited for honeybees. A large concentration of CRP land has been located in the upper Midwest and Northern Plains where perhaps as many as 50 percent of the nation's honeybee colonies spend the summer, after providing pollination services in the south and in coastal regions. Traditionally, CRP acres, with their abundant acres of legume rich forage, have offered the hives a safe haven from the pressures of modern agriculture and have provided larger-scale, natural sources of pollen and nectar essential to healthy brood rearing needed to sustain colonies throughout the year.

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, encourages the inclusion of pollinator habitat in all USDA administered conservation programs. CRP practice, Pollinator Habitat, was developed with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and pollinator partners to meet this goal. Additionally, Handbook 2-CRP, subparagraph 634 B, provides that beehives may be stored on CRP acreage consistent with the soil, water, and wildlife goals of CRP.

Ensuring the long-term viability of honey beekeeping requires the development of both suitable habitat for foraging bees, and access to this habitat for beekeepers. Farm Service Agency (FSA) and NRCS leadership encourages FSA county committees and NRCS field office staff to work together and with pollinator partners during the conservation planning process to provide healthy pollinator habitat on CRP lands, and also to encourage landowners enrolled in the CRP program to provide, as might be negotiated in the conservation planning process, access and space for beekeepers to place their hives.