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Important Updates

Deadlines:

COC Elections - All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

July 17, 2023 - Acreage reporting Deadline

July 14, 2023 - Deadline to apply for Emergency Relief Program (ERP Phase 2) & Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP)

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally.

All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and they may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. Urban farmers should use an Nomination forms and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023.

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with their County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Fremont-Sweetwater/Sublette County:

July 17, 2023

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made. Check with FSA at the local USDA Service Center for more information on continuous certification.

New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and these video tutorials.

More Information

For questions, please contact the County FSA office.

USDA Extends Application Deadline for Revenue Loss Programs to July 14

USDA is extending the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) to July 14, 2023, to give producers more time to apply for assistance. The original deadline was June 2. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to agricultural producers and provide assistance in completing an ERP Phase Two application. The extended deadline will give producers more time to work with these partner organizations and apply for assistance.

Cooperative Agreements for ERP Phase Two Application Assistance

Through cooperative agreements with FSA, the following organizations are providing free assistance to producers across the United States and territories.

- [Alabama State Association of Cooperatives](#)
- [Farmers Legal Action Group, INC.](#)
- [Flower Hill Institute](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council, Inc](#)
- [North South Institute](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside II](#)
- [Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA](#)
- [Rural Coalition](#)
- [Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO](#)

Depending on a producer's location, these nine partners can provide assistance either by phone or through online meeting software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. There is never a charge for technical assistance provided by FSA employees or cooperative agreement recipients. These organizations will assist producers with completing the application and any follow-up future insurance coverage requirements. Producers who receive ERP payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years. These organizations will not collect producer records, complete or sign the application form, or act on the producer's behalf in any way throughout this process. Find more information on FSA cooperative agreements and contact information for the nine organizations please visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index.

PARP Application Assistance

USDA will host a webinar that focus on completing the PARP application form on June 8, 2023 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. eastern with members of the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee. Register [here](#).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ERP Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Assistance will be primarily to producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or NAP, since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One. To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a 15% or greater decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a baseline year. FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that can help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue for each respective program. Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two and PARP assistance. Producers should also keep in mind that July 15 is a major deadline to complete acreage reports for most crops. FSA encourages producers to complete the ERP Phase Two application, PARP application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

More Information

For more information, view the [ERP Phase Two Fact Sheet](#), [PARP Fact Sheet](#), the [ERP Phase Two-PARP Comparison Fact Sheet](#), [ERP Phase Two application video tutorial](#), [PARP application video tutorial](#), [myth-buster blog](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

NRCS Announces \$75 Million to Assist Producers Transitioning to Organic as Part of USDA's Organic Transition Initiative

USDA announced its \$75 million investment in conservation assistance for producers transitioning to organic production. As part of the multi-agency [Organic Transition Initiative \(OTI\)](#), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will dedicate financial and technical assistance to a new organic management standard and partner with new organic technical experts to increase staff capacity and expertise.

The investment, which includes funds from the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), will help build new and better markets and income streams, strengthen local and regional food systems and increase affordable food supply for more Americans, while promoting climate-smart agriculture and ensuring equity for all producers.

Direct Farmer Assistance

NRCS will dedicate \$70 million to assist producers with a [new organic management standard](#) under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS will help producers adopt the new organic management standard, which allows flexibility for producers to get the assistance and education they need such as attending workshops or requesting help from experts or mentors. It supports conservation practices required for organic certification and may provide foregone income reimbursement for dips in production during the transition period.

Higher payment rates and other options are available for underserved producers including socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran, and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

How to Apply

Eligible producers include farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and other producers beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification. NRCS will announce state-specific deadlines later this year, after which producers can apply through NRCS at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Notice of Funding for Seven New Positions

NRCS will dedicate \$5 million to partner with six organic technical experts through five-year agreements. The organic experts will develop regional networks and support NRCS staff who provide services to USDA customers. These services include hosting hands-on organic training and fielding organic-related staff questions. One organic research position will support this network. A [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), closing on June 11, 2023, outlines requirements for proposals from regional organizations and partners.

For more information, visit farmers.gov/organic.

USDA Unveils Efforts to Streamline Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The USDA is streamlining its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to ultimately better help agricultural producers and private landowners conserve wetlands, productive farmlands and at-risk grasslands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is rolling out several improvements to this important program, which has more than 5 million acres of land enrolled, in response to feedback from producers, landowners and conservation partners.

Specifically, NRCS is updating its processes around appraisals, land surveys, as well as certifying eligible entities who help NRCS and producers enroll land into easements. These changes are for ACEP [Agricultural Land Easements](#) (ALE) as well as [Wetland Reserve Easements](#) (WRE).

Key program changes include:

- **Appraisals for ALE:** The threshold for national review of ALE appraisals is now \$3 million, raised from \$1 million. NRCS raised the threshold to align program requirements with increased land values, enabling the agency to better target staff resources and speed up implementation. Appraisals help ensure cost-effective and appropriate use of federal funds that are contributed to a conservation partner for their purchase of the ALE from the farmer or rancher.
- **Land Surveys for WRE:** NRCS plans to encourage procurement of land surveys earlier in the acquisition timeline, such as when an application has been tentatively selected for a WRE. These surveys help with locating land boundaries, which is needed to purchase and manage the easement. NRCS is also increasing its use of partnerships to assist with acquiring the land surveys and has simplified the review process for producer-acquired land surveys. This will speed up the time it takes producers and landowners to enroll.
- **Certification of Entities for ALE:** For ALE, NRCS works with eligible entities, such as American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations, to conserve prime farmland and at-risk grasslands. NRCS is working to expand the number of entities by launching a certification initiative to proactively notify potentially eligible entities that they qualify for administrative flexibilities. Certified entities have greater independence and less oversight in their purchase of easements funded under ALE. Information for entities on how to get certified is available on the [ALE webpage](#).

These improvements are the first step in an ongoing effort to streamline ACEP as well as other NRCS conservation programs to ensure that they are easier and more convenient to utilize, and it will strengthen implementation of the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA), which included \$1.4 billion in additional funding for ACEP over five years. ACEP is administered by NRCS and aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring, and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands, and grasslands at risk to conversion to non-grassland uses. Healthy wetlands, grasslands and farmlands sequester carbon and provide many other natural resource benefits. NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs – including ACEP – year-round. Producers interested in easements should contact their [local Service Center](#) or view their [state application ranking dates](#).

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.



USDA Service Center

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