2025 CEAP Phase 1 – Workshop Presentations

Overview & Importance of CEAP

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USDA AGRICULTURE COUNTS NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service Center for CSSM Survey Statistics and Methodology

Who is NRCS?

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **Our Mission**: We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.
- USDA's primary private lands conservation agency
- Focused on the American farmer, through one-on-one, personalized advice, we work voluntarily with producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation goals

What is NRI?

- National Resources Inventory
- Conducted by NRCS in cooperation with Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology
- Collects and produces scientifically credible information on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related natural resources on the nation's non-federal lands
- Allows for regular resource appraisals on the effectiveness of soil and water conservation practices, irrigation techniques, and agricultural technologies, techniques, and practices

What is CEAP?

- A multi-agency effort led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to quantify the effects of conservation practices across the nation's working lands.
- Findings are used to guide conservation program development
- Support conservationists, agricultural producers, and partners in choosing the most effective conservation actions and making informed management decisions backed by data and science

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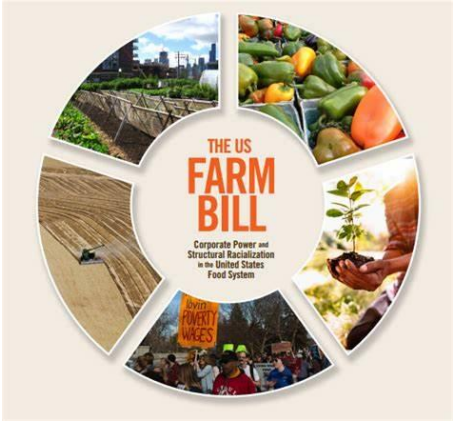
Purpose of CEAP

- Quantify the benefits of conservation on working lands that is implemented both voluntarily and through financial and technical assistance
- Helps NRCS:
  - Evaluate conservation effects
  - Identify potential improvements to programs or priorities
  - Set targeted, measurable goals for the future

History of CEAP

2002	**CEAP is initiated** to strengthen accountability for conservation program funding provided through the 2002 Farm Bill
2003-2006	**CEAP I Survey** is administered
2011	**Chesapeake Bay Special Emphasis Survey** is administered. Compared results to CEAP I survey results to establish trends.
2012	**Western Lake Erie/Des Moines Special Emphasis Survey** is administered. Compared results to CEAP I survey results to establish trends.
2013-2016	**CA Central Valley & St. Francis Special Emphasis Surveys** administered in 2013 & 2014 and added to CEAP II survey results. **CEAP II Survey** administered in 2015 & 2016
2024-2026	**CEAP III Survey** administered



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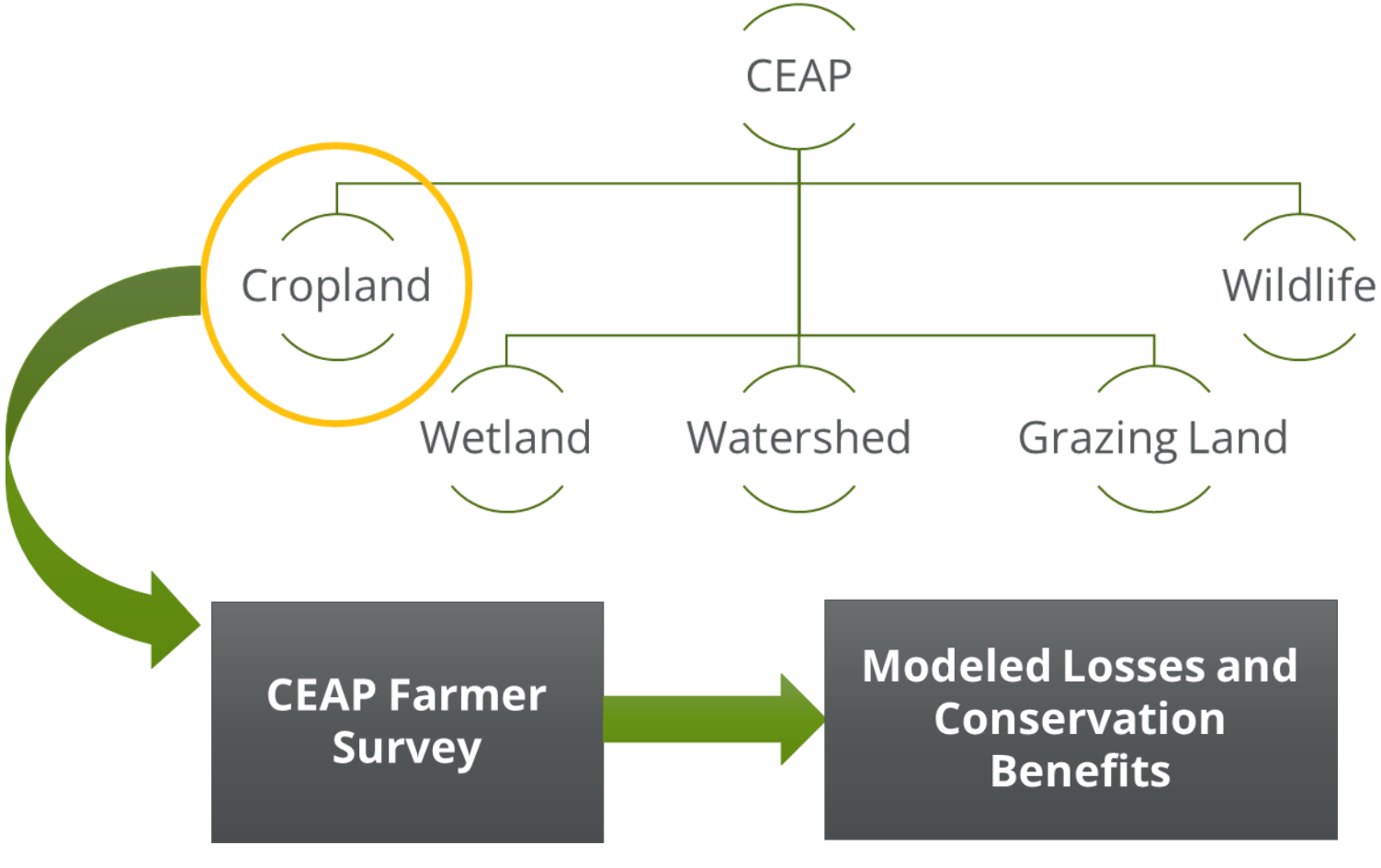
Why is CEAP Important?

