UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

APR 5 2010

OFFICE OF
ENFORCEMENT AND
COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE

Matthew T. Ponish
National Environmental Compliance Manager
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Mail Stop 0513
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Ponish:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The EIS examined the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing changes to the Conservation Reserve Program required by the 2008 Farm Bill and assist in developing new regulations. Two preliminary action alternatives have been developed: Alternative 1 – full implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill provisions for the CRP utilizing current procedures; and Alternative 2 – implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill provisions for the CRP with varying discretion. A No Action Alternative – assumes the CRP would continue as is currently administered, was also analyzed. A preferred alternative was not selected.

While EPA's review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes, EPA recommends that the final supplemental EIS fully disclose (pg. 4-187), how "The PAYGO" redistribution would be conducted to ensure it would not result in secondary disproportionate adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations" under Provision 1, Alternative 1. In addition, EPA believes that Provision 1 (National Conservation Initiatives) Alternative 1; Provision 2 (Maximum Enrollment) Alternative 2 and Provision 5 (Conservation Plan Management Alternative 2 are activities most in line with responsible environmental activities.

EPA has rated the draft supplemental EIS an LO (Lack of Objections) which indicates that we have no concerns regarding USDA's action to implement proposed changes in the Conservation Reserve Program.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on this document and look forward to reviewing the final supplemental EIS. If you have any questions, you may contact me at (202) 564-5400 or Arthur Totten, my staff point of contact for this review at (202) 564-7164.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Heiss

for Susan E. Bromm
Director
Office of Federal Activities