

Peer Review Plan

Preliminary Title: Options for Improving Conservation Programs: Evidence from Economic Experiments on the Design of Enrollment Mechanisms

Type of Report (ERR, EIB, EB,) ERR

Influential Scientific Information

Agency: Economic Research Service Highly Influential Scientific Assessment
USDA

Agency Contact: Daniel Pick, dpick@ers.usda.gov

Subject of Review: The USDA spends over \$5 billion per year on conservation programs. Most of this expenditure is on voluntary programs that pay farmers and landowners to provide environmental services, such as the implementation of a nutrient management program, or the planting of native grasses. Since most programs cannot fund all interested parties, they must use some mechanism to select applicants. This report addresses how enrollment mechanisms are implemented and explores alternatives, considering how information, both in the hands of government and rural landowners, affects program performance. Of particular interest is how program design can leverage information to reduce government expenditures or encourage landowners to provide greater environmental services. We report finding from a set of economic experiments. These experiments, conducted in the classroom, highlight shortcomings of common features of conservation programs, such as the imposition of a bid cap. The report also shows how more sophisticated auction designs that leverage available information can improve program performance.

Purpose of Review: The purpose of the review is to ensure the high-quality of the economic analysis, transparent explanation of methods, objective interpretation of results, and effective communication to the intended audience.

Type of Review: Panel Review Individual Reviewers

Alternative Process (Briefly Explain):

Timing of Review (Est.): Start: 11/19/13 End: 04/21/14 Completed: 04/21/14

Number of Reviewers: 3 or fewer 4 to 10 More than 10

Primary Disciplines/Types of Expertise Needed for Review: Economists

Reviewers selected by: Agency Designated Outside Organization

Organization's Name:

Opportunities for Public Comment? Yes No

If yes, briefly state how and when these opportunities will be provided:

How:

When:

Peer Reviewers Provided with Public Comments? Yes No

Public Nominations Requested for Review Panel? Yes No