- **Community:** Gives producers an opportunity to provide a complete and accurate picture of the conservation practices they use to improve the production and sustainability of croplands.
- **Science:** Establishes the scientific understanding of effects of conservation practices and agricultural land management at the regional and watershed scale
- **Policy:** Provides policymakers with valuable information needed to prioritize programs and practices that producers can use to address resource concerns

CEAP Cropland Assessment



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How is Farmer Survey Data Used

- **Status & Trends:** Provides a 3-year snapshot of the conservation and management practices carried out at the surveyed point
- **Predictive Models:** CEAP pairs the survey data with the Agricultural Policy/Environmental eXtender (**APEX**) cropping system model to estimate edge-of-field sediment and nutrient losses:
  - Cropping system management : crops, tillage, fertilizer, irrigation, pesticides
  - Conservation practice adoption

How Do We Estimate Conservation Benefits?

- Simulate the management and practices as reported by the farmers
  - Estimate current sediment, nutrient losses, & carbon trends
  - Compare changes over time
- Simulate the same points with removal of all conservation practices
  - Compare to the reported scenario to determine the benefits provided by current conservation practice implementation
- Simulate implementation of additional conservation practices based on site-specific characteristics
  - Compare to the reported scenario to determine the potential benefits that could be realized if additional conservation practices were installed

What are the Reported Outcomes?

- How did the use of conservation practices change between the CEAP surveys?
  - Structural practices and conservation tillage
  - Conservation crop rotations
  - Use of cover crops in rotations
  - Irrigation (water sources, application method, efficiency, amount)
  - Nutrient management (rate, timing, and method)
  - Manure application trends (rate, timing, and method)

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What are the Reported Outcomes?

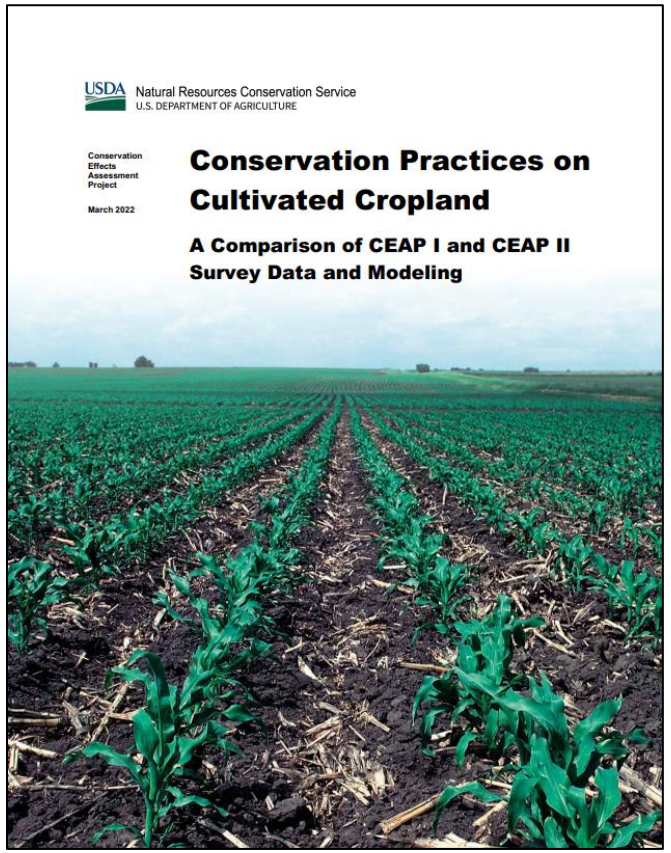
- How did conservation adoption affect resource concerns
  - Erosion (water and wind)
  - Sediment loss
  - Surface nitrogen loss
  - Subsurface nitrogen loss
  - Total phosphorus loss
  - Soluble phosphorus loss
  - Soil Carbon trends

How Are CEAP Findings Used?

- **Cropland farmers** can use CEAP findings to inform on-the-ground decisions related to conservation tillage, cover crops, irrigation, nutrient management, etc.
- **NRCS and conservation partners** use CEAP data to evaluate regional and national conservation outcomes to guide future efforts and initiatives

How Are Findings Distributed?

- National Report
- As a result of these findings, NRCS launched a Nutrient Management Task Force to discuss next steps
  - Revitalized the push for 4Rs of nutrient management (right **s**ource, right **m**ethod of application, right **r**ate, and right **t**iming) with site-specific **a**ssessment
  - SMART Nutrient Management Informational



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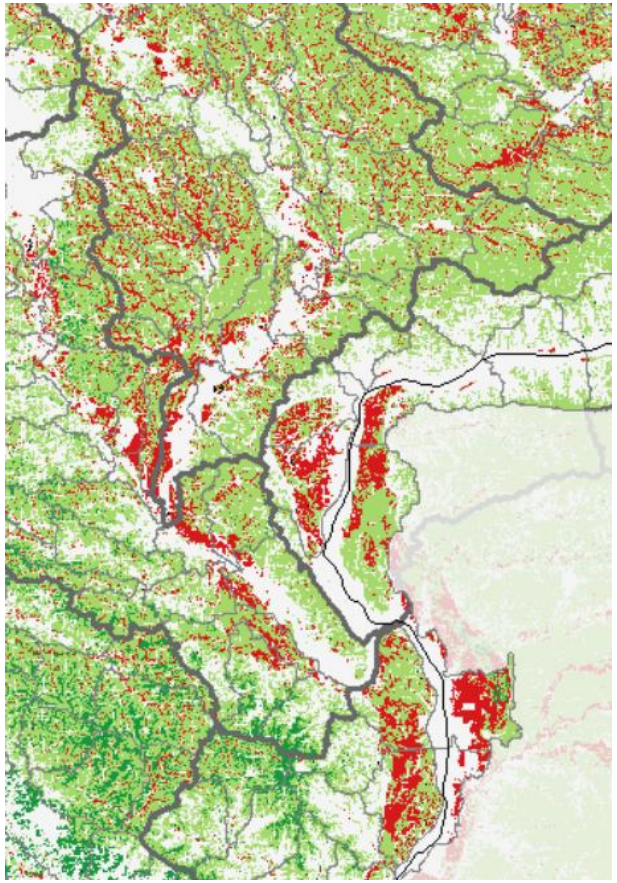
How Are Findings Distributed?

