

# Whole Farm Plan Concept Included in Clean Water Act



A provision of the Clean Water Act (CWA) authored by Representative Bill Emerson (R-MO), which recognizes the voluntary whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan approach, is supported by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) and several agricultural organizations. The amendment, adopted by voice vote, says if a farmer or rancher implements a voluntary plan under an approved state process, they will be in compliance with the CWA nonpoint source provisions.

"In order to reduce complex and diverse nonpoint source pollution problems, a commitment of time and resources is necessary," said James Moseley. "A voluntary whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan will be more successful than 'command and control' type provisions because the voluntary plan is reasonable, voluntary, and based on incentives, education and technical assistance."

As a part of its 1995 Farm Bill proposal, NASDA suggested that a whole farm plan should be included in the 1995 Farm Bill, and that voluntary implementation of the plan would place the farmer/rancher in compliance with other regulatory programs such as the CWA, the Endangered Species Act, the Central Zone Management

Act (CZMA), and other programs which require management plans and practices to conserve, protect, and enhance the environment.

H.R. 961 would also make significant changes to section 404 of the law, the provisions regulating wetlands. The bill establishes a clear and concise definition of wetlands, places the Secretary of Agriculture in the sole lead role for delineating agricultural wetlands, and fully protects private property rights.

NASDA is a nonprofit association of public officials representing the Commissioners, Secretaries and Directors of Agriculture in the 50 states and four territories.

The following is a fact sheet describing what a voluntary whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is and is not.

## What a Voluntary Whole Farm/Ranch Natural Resource Management Plan Under the Environmental Enhancement Investment Program Is

- *Voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plans provide farmers and ranchers an opportunity to plan for environmental enhancement of the farm and ranch natural resources. The plan will balance environmental protection and enhancement with the economic needs of the

producer by addressing the appropriate resource needs of the individual farm/ranch as assessed by the producer.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is farmer and rancher owned and controlled. The planning process allows a producer to manage the business rather than a federal or state bureaucrat.

- The planning process will provide that when *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plans are implemented the farmer/rancher will meet all laws, regulations and natural resource needs and allow them to make a profit in a world marketplace.

- Implementation of a *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan eliminates multi-agency decision making. Producers will deal only with the appropriate agricultural agency when developing and implementing a plan. Farmers and ranchers will not fear multiple agencies giving conflicting and confusing advice and direction.

- *Voluntary* whole farm/ranch resource management plans will provide financial assistance for implementing additional environmental management. Options may range from direct incentives to develop and implement the plans, tax credits for implementation of the plan, and low interest loans through a state revolving fund.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is a logical step-by-step process toward better resource management with a rationale timeframe for implementation.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is a summary of generally recognized and scientifically-based resource enhancing

practices which allows for producer-based innovations.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is a non-threatening process for producers because it is owned and controlled by farmers and ranchers rather than a government agency.

## What a Voluntary Whole Farm/Ranch Natural Resource Management Plan Under the Environmental Enhancement Investment Program is NOT.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is NOT a step toward mandatory and regulated farm/ranch decision making.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is NOT a government driven planning process. Planning is done by farmers and ranchers with assistance and cooperation of private sector resources.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is NOT a government payment for specific action. Payments for the plan are NOT the same as "green payments" where producers receive payments for such actions as reduced pesticide use. The plan is NOT focused on reduced use of inputs, but rather the opportunity to effectively, efficiently and economically use inputs in a responsible fashion.

- A *voluntary* whole farm/ranch natural resource management plan is NOT a trade off for continued government commodity support programs. Environmental enhancement assistance must be in addition to current income support programs.

Source: National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. (202) 296-9680.