



# Oklahoma

Natural Resources Conservation Service



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## A Message from the State Conservationist

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Fall is finally upon us! Having grown up a little further north than Oklahoma, I am enjoying the cooler weather and a reprieve from the humidity! As an agency, we have wrapped up fiscal year 2023 and are excited for the increased opportunities we will have as we move into 2024. In 2023, we were able to cost share conservation activities on almost 600,000 acres through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and we are expecting our available funding for these programs in 2024 to be even greater!



NRCS has set our application batching date for 2024 funding consideration for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) for Friday November 3, 2023. In addition to moving that deadline up to assist with earlier contracting dates, we are also implementing Act Now funding through EQIP this year. With Act Now, as applications are received for cover crops, perennial seedings and high tunnels, they will be immediately evaluated and ranked. If they meet a pre-determined threshold based on the resource concerns addressed, they will be obligated without having to wait for a future ranking deadline. This will allow staff to expedite the contracting process and for our customers to implement conservation practices sooner. We will be evaluating how the process works in 2024 and may have an opportunity to expand those opportunities in future years.

I would also like to apologize to those of you who may have received a text message about our program batching date at a late hour! We utilize an automated system to send those notifications out to subscribers to help keep you informed of pertinent information. Although we sent the message from our system at 4:30pm, some recipients have reported that it was not delivered until late into the night. In the future, we will send those out earlier in the day so that if there is a delay, it will not push back to a midnight hour.

We look forward to working with you on your conservation needs in 2024!

**Jeanne Hamilton, Oklahoma State Conservationist**

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## NRCS Programs

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

Application Deadline for FY2024 funding is Friday, November 3, 2023 - This deadline will include conventional funding and/or funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to include variances of the programs referenced.

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## Conservation Practice-of-the-Month

### Critical Area Planting (Code 342)



There are several conservation practices that farmers and ranchers are already doing that are tied to Climate-Smart Agriculture. The benefits from [Critical Area Planting \(Code 342\)](#) establishes permanent vegetation on sites that have, or are expected to have, high erosion rates, and on sites that have conditions that prevent the establishment of vegetation with normal practices.

Looking for more information about [NRCS Conservation Practices](#).

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## Job Postings

Upcoming Vacancy Announcements:

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- [Soil Conservationist Student Trainee](#)
- [Range Conservationist Student Trainee](#)
- [Engineer Student Trainee](#)
- Range Conservationist entry level opening early November
- Soil Conservationist entry level opening mid November
- Natural Resource Specialist entry level early January

The best way to stay updated on job postings is to check [USA Jobs](#) often and sign up for notifications for job announcements.

**All jobs with NRCS are listed and posted on USAJobs.**

[NRCS Recruitment Video](#) - Your Field, Your World, Your Future

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## Photo of the Month



Photo by John Kern, Pawnee County. Winners are highlighted here and the [Oklahoma NRCS Webpage](#). To enter a photo in this month's contest, email the full resolution photo to [NRCSinfo-OK@usda.gov](mailto:NRCSinfo-OK@usda.gov)

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## Dates to Remember

NRCS and FSA will have representatives at the following events/meetings if you have questions or want to visit.

### October

- [Central Oklahoma Local Agriculture Collaboration meeting in Shawnee, Oct. 18](#)

### November

- [Oklahoma Ag Expo in Norman, Nov. 6-8](#)
- [Oklahoma Farm Bureau annual meeting, Nov. 10-11](#)

### December

- [Tulsa Farm Show, Dec. 7-9](#)
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## Harvest 2023



As Oklahoma farmers harvest the crops that feed, clothe, and fuel our world, let's fill the [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) social media feed with your stories about this year's harvest season by using #Harvest2023 on your social media posts.

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## Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination

USDA announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

The program website, [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov), is now open. The website includes an English- and Spanish-language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov) or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process closes October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group

serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov), which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is free.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).



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