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Agency Information Collection Activities; Proposals, Submissions, and Approvals

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General Comment

The Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) should be reinstated for it has enormous potential for guiding farming and land management practices as climate change continues to alter weather patterns. Data collection and analysis are crucial to understanding the complex, changing relationships in our environment. The CEAP surveys conducted in 2003-2006 and subsequent pilot surveys provide a strong foundation for comparative analyses in the areas they were originally conducted. Furthermore, these records collected over time can help us predict the future of our soil quality and productivity of our agricultural sector. The following suggestions relate to part c of the request for comments; “(c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected”.

One thing that I think would enhance the utility and clarity of the information to be collected in these surveys is making the data publicly accessible on a government data platform. Not only will this transparency promote responsible practices for farmers and surveyors, but it will also increase the number of people engaging with the raw data. While the NRCS provides written assessments using this survey data, certain stakeholders may want to explore different questions from this data. By making this data publicly accessible, people outside of these agencies can help increase the knowledge base of the content being surveyed. This in turn can lead to more collaboration and informed decision-making when it comes to sustainable practices.

Additionally, I think the CEAP data could be a useful resource for educational purposes. Since the CEAP is conducted with the aid of many educational institutions, this offers a unique opportunity for partnerships with students. Many schools, especially within agricultural studies, environmental science, and political science, could incorporate real-time data into their learning. This would raise awareness about the issues addressed using CEAP data. The expansion of this knowledge through education could lead to more support of conservation methods in agriculture.