

**United States Geological Survey
Data Storage and Aggregation Procedures and Employee Agreement
for compliance with
Section 1619 of the 2008 Farm Bill**

The USGS is an official USDA Section 1619 Cooperator and has been authorized access to protected geospatial and tabular information on farming and conservation practices in the Mid-Atlantic States (i.e., New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia). The protected data are managed and maintained by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)¹. The USGS has been granted access to these data to analyze the impact of farming practices on water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The protected data may be viewed and analyzed by any USGS employee who has signed and agreed to the terms of this Agreement.

To comply with Section 1619, all USGS employees granted access to protected FSA and NRCS information and their immediate supervisors must read the referenced Cooperative Agreements, Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, and agree to and sign the data use, storage and aggregation protocols outlined below.

USGS² shall not disclose protected information to any individuals or organizations that are not verifiable and official USDA Section 1619 Cooperators with permitted access to the data. USGS shall use the protected information only to perform work that is directly connected to providing technical assistance, in the form of monitoring, assessment, and evaluation, concerning NRCS and FSA Farm Bill programs. USGS may be legally liable should disclosure of the protected information occur in violation of the Federal statute Section 1619.

The following procedures pertain to the storage, use, aggregation, reporting and release of data and information protected under Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. These procedures have been reviewed and approved by FSA and NRCS. Any deviation from or amendment to these procedures must be approved by FSA and/or NRCS and documented for the record.

Data Analysis, Storage, and Destruction Procedures

1. All FSA and NRCS protected data shall be stored on a dedicated external storage device and in a secure location when not in use (e.g., locked cabinet

¹ USDA-NRCS Cooperative Agreement and Acknowledgement of Section 1619 Compliance, signed December 14, 2010. USDA-FSA Cooperative Agreement, USDA Section 1619 Cooperator, signed August 2, 2010.

² This restriction applies to all USGS employees and their immediate supervisors who have signed this agreement.

or area). The storage device should be an externally-connected hard drive that is larger than a USB stick to minimize the risk of accidental loss. Access to the external storage device shall be restricted to USGS employees who have signed this Agreement.

2. All analyses of the FSA and NRCS data that include the raw data must be saved on the dedicated external storage device. Analyses can be temporarily saved on a password protected computer that is disconnected from all networks and servers (including wireless networks), has an active firewall, and up-to-date virus protection software. All analyses, raw data, and temporary files must be deleted from the computer before it is connected to a network and the computer must be stored in a secure area when not in use
3. Only data aggregated according to procedures approved, in writing, by FSA and/or NRCS can be stored on network drives and released to the public.
4. While in use, the data will only be accessible to authorized personnel (i.e., signatories to this Agreement). Access to the data includes viewing the data in hard or softcopy formats.
5. When the protected data are no longer needed, all storage devices containing the protected data must be degaussed to ensure full destruction of the data; written, dated and signed confirmation verifying destruction of the protected data must be provided to David Kirtland (dakirtland@usgs.gov) and Peter Claggett (pclaggett@usgs.gov) within the week following destruction..

Data Aggregation Procedures

The protected conservation practice data may be aggregated to a mapping unit (e.g., watershed, grid cell, or hexagon) and released to the public if five or more farm owners or producers participate in the practice in the aggregation unit or at least three owners or producers participate in the practice in the aggregation unit and no one owner or producer provides 50% or more of the variation. **If these conditions are not met for a particular aggregation unit, the data shall not be reported, displayed or otherwise revealed for that unit.**

Options for aggregating the data while ensuring full reporting of all conservation practices in a region include:

- combining information from units that do not meet the above conditions with information from neighboring units and spatially merging those units;
- increasing the size of all units (e.g., from 12-digit to 11-digit HUCs) to ensure all units meet the above conditions;
- translating the conservation practices into their nutrient and sediment reduction equivalents (thus only revealing the net reduction in nutrients and sediment, not the individual practices) so long as a minimum of three farms exist in the unit; or
- a combination of the above.

Description of Data Use

Please describe your intended use of the protected data consistent with permitted uses described in the FSA and NRCS Cooperative Agreements. If the use changes from the description below, this Agreement must be revised and resigned. If more space is needed to describe your use, please use an additional page.

- 1. Developing a methodology for each state to remove duplicate data,
- 2. Providing assistance to states in matching the NRCS BMPs to the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) , and
- 3. Aggregating the data to ensure confidentiality of individual farm owners or producers.

I , Olivia Devereux, have read the FSA and NRCS Cooperative
Print Name

Agreements, Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, and I agree to the above data use, analysis, storage, aggregation and reporting procedures.


USGS Contractor Signature

5/17/2012
Date

USGS Supervisor Signature

Date

IMPORTANT! Please send an electronic copy (pdf) of this signed Agreement to David Kirtland (dakirtland@usgs.gov) and Peter Claggett (pclaggett@usgs.gov). Please also send an appropriate electronic storage device to Peter Claggett (pclaggett@usgs.gov) to receive the data.