- Regional reports by CEAP Production Regions
- State-specific informational pages provided to State NRCS conservationists and other state agricultural agencies
- Combined with other conservation planning data to help NRCS conservationists target areas in need of additional conservation measures



Why Participate in the Survey?

- Survey responses are **completely confidential**, and will never be used individually

- NRCS is **non-regulatory**
  - We're not looking to point fingers or catch "bad actors" and the data we collect will never be used that way

- We're not in the business of selling anything!
  - The survey is a data collection implement and you won't be contacted or influenced to operate differently

Why Participate in the Survey?

- Participation is a chance to tell your story
- Findings help inform the technical and financial assistance programs delivered by NRCS
  - Your responses may help dedicate more money to conservation programs or make them more tailored to farmer needs
- Findings help improve the effectiveness of voluntary conservation practice implementation


Questions?

Survey Materials for CEAP Phase 1

Project Code 912

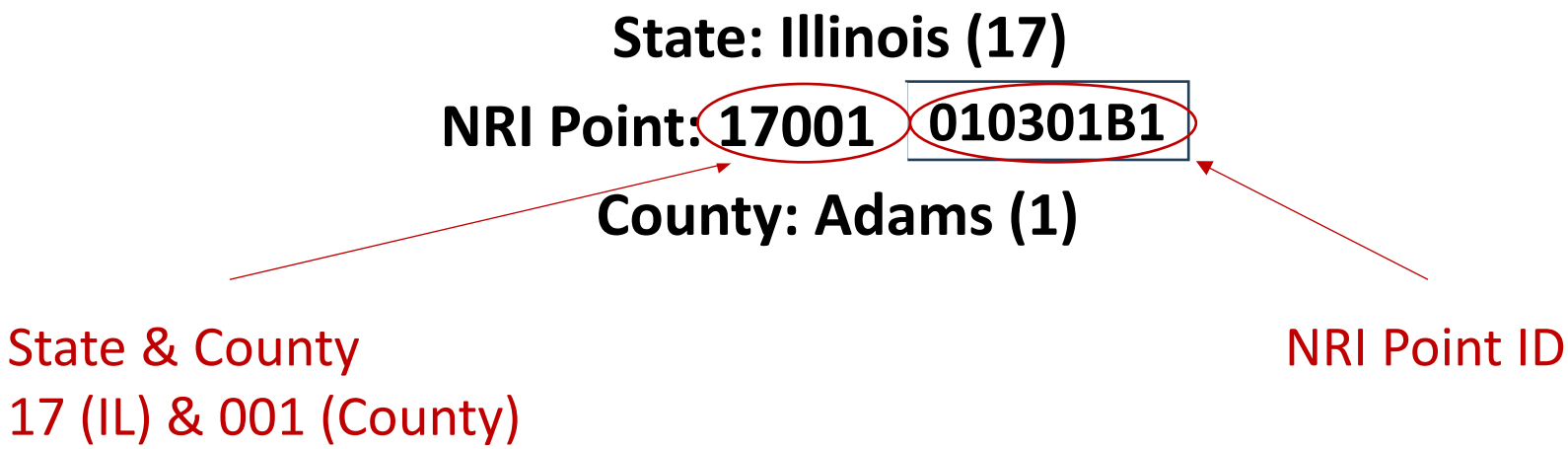
Enumerator Packet Contents

- Envelopes containing: FSA Name and Address Listing and Map for each point
- Operator ID cards
- Blank Phase 1 questionnaires
- Door hangers
- Thank you post cards

FSA Name and Address Listing

- Listing of all individuals who registered with FSA in the last two years
  - A very small number do not have an FSA Listing (less than 1%)
- Best information to identify operator
  - FSA “BEST GUESS” operator
- Operator must be located. Owner may be listed instead but try and get the operator.

How to Read an FSA Listing



How to Read an FSA Listing

- Remember some points only have operation names referring to a corporation, LLC, JV, partnership, trust
- **Please get the name of the primary operator**
- FSA Name Type column

  - OP = operator

  - OO = owner/operator

  - OT = other

  - OW = owner

Operator ID Card example

Operator ID Cards

- Card with a unique 9-digit number given to every operator.
- No matter how many points an operator has, they will only have one Operator ID Card.
- Purpose: to ensure every operator has only one point selected for phase 2

3 step Operator ID Card process!

1. Give them the card
2. Record the number
3. They keep the card

How to use the Operator ID Card

1. Ask if the operator has already been interviewed for CEAP this year and has an Operator ID Card

How to use the Operator ID Card

2. Each time you interview a new operator, give them an ID Card and record the number in the screener and make note of it. Ensure the number is saved in the screener.

-you can always retrieve that number in the screener later

How to use the Operator ID Card

3. Tell the operator to keep the card to present to another enumerator who may interview them about a different point
   - (suggest the operator take a picture of the card)

Why are Operator ID Cards important?

- This is the **ONLY** way to link multiple points to one operator.
- These cards are NOT preassigned, but once assigned only refer to that operator.
- Remind operators that it is VERY important to **hold onto this card**
- Some producers might have 11 NRI points located across the country.

