

Committee, may establish uniform maximum annual payment limits for agreements within a State or for geographic areas within a State.

(d) Preliminary estimates of annual payments. Upon request prior to filing an application for enrollment, a person may be apprised of the maximum annual payment rates.

(e) Adjustment of annual rates.

(1) The State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, shall reexamine the payment rates with respect to each agreement at the beginning of the fifth year of any ten-year initial or renewal period and before the renewal expires.

(2) An adjustment in the payment rates shall be made for any initial or renewal period taking into consideration the current land rental rates and crop values in the area. No adjustment shall be made in a payment rate which will result in a reduction of an annual payment rate from the rate which is specified in the initial or renewal agreement.

(3) The rate or rates of annual payments may be increased if the program participant permits access by the general public to the designated acreage for hunting, trapping, fishing, and hiking, subject to applicable State and Federal regulations.

§ 633.8 Cost-share payments.

(a) In addition to annual payments, the NRCS may share the cost with program participants of protecting the wetland functions and values of the enrolled land as provided in the conservation plan. The NRCS may pay up to 75 percent of such costs.

(b) Cost-share payments may be made only upon a determination by the NRCS that an eligible practice or an identifiable unit of the practice has been established in compliance with appropriate standards and specifications. Identified practices may be implemented by the program participant or other designee.

(c) A program participant may seek additional cost-share assistance from other public or private organizations as long as the activities funded are in compliance with this part. In no event shall the program participant receive

an amount which exceeds 100 percent of the total actual cost of the practices.

§ 633.9 Conservation plan.

(a) The program participant, with assistance from NRCS and in consultation with the Conservation District, shall prepare a conservation plan for the acreage designated under an agreement.

(b) The conservation plan is the basis for the agreement and is incorporated therein. It includes a schedule of conservation treatment and management required to protect and to maintain the wetland and adjacent land as a functional wetland unit for the life of the agreement.

(c) Conservation treatment and management of the vegetation for wetland protection, wildlife habitat, or other authorized objectives are consistent with the program objectives and priorities.

§ 633.10 Modifications.

The NRCS may approve modifications to the agreement or associated conservation plan after consultation with the Conservation District. Any modification must meet WBP program objectives, and must be in compliance with this part.

§ 633.11 Transfer of interest in an agreement.

(a) If the ownership or operation of a farm changes in such a manner that the agreement no longer contains the signatures of the persons required by § 633.6(a) to sign the agreement, the agreement shall be modified to reflect the new interested persons and new divisions of payments.

(b) If such persons are not willing to become parties to the modified agreement or for any other reason a modified agreement is not executed, the agreement shall be terminated and all unearned payments shall be forfeited or refunded.

(c) The annual payment for the year in which the change of ownership or operation occurs shall not be considered to have been earned unless the designated acreage is continued in the program and there is compliance with the agreement for the full agreement year.

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(d) The signatories to the agreement prior to the change of ownership or operation shall be jointly and severally responsible for refunding the unearned payments previously made.

§ 633.12 Termination of agreements.

(a) The State Conservationist may, by mutual agreement with the parties to the agreement, consent to the termination of the agreement where:

(1) The parties to the agreement are unable to comply with the terms of the agreement as the result of conditions beyond their control;

(2) Compliance with the terms of the agreement would work a severe hardship on the parties to the agreement; or

(3) Termination of the agreement would be in the public interest.

(b) If an agreement is terminated in accordance with the provisions of this section, the annual payment for the year in which the agreement is terminated shall not be considered to have been earned unless there is compliance with the terms and conditions of the agreement for the entire calendar year.

§ 633.13 Violations and remedies.

(a) In the event of a violation of an agreement or any associated conservation plan, the parties to the agreement shall be given reasonable notice and an opportunity to voluntarily correct the violation within 30 days of the date of the notice, or such additional time as the State Conservationist may allow.

(b) In addition to any and all legal and equitable remedies as may be available to the NRCS under applicable law, the NRCS may withhold any annual or cost-share payments owing to the parties of the agreement at any time there is a material breach of the agreement or any conservation plan. Such withheld funds may be used to offset costs incurred by the NRCS in any remedial actions or retained as damages pursuant to court order or settlement agreement.

(c) The NRCS shall be entitled to recover any and all administrative and legal costs, including attorney's fees or expenses, associated with any enforcement or remedial action.

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§ 633.14 Debt collection.

Any debts arising under this program are governed with respect to their collection by the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966 (31 U.S.C. 3701) and the regulations found in 4 CFR chapter II.

§ 633.15 Payments not subject to claims.

(a) Any payments due any person shall be determined and allowed without regard to State land and without regard to any claim or lien against any crop, or proceeds thereof, which may be asserted by any creditor, except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) The regulations governing setoffs and withholdings, in part 13 of this title, as amended, shall be applicable to this program.

§ 633.16 Assignments.

Any person entitled to any cash payment under this program may assign the right to receive such cash payments, in whole or in part.

§ 633.17 Appeals.

(a) Any person may obtain reconsideration and review of determinations affecting participation in this program in accordance with part 614 of this chapter.

(b) Before a person may seek judicial review of any action taken under this part, the person must exhaust all administrative appeal procedures set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, and for purposes of judicial review, no decision shall be a final agency action except a decision of the Chief of NRCS under these procedures.

§ 633.18 Scheme and device.

(a) If it is determined by the NRCS that a person has employed a scheme or device to defeat the purposes of this part, any part of any program payment otherwise due or paid such person during the applicable period may be withheld or be required to be refunded with interest thereon, as determined appropriate by the NRCS.

(b) A scheme or device includes, but is not limited to, coercion, fraud, misrepresentation, depriving any other person of an annual payment or payments for cost-share practices for the