**RESOLUTION 2024-09**

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| **RESOLUTION TITLE:** The Role of FSA and NRCS in Managing CREP and CRP |

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| **SPONSORING CDs (or entities):** Whitman Conservation District |

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| **AREA:** 🞏 Northwest 🞏 Southwest 🞏 North Central 🞏 South Central 🞏 Northeast  Southeast |

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| **RESOLUTION TYPE:**   **Policy** (setting a new or amended internal policy directive)  🞏 **Position Statement** (declaring an official WACD position)  🞏 **Recognition** (recognizing an entity for notable contributions)  🞏 **Study** (identifying research or investigation deemed necessary by WACD members) |

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| **RESOLUTION ACTION AGENCY** (check any option that applies):   **WACD**  **🞏 WSCC**  **🞏 OTHER STATE AGENCY \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**   **NRCS**  **🞏 NACD (See Page 2)**  **🞏 NON-STATE/FEDERAL PARTNER \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

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| **TYPE OF TEXT OF RESOLUTION** (check all boxes that apply):  🞏 **Technical change**.   **Substantive change to existing policy**.  🞏 **New policy**. |

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| **BACKGROUND DESCRIBING THE ISSUE/PROBLEM STATEMENT:**  The management of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has been a source of conflict and frustration across Whitman County and beyond. This tension arises primarily from the misalignment of responsibilities between the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It is imperative that CREP be administered under the technical expertise of the NRCS to better serve the community and address key conservation needs.  **1. Mismanagement by FSA** The FSA, which primarily focuses on financial transactions such as loans and insurance claims, has been analyzing contracts without the necessary recommendations from the NRCS, the agency designed to provide the technical guidance needed for such conservation efforts. This lack of collaboration leads to inefficiencies and errors in program implementation, as evidenced by reports that the FSA has improperly removed participants based on contract evaluations rather than technical advice from the NRCS.  **2. Inefficiency in Administration** Currently, the FSA’s role in managing a technical program like CREP does not make sense. The NRCS specializes in developing and administering conservation programs that require informed technical input, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The overlap and confusion created by having a primarily financial entity handle the technical aspects complicate the program and create redundancy. This misalignment of roles not only frustrates stakeholders but also undermines the effectiveness of conservation efforts.  **3. Importance of Technical Expertise** The CREP program inherently requires both monetary management and technical knowledge to ensure its success. By allowing the NRCS to handle both the technical and financial aspects of CREP, the program can benefit from cohesive management and direct communication. The 2018 Farm Bill allows USDA to partner with various organizations, yet the FSA continues to operate in a manner detached from the technical realities necessary for effecting real conservation impact.  **4. Proposed Solutions** To resolve these issues, it is essential to delineate the roles of each agency clearly. The FSA should focus on non-technical programs such as loans and farm certifications. By doing so, it can operate efficiently within its expertise, while the NRCS can fully leverage its technical acumen to manage programs like CREP. This change would not only streamline operations but also enhance the overall efficacy of conservation efforts moving forward.  To optimize the management of programs like CREP, it is vital to realign responsibilities. By entrusting the NRCS with both the technical and financial components of conservation programs, we can eliminate redundancy, improve collaboration, and ultimately deliver better outcomes for our communities and the environment. It is time to acknowledge the strengths of each agency and allow them to operate within their areas of expertise for the benefit of sustainable agriculture and conservation. |

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| **PROPOSED RESOLUTION LANGUAGE:**  The NRCS shall be tasked with full management of the CREP, CRP, and other technical conservation programs retaining authority over both technical and financial segments of the program to ensure a streamlined and effective delivery of conservation services.  The FSA focus exclusively on its established role in administering non-technical financial programs such as loans, insurance claims, and farm certifications, thereby reducing redundancy and enhancing operational efficiency.  An inter-agency collaborative framework be established between the FSA and NRCS to facilitate ongoing communication, share insights, and ensure alignment of goals that supports agricultural sustainability and effective conservation outcomes. If a program already exists, this should be expanded upon.  Regular assessments should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of this new structure, ensuring that it serves the best interests of landowners and the community, while securing our environmental resources for future generations. |

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| **IS THERE A WACD FINANCIAL IMPLICATION TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY? (Funding required, staff time, etc.)**   **NO**  🞏 **YES** (briefly explain to the best of your ability): |