Operator HASN'T Been Contacted…

6. **Have you previously been contacted by NASS/NASDA in regards to another field for the 20XX CEAP Survey?**
   No

7. **Select a new operator card from your supply, enter the Operator ID in the screener and on the name and address sheet, and then give the card to the operator.**

   Operator ID: [ ] Validate

7. **Select a new operator card from your supply, enter the Operator ID in the screener and on the name and address sheet, and then give the card to the operator.**

   Operator ID: 089-589-714 Reset

Eligible for operator survey. Screening is complete.

Operator HAS Been Contacted…

6. **Have you previously been contacted by NASS/NASDA in regards to another field for the 20XX CEAP Survey?**
   Yes

7. **Ask the operator for the card given to them during the previous contact. Enter that operator id in the screener and on the name and address sheet. Return the card to the operator when complete.**

   Operator ID: 089-589-714 Reset

Eligible for operator survey. Screening is complete.

The Screener website…

- Practice on the purple training website until July 31st.
- On August 1st the training app will close and only the white production website will be available.

Why the blank questionnaires?

- Blank questionnaires are a backup only
- All data must be entered in the screening website
- Do not mail blank phase 1 questionnaires…anywhere

Important Dates

- July 1 – July 15: Register for screening website
- August 1- September 26: Data Collection

Thanks for your attention!

Conservation Practice Examples

What does that mean?

Field Buffers & Filter Strips

Areas of **permanent vegetation** located within and between agricultural fields and the water courses to which they drain.

Grassed Waterways

Constructed, graded channels that are seeded to grass or other suitable vegetation.

Riparian Buffer

- Located along the edge of a water body
- Can be made of trees, shrubs or grasses

Field Boarders or Wind Breaks

Permanent vegetation established at the edge, around the perimeter of a field.

Terrace or Strip-Cropping

- Common in hilly and mountainous areas.
- Used to reduce erosion and trap sediment, manage runoff, and conserve soil moisture.

Challenging Situations

What do you do?

Field that is entirely CRP (continuous conservation cover) and has been enrolled for more than 3 years.

- The selected field “X” is CRP.
- Follow the NRI application routing:
  - item 2 (planted to a crop) = 3 (no);
  - item 3 (idle cropland) = 3 (no);
  - then item 8.
- The field of CRP will be marked ineligible for the Phase II survey.

Selected Field is entirely CRP in the current and previous years. Field was cropped until the CRP enrollment 2 years ago.

- Same steps as if field was CRP for 3+ years
- CRP in the current year will mark the field ineligible

Selected Fields adjacent to conservation area examples:

The NRI point (“X”) falls in a field planted to a crop.

Next to the selected field is CRP, a windbreak, or stream buffer.

CASE 1: NRI point (“X”) falls in the field planted to a crop; adjacent CRP field is separated by a ditch that cannot be crossed by equipment.

- When this happens, the CRP and cropped field are clearly separated by an uncrossable ditch/stream.
- Draw the boundary around the crop field and ditch.

CASE 1a: NRI point (“X”) falls in a CRP field is separated by a ditch that cannot be crossed by equipment from a crop field.

Complete the NRI application as discussed earlier for a CRP field.

CASE 2: Selected field is planted to a crop; CRP is in the adjacent field. No ditch/stream is separating the two fields.

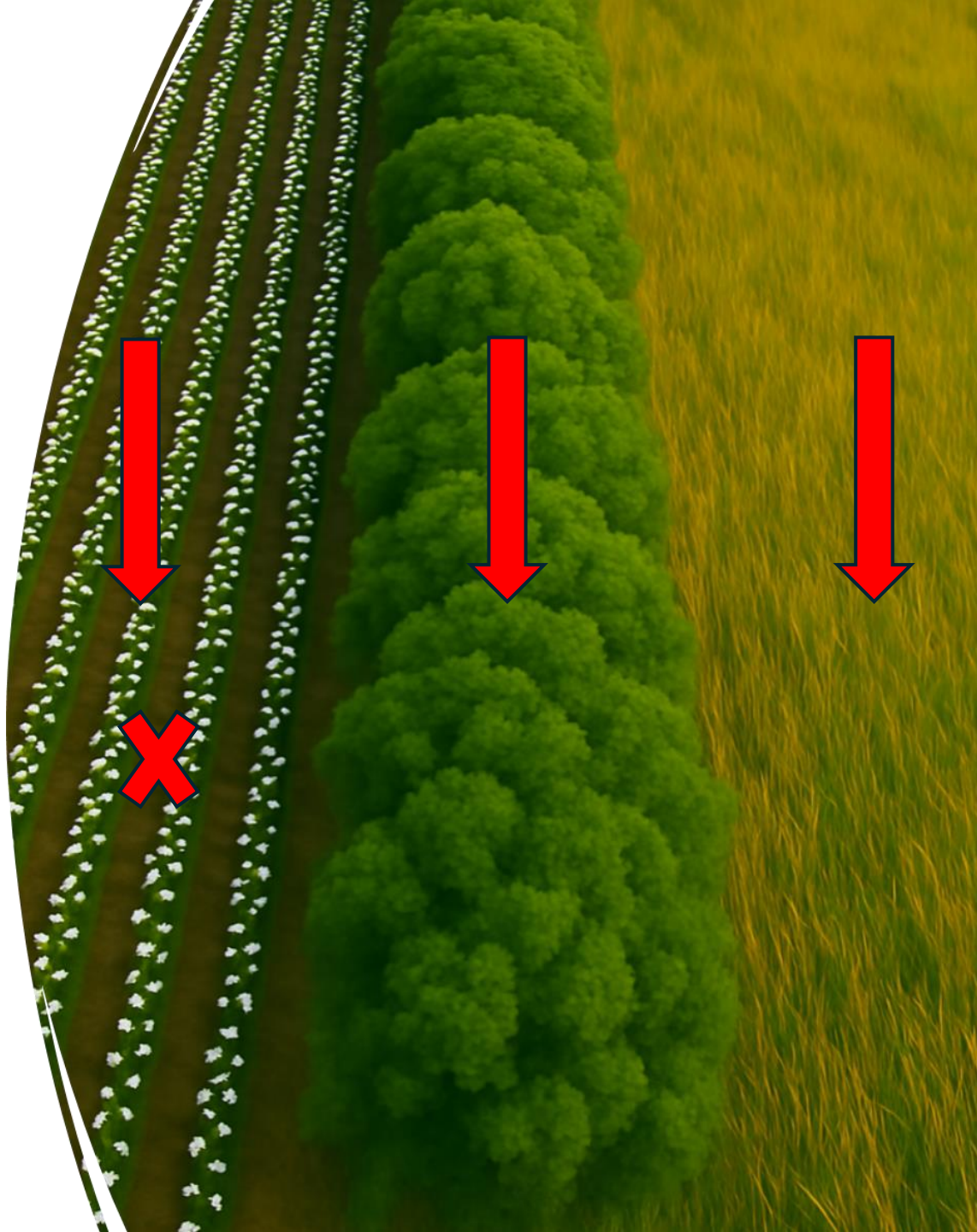
- Complete the NRI Application for the crop field.
- When drawing the field boundary, include both the field and adjacent CRP acreage.
- In this case the CRP area is considered to be a conservation area associated with the cropped field and all screening questions should be based on the cropped field.

