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## From Brenda's Desk

Spring has sprung, well according to the calendar anyway. The weather sure has been unpredictable so far this year. With the snowstorms and now the spring melt other programs may become available. If you experience loss to off stream headgates, washed out pipelines, excessive debris on your fields, etc., from ice jams or flooding, please contact this office as soon as possible so we can evaluate the damage. These kinds of events could make available the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to help restore damages caused by flooding.



The articles in the newsletter describe the different programs available through out the year from our Service Center. There is also an article describing the difference between the types of disaster declarations. Check these out to learn more.

If there are changes to your operation including changes in farms you are leasing or have sold, changes to your bank account information, changes to your entity such as adding members or changing share percentages, or forming a trust please notify this office. Keeping us updated with any changes will help us help you keep your records up to date and prevent delays in program benefits.

Big Horn County FSA is here to assist your agricultural needs, stop by or call our office with program questions.

### **Upcoming Deadlines/Dates:**

May 29- Office Closed- Memorial Day

June 2- Signup Deadline for ERP Phase 2 and PARP

July 15- Acreage Reporting Deadline- Spring Planted Crops & Perennial Grasses

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## USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for Producers Facing Inclement Weather

Severe weather events create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. USDA offers several programs to help with recovery.



### **Risk Management**

For producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP), we want to remind you to report crop damage to your crop insurance agent or the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

If you have crop insurance, contact your agency within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days. If you have NAP coverage, file a Notice of Loss (also called Form CCC-576) within 15 days of loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

## Disaster Assistance

USDA also offers disaster assistance programs, which is especially important to livestock, fruit and vegetable, specialty and perennial crop producers who have fewer [risk management options](#).

First, the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) and [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died as a result of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed and forage. And, the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) provides assistance to producers of grazed forage crop acres that have suffered crop loss due to a qualifying drought. Livestock producers suffering the impacts of drought can also request [Emergency Haying and Grazing](#) on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

Next, the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) provides cost share assistance to rehabilitate and replant tree, vines or shrubs loss experienced by orchards and nurseries. This complements NAP or crop insurance coverage, which cover the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

For LIP and ELAP, you will need to file a Notice of Loss for livestock and grazing or feed losses within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days. For TAP, you will need to file a program application within 90 days.

## Documentation

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to after the loss.

Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- Production records
- Vaccination records
- Bank or other loan documents
- Third-party certification

## Other Programs

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore damaged farmland or forests.

Additionally, FSA offers a variety of loans available including emergency loans that are triggered by disaster declarations and operating loans that can assist producers with credit needs. You can use these loans to replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs.

Meanwhile, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial resources through its [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. Assistance may also be available for emergency animal mortality disposal from natural disasters and other causes.

## Additional Resources

Additional details – including payment calculations – can be found on our [NAP](#), [ELAP](#), [LIP](#), and [TAP](#) fact sheets. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options.

While we never want to have to implement disaster programs, we are here to help. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local USDA Service Center. All [USDA Service](#)

[Centers](#) are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments because of the pandemic.

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## Overview of Emergency Disaster Declarations and Designations

Farmers and ranchers know all too well that natural disasters can be a common, and likely a costly, variable to their operation. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has emergency assistance programs to provide assistance when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger.

FSA administers four types of disaster designations.

### USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation

- The designation process can be initiated by individual farmers, local government officials, State governors, State agriculture commissions, tribal councils or the FSA State Executive Director
- This designation is triggered by a 30-percent or greater production loss to at least one crop because of a natural disaster, or at least one producer who sustained individual losses because of a natural disaster and is unable to obtain commercial financing to cover those losses
- In 2012, USDA developed a fast-track process for disaster declarations for severe drought. This provides for a nearly automatic designation when, during the growing season, any portion of a county meets the D2 (Severe Drought) drought intensity value for eight consecutive weeks or a higher drought intensity value for any length of time as reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>)

### Administrator's Physical Loss Notification

- This designation is initiated by the FSA State Executive Director.
- The designation is triggered by physical damage and losses because of a natural disaster, including but not limited to dead livestock, collapsed buildings, and destroyed farm structures.

### Presidential Designation

- A Presidential major disaster designation and emergency declaration is initiated by the Governor of the impacted state through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- This designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by a disaster of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capability of the State and local governments.

### Quarantine Designation

- This designation is requested of the Secretary of Agriculture by the FSA State Executive Director.
- A quarantine designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by the effects of a plant or animal quarantine approved by the Secretary under the Plant Protection Act or animal quarantine laws.

All four types of designations immediately trigger the availability of low-interest Emergency loans to eligible producers in all primary and contiguous counties. FSA borrowers in these counties who are unable to make their scheduled payments on any debt may be authorized to have certain set asides. Additional disaster assistance requiring a designation may also be provided by new programs in the future.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, contact your Big Horn County USDA Service Center at (307)765-2689 Ext. 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/disaster](http://fsa.usda.gov/disaster).

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# USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.



USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting [farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool](https://farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool) and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

## Background

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA is taking action to immediately [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) whose operations are at financial risk while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

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## NRCS Announces the 30-day signup period for 2023 Inflation Reduction Act Funding Applications must be received by Wednesday, May 3, 2023

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing the 30-day open application window, ending on May 3, for farmers, ranchers, and landowners to sign up for the USDA conservation funding.

Jackie Byam, NRCS State Conservationist in Wyoming, announces that farmers, ranchers, and landowners interested in any of the following programs need to apply by May 3, for funding in 2023. Applications are being taken at all USDA Service Centers in Wyoming.



-Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) initiative

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) IRA initiative

“The Inflation Reduction Act provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our Wyoming ranchers, farmers and other agricultural and forest landowners,” said Byam. “The act will allow qualifying producers in Wyoming to invest in climate-smart practices that create value and economic opportunities. Agriculture is the backbone of Wyoming and what we produce here has far reaching impacts beyond our state. We look forward to seeing our producers take advantage of this additional funding to existing NRCS programs.”

All eligible applications received by May 3, will be prioritized, evaluated, and ranked for funding in 2023. Farmers may contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning. Farmers and Ranchers who are interested in practices that may require permits, such as manure storage or streambank restoration, to begin planning and seeking permits as soon as possible.

Special incentives are also available for beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged and other historically underserved customers at increased payment rates.

Landowners interested in applying for consideration in any of the listed programs should contact their local NRCS office at the USDA Service Center for their county. For more information, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

NRCS does accept applications for all programs year around and farmers, ranchers and landowners are encouraged to continually work with their local NRCS office personnel to better understand which programs will best work for them.



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Spencer Ellis-Vice Chairman  
Justine Paxton-Member

COC Meeting: TBD

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