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Showcase Your Season with #Plant2022



This planting season let's highlight the innovation and leadership demonstrated by conservation-minded farmers in our #Plant2022 campaign. We'll share your photos and stories on social media, blogs, and a nationwide storymap.

Learn more (<https://go.usa.gov/xuTqj>)

USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is welcoming new and modified proposals from conservation partners for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative, a part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) focused on effectively managing wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners.

Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations

by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.

Expanded Practices

To help improve the planning and implementation of the SAFE initiative, FSA is adding two new practices with the assistance of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FSA's sister agency. In partnership with FSA, NRCS employees across the country provide CRP participants with critical conservation planning assistance, which will now include managing for early successional habitat cover establishment or management, as well as wildlife habitat planting. These additional eligible practices will enable SAFE partners to better target a wide variety of wildlife species, such as the Northern bobwhite, lesser prairie-chicken, and the New England cottontail.

As part of this year's SAFE signup, FSA will also authorize cost-share assistance for producers who would like to re-enroll acres in CRP but need assistance updating their vegetative cover to align with NRCS practice standards for early successional habitat or wildlife planting.

Submitting Proposals

Eligible entities for SAFE include government entities, non-profits, or private organizations.

Additionally, partners with SAFE projects with both General and Continuous CRP practices must submit modified proposals to continue in the program.

New and modified proposals for SAFE projects must be submitted to the FSA State Office in June. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

SAFE is part of the Continuous CRP signup, and producers can begin enrolling in new or updated SAFE programs beginning October 1, 2022. Meanwhile, the Continuous and Grassland signups are currently open, and producers can learn more by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#). To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

CRP complements other USDA conservation programs, including several programs offered by NRCS for working lands and conservation easements. Earlier this month, NRCS released its Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savannas Framework for Conservation Action to help guide voluntary conservation work over the next five years across 25 states, including over 7 million acres of new conservation practices on productive, working lands, and will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to make our nation a leader on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. The plan will accelerate voluntary conservation efforts for the Northern bobwhite quail and the grassland and savanna landscapes that the species calls home.

USDA Expands Aquaculture Disaster Assistance to Include Fish Raised for Food

In response to catastrophic aquaculture losses due to major winter storms that hit states along the U.S. Gulf Coast, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced a policy change that makes food fish and other aquatic species eligible for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). Previously, only farm-raised game and bait fish were eligible for death loss ELAP benefits.

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary.

To be eligible, losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2021. An aquaculture producer will still need to be able to provide contemporaneous records upon request to document the eligible loss event and demonstrate the beginning and ending inventory. The deadline to file an application for payment for the 2022 program year is Jan. 31, 2023.

Producers must provide acreage reports for the surface acres of water where their aquatic species are raised. Acreage reports for 2022 must be filed by Sept. 30, 2023.

More Information

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Encourages Producers to Enroll in Grassland CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting next week through May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover. The program had its highest enrollment in history in 2021 and is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader effort to equip producers with the tools they need to help address climate change and invest in the long-term health of our natural resources.

[Grassland CRP](#) is a federally funded voluntary working lands program. Through the program, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides annual rental payments to landowners to maintain and conserve grasslands while allowing producers to graze, hay, and produce seed on that land. Maintaining the existing permanent cover provides several benefits, including reducing erosion, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and capturing and maintaining carbon in the soil and cover.

FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. The annual rental rate varies by county with a national minimum rental rate of \$13 per acre for this signup. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

Grassland CRP National Priority Zones

Because Grassland CRP supports not only grazing operations but also biodiversity and conserving environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion, FSA created two [National Priority Zones](#) in 2021: the Greater Yellowstone Migration Corridor and Dust Bowl Zone. As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's focus on conservation in important wildlife corridors and key seasonal ranges, for this year's signup, FSA is expanding the Greater Yellowstone Wildlife Migration Corridor Priority Zone to include seven additional counties across Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, to help protect the big-game animal migration corridor associated with Wyoming elk, mule deer, and antelope.

Offers within one of these National Priority Zones will receive an additional 15 ranking points and \$5 per acre if at least 50% of the offer is located in the zone.

Alongside Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can also enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

Broadening Reach of Program

As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans, will receive 10 additional ranking points to enhance their offers.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, non-profit, and private entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

More Information on CRP

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the May 13 deadline. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The working lands signup announced today demonstrates how much it has evolved from the original program that was primarily intended to control soil erosion and only had the option to take enrolled land out of production. The program has expanded over the years and now supports a greater variety of conservation and wildlife benefits, along with the associated economic benefits.

USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](#) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll will need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit [farmers.gov](#) and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).

Applying for NAP Payments

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 "Application for Coverage" and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment" within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your [local County USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, contact your [local County USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact [your local County USDA Service Center](#) at or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

USDA Announces Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators

Producers can apply for a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. EZ Guarantee Loans use a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved, and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

A new category of lenders will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

For more information about the available types of FSA farm loans, [contact your local FSA office](#) for more information or visit fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

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