CASE 3: Selected crop field separated from CRP area by a conservation area (such as tree lined wind break).

- If the CRP portion of the field is separated from the selected cropped field (NRI point is in cropped field) by another conservation area, then both conservation areas are associated with the cropped field.

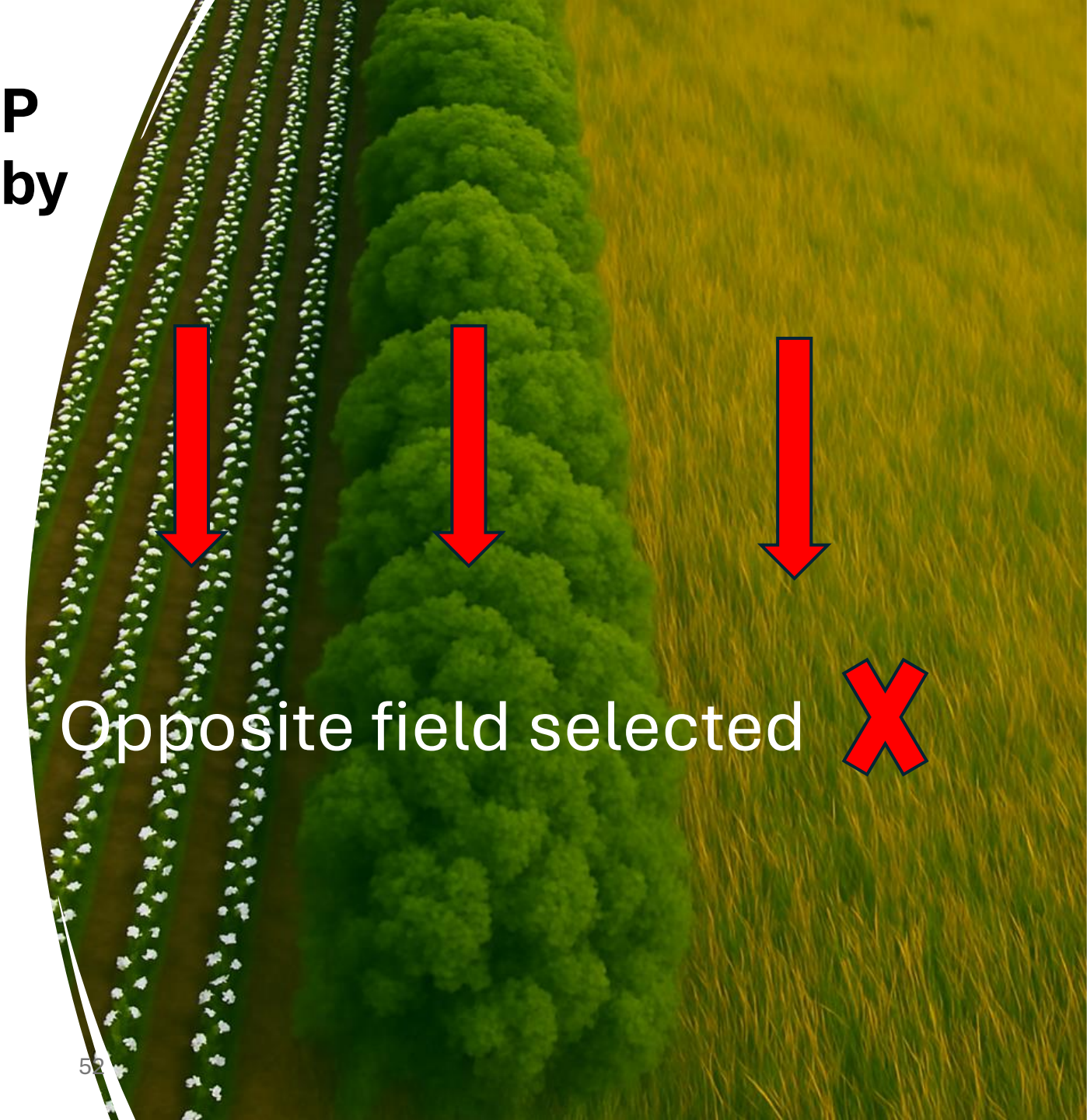
- Include the selected field planted to a crop, CRP and other conservation area when drawing the field boundary.

- All screening questions should be based on the cropped field.



CASE 3a: Selected field of CRP is separated from a crop field by a conservation area (such as tree lined wind break).

- If the CRP portion (NRI point is in CPR field) of the field is separated from the cropped field by another conservation area, do not include the cropped field or other conservation area in the field boundary drawing.
- The answers to the screening questions should then be based on the CRP portion of the field.
- The CRP field will screen as ineligible following the question routing in the previous CRP example.



NRI point falls in a riparian buffer that is located between the crop field and a stream.

What is the selected field?

Answer screening questions are based on the riparian buffer only.

Do not include the cropped field in the field boundary drawing.

The riparian buffer is considered continuous conservation cover (think CRP) and the point will be ineligible for Phase II.

