



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

Land Reclamation Division Operator Memorandum 2021-03

To: All Coal Mine Operators/Consultants

Date: May 27, 2021

From: Nick San Diego, Supervisor
Land Reclamation Division

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "NSD".

Re: Policy and Procedure for Combining MYRP Fields

The historical practice of combining Mined Yield Reclamation Project (MYRP) fields “on-the-fly” by enumerators and operators while in the field has caused numerous issues. The main issues with “on-the-fly” combining of fields included, but were not limited to:

1. Combining fields without agency consultation
2. Combining fields of different land uses but same crops
3. Combining fields of different soil capabilities
4. Combining non-contiguous fields
5. Combining fields > 4 acres
6. Combining fields that are tested in different “pits”

Therefore, the Department instituted a temporary policy regarding the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) enumerator procedure (outlined below) for combining corn and soybean MYRP fields during the 2020 testing year (wheat and hay sampling for 2020 were not affected).

Effective for all crops (corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay) during the 2021 testing year and beyond, both the Department and Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) must be contacted via email for approval prior to combining fields. This request will be initiated and submitted by the enumerator (in consultation with the operator, if applicable). The following information must be included with the request for approval:

1. MYRP Numbers
2. Proximity between fields
3. Acreage of each field
4. Reason for request to combine fields

Emailed requests for approval to combine fields must be sent by the enumerator to jeff.steiner@illinois.gov, kristi.dodson@illinois.gov, mark.schleusener@usda.gov and john.lohse@illinois.gov. The appropriate Department staff will evaluate the request based on the submitted information and take into consideration the policy outlined below. Please note, the Department will notify the enumerator, IDOA, NASS, and the operator (if applicable) of the final decision.

Department Policy for Combining Fields:

1. Established MYRP fields $>$ or $=$ 4 acres shall not be combined and must be tested under the accepted sampling procedure.
2. Non-contiguous fields shall not be combined. “Contiguous” means physically adjacent and originally planted as one field operation, not separated by roads or fields planted to other crops or vegetation (e.g. contiguous fields cannot be separated by trees or separated by fields of different crops). Grassed waterways and terraces are considered “within” a field.
3. MYRP fields that are contiguous and $<$ 4 acres may be combined.
4. MYRP fields meeting the standards outlined in Item no. 3 of different soil capabilities may be combined, if reclaimed to the higher soil capability standard (high capability and prime farmland fields may be combined if all acreage is reclaimed to prime farmland standards).
5. MYRP fields meeting the standards outlined in Item no. 3 of different land uses may be combined (pasture and cropland fields may be combined). This practice facilitates future, projected land use changes.
6. Requests for adding acreage to established MYRP fields or combining contiguous MYRP fields where one or more are $>$ or $=$ 4 acres must be handled via the initial or amended testing request procedure under the regulations.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss these procedures, the Department recommends that you contact Kristi Dodson or Jeff Steiner at the Springfield office. Be aware that questions regarding this should not be directed to any NASS staff or their enumerators.

The Department reminds operators to review Operator Memorandum No. 2019-02 regarding initial establishment of small fields. Please note, requests to establish very small MYRP fields that may eventually be merged into a larger, combined field may be rejected based on the Department policy for combining fields established in this notification. Keeping in mind that MYRP fields $>$ or $=$ 4 acres shall not be combined should discourage operators from establishing fields of that size if larger, more manageable fields are the eventual reclamation and post-mining land use/soil capability goal.