NRI point falls in a field planted to a crop that is adjacent to a riparian buffer then stream. Do we include the buffer when we draw the field boundaries?

Include	The riparian buffer is conservation area associated with the cropped field.
Draw	Trace the field boundary around both the buffer and crop field.
Answer	Answer the questions for the selected crop field.

Would conservation areas that are not directly adjacent to the field but located close by be included with the field?

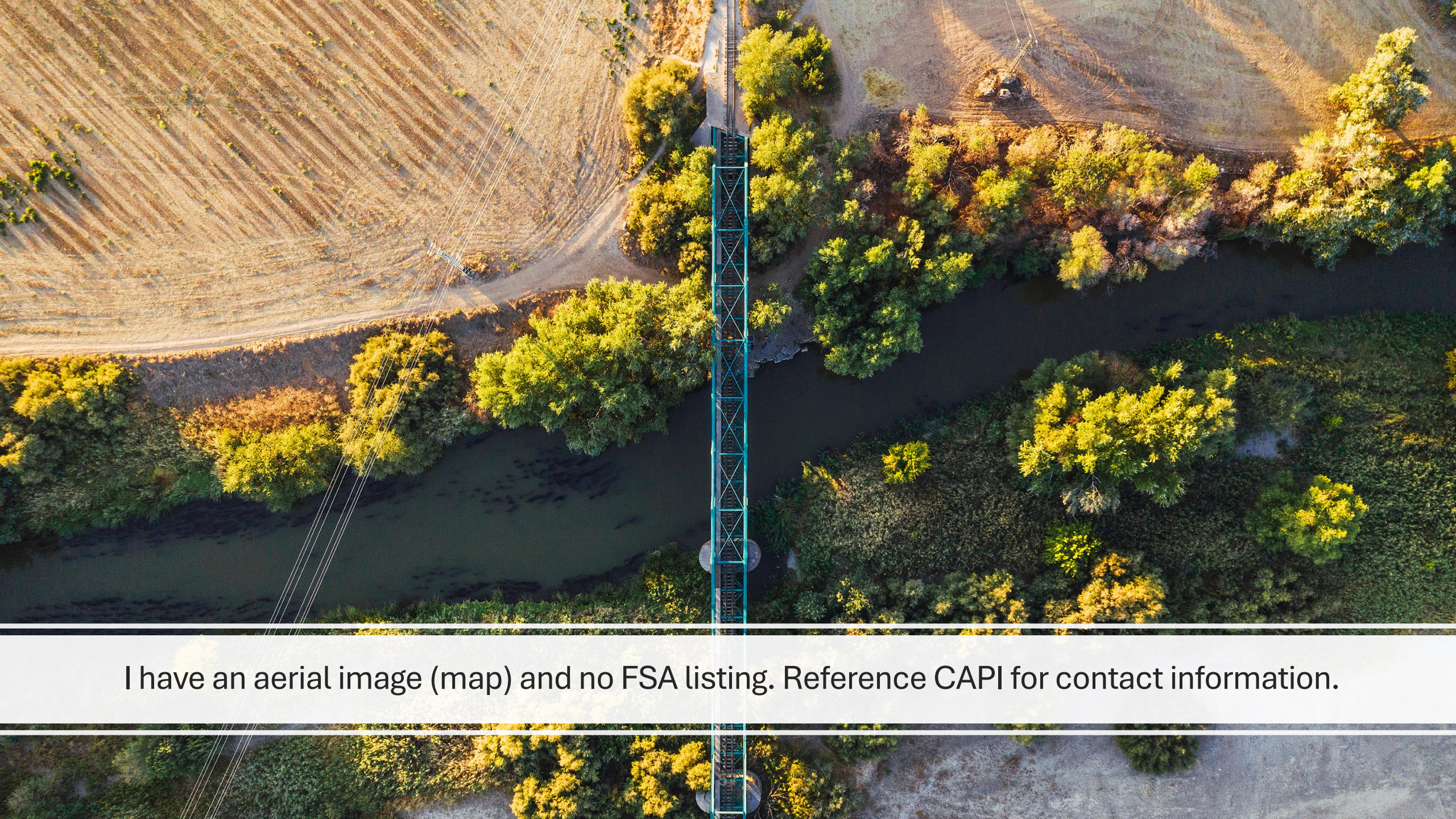
Typically, only conservation areas directly adjacent to the cropped field are included (see examples above).

If a conservation area is in question, include it in the field boundary drawing and indicate the conservation area in a comment.

The FSA listing has a university research farm or tribal name as the contact for the selected field.

- Screen NRI points based on what is within the selected field.

- All operator types are eligible to participate in the CEAP survey.



I have an aerial image (map) and no FSA listing. Reference CAPI for contact information.

NRI point is located in a cropland pasture that was planted to a perennial crop such as bermudagrass or orchard grass four years ago. It is only grazed and is not hayed.

- This point would be considered Permanent Pasture because it is not tilled or planted each year and is only grazed.
- This point will be ineligible for Phase II based on the question routing.

NRI point is in a permanent pasture that was cut for hay once in the last three years. The field is native grass (not planted) that gets cut for hay occasionally, based on need. The expected practice is to have livestock pasture (graze) the selected field.

Points located in permanent pasture are ineligible for Phase II regardless of whether it is hayed occasionally.

NRI point is in a cropland pasture that was planted to winter wheat last fall (part of current year crop year). The plan is for the winter wheat to only be grazed.

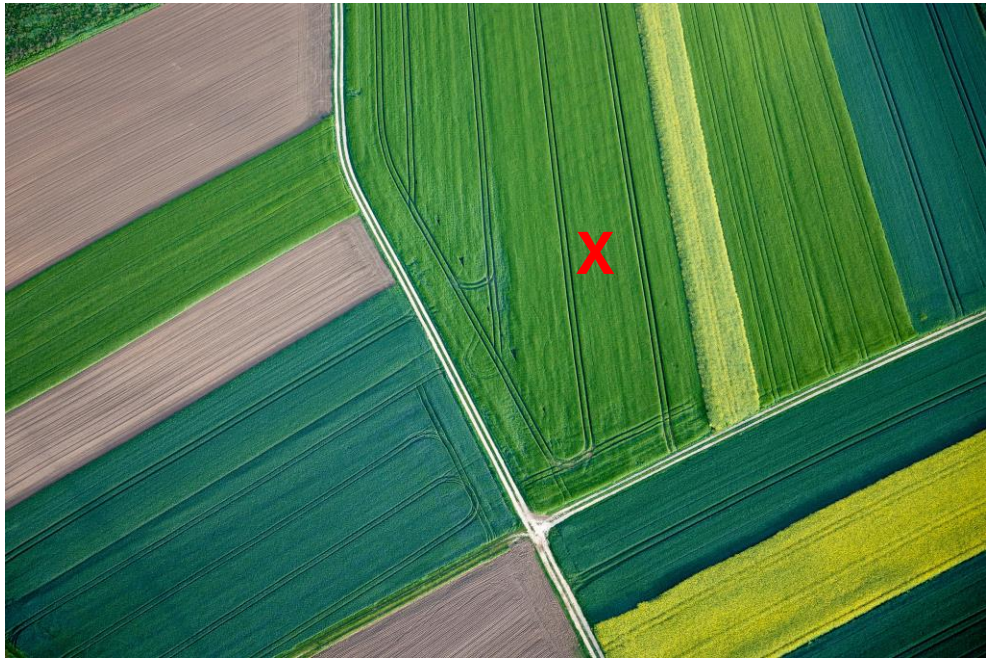
This point would be considered cultivated cropland because it was planted for the 2025 crop year even though it will only be grazed.

Idle land – *cropland that is not cropped or grassland that is not grazed and is not CRP*

If point falls in a field that is idle in all three years, it is not considered cultivated cropland and is ineligible for Phase II.

The field containing the NRI point includes multiple crops (i.e. the east half was corn, and the west half was hay). Should the crop that the X falls on be drawn as its own field?

If crops are considered to be in the same field by the operator, the boundary drawing should include the entire field (including corn and hay).



How should center pivot field be handled?

- Where did the X fall?
- Identify operator of land where the X is located.
- In situations where the operator rented out the circle but farmed the corners or the opposite, contact the operator for the land of the selected field.

If the “X” falls in the center pivot circle, do not include corners in field boundary.

If the “X” falls outside of the center pivot circle, whether in the corners or between circles, do not include the circle in the field boundary.

The term “sod” can have many meanings/definitions depending on the region.

- **For CEAP surveys, sod, is a cultivated crop, defined as**: grass and the part of the soil beneath it held together by its roots, grown and harvested for use in lawns, sports fields, golf courses, and erosion control projects.

- It is cultivated on specialized farms where turfgrass species are carefully managed for uniformity, density, and health, then cut into sections (often as rolls or slabs) and transplanted to new locations.

SOD CASE 1: Operator calls the selected field where they graze livestock on “sod”.

- This field is considered permanent pasture and should be screened as permanent pasture.
- This will be ineligible for CEAP phase II.

SOD CASE 2:

Producer comments they are doing “sod through NRCS” in the selected field.

NRCS Programs may require grass species

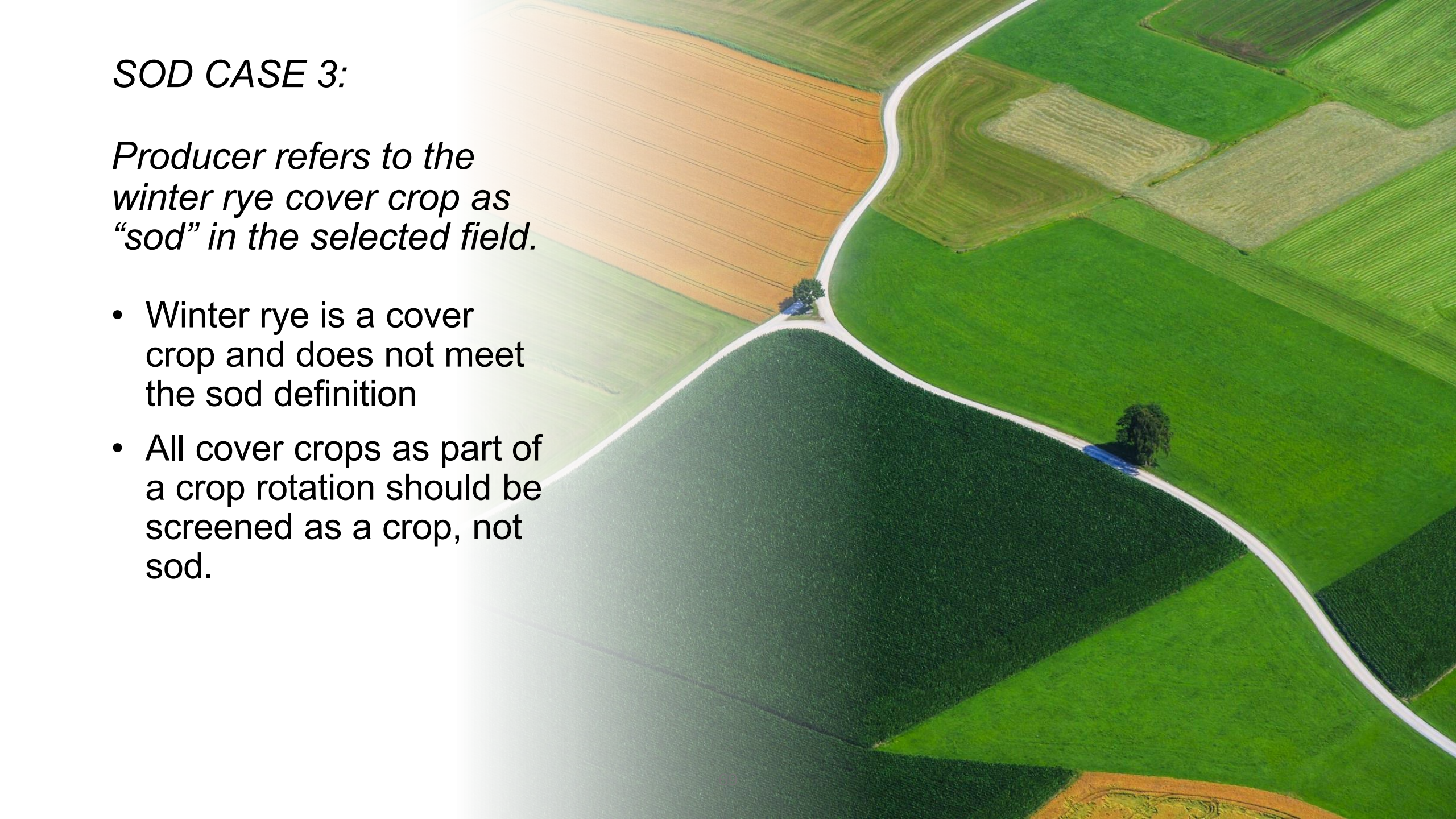
1. CRP or EQIP requires a specific grass species, these fields are not managed and harvested as described in the sod definition.
2. Grassed waterway or other erosion control efforts within or adjacent to cropland NRCS requires to be planted to sod.

If the producer indicates “sod” as the crop, the enumerator should probe for more information.

SOD CASE 3:

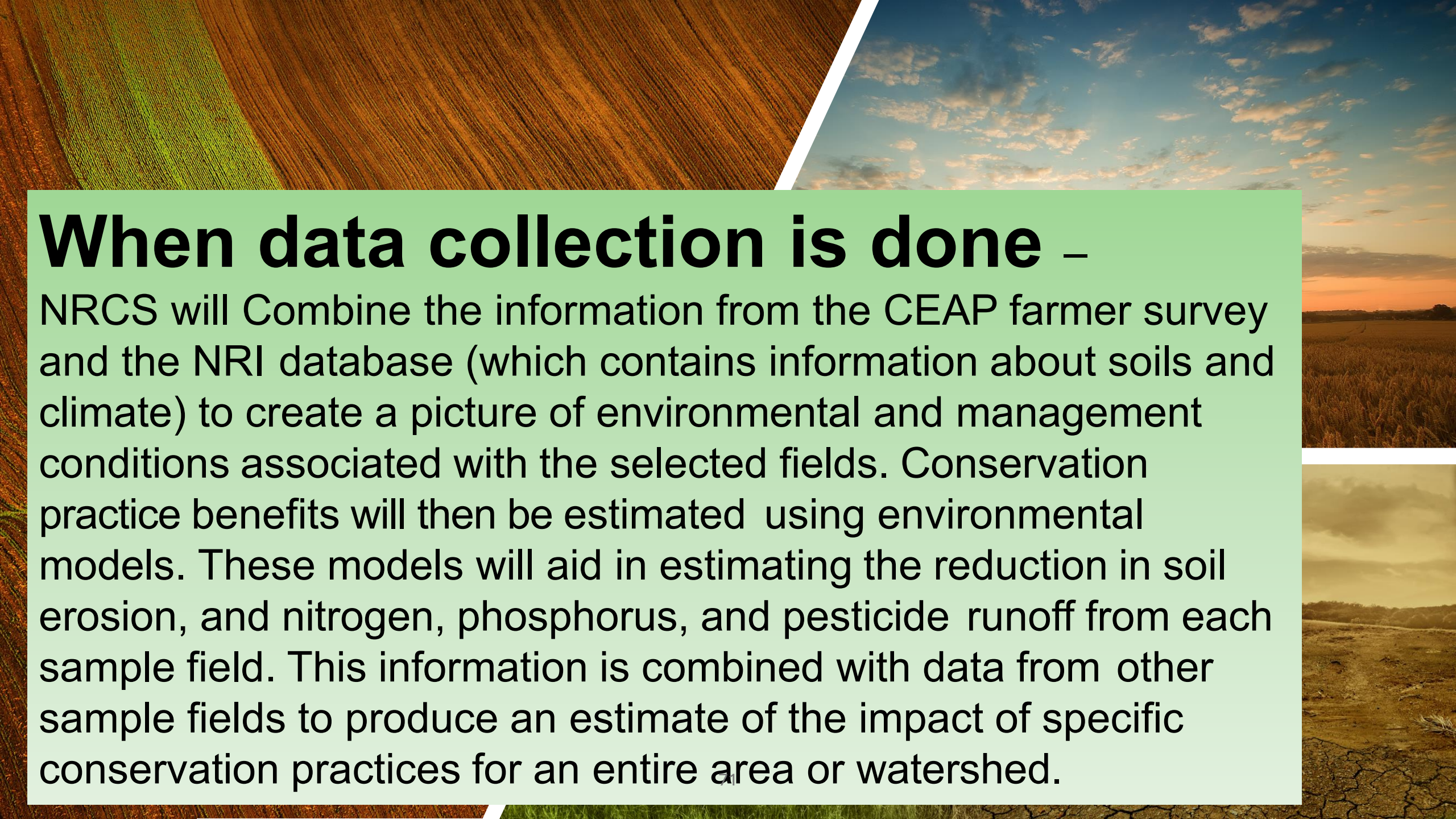
Producer refers to the winter rye cover crop as "sod" in the selected field.

- Winter rye is a cover crop and does not meet the sod definition
- All cover crops as part of a crop rotation should be screened as a crop, not sod.



Takeaway Message:

Review	Review the aerial images before you start your interviews
Consult	Consult your coach if you are unsure how to proceed
Find	Find the operator of the selected field
Be	Be curious, ask a follow up question
Remember	CEAP focuses on land classified as cultivated cropland



When data collection is done –

NRCS will Combine the information from the CEAP farmer survey and the NRI database (which contains information about soils and climate) to create a picture of environmental and management conditions associated with the selected fields. Conservation practice benefits will then be estimated using environmental models. These models will aid in estimating the reduction in soil erosion, and nitrogen, phosphorus, and pesticide runoff from each sample field. This information is combined with data from other sample fields to produce an estimate of the impact of specific conservation practices for an entire area or watershed.