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## Natrona/Converse County Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

Natrona County U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over, and the ballots have been counted.



Laura J. Miles of Casper was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) 3 and Donald Blackburn of Douglas was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) 4, the alternate for (LAA) 4 is Richard W. Lisco. County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently elected county committee members will take office in January 2024 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, and they are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

Nearly 7,800 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) or contact the Natrona County FSA office at 307-261-5436 Ex.2.

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## USDA Makes Producer-Friendly Change to 2023 Notice of Loss Requirements for Two Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived certain notice of loss requirements for 2023 for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). In an effort to streamline assistance to support access to critical 2023 natural disaster recovery assistance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is waiving the requirement to submit ELAP or LIP notices of loss within a pre-determined number of days for 2023. Instead, producers have the flexibility to submit 2023 notices of loss as soon as possible, once losses are realized, following a natural disaster event or no later than the established annual program application for payment deadlines for each program. FSA county committees are also being asked to re-evaluate 2023 ELAP and LIP late-filed notices of loss to determine if the waiver applies.

### **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish**

ELAP provides recovery assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish losses due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP covers grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres. ELAP also covers certain mortality losses for livestock including honeybees and farm-raised fish as well as honeybee hive losses. ELAP is designed to address losses not covered by other FSA disaster assistance programs.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for ELAP to file a notice of loss with FSA within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent for livestock and farm-raised fish and 15 calendar days for honeybees. Under this waiver, notices of loss are to be completed by the eligible producer and submitted to FSA no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred. Therefore, producers who incurred ELAP-eligible losses in 2023, will need to submit a notice of loss by Jan. 30, 2024.

### **Livestock Indemnity Program**

LIP provides disaster recovery assistance to livestock owners and contract growers who experience livestock deaths, in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. LIP also helps livestock owners who must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from certain loss conditions.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for LIP to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent. Under this waiver, producers are still required to complete and submit the notice of loss to FSA no later than the annual program payment application date, which is 60 calendar days following the program year in which the loss occurred. The LIP payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year.

### **2023 Disapproved Applications**

FSA county committees will review all notices of loss for both ELAP and LIP that were previously disapproved for the 2023 program year due to late filing and re-evaluate them to determine if the waiver applies. To receive ELAP and LIP benefits, producers will still need to file an application for payment by the established program deadline for the 2023 program year. Producers who are unsure about the status of their notice of loss or application for payment, should contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible.

### **Supporting Documentation**

Accurate records and loss documentation are critical following disaster events and are required when filing notices of loss with FSA. Acceptable loss documentation includes:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented, if possible, by photographs or video records of ownership and losses.
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type, and weight - important to document prior to disposal.

- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.
- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition.
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition.
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal.
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.
- Number of gallons of water transported to livestock due to water shortages.

### More Information

The improvements to ELAP and LIP build on others made since 2021. This includes ELAP benefits for above normal costs for hauling feed and water to livestock and transporting livestock to other grazing acres during a qualifying drought. FSA also [expanded eligible livestock](#) under ELAP, LIP, and the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program, and increased the LIP payment rate for beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals less than 250 pounds and most recently beef calves over 800 pounds. Learn about USDA disaster assistance programs on [farmers.gov](#).

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine [disaster protection and recovery](#) program or loan options. For more information about FSA programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## NRCS Announces ACEP, AMA, CSP, EQIP, RCPP for 2024 Funding, Apply by January 19th, 2024 Providing Conservation Practices to Protect Natural Resources

**CASPER, Wyo.** – Farmers, Ranchers, Land Trusts, and landowners will want to plan ahead and sign up early for USDA conservation funding. Jackie Byam, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist in Wyoming, announced farmers, ranchers, Land Trusts, and landowners interested in the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE), Agriculture Management Assistance (AMA), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), , and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), , for funding in 2024. Applications are being taken at all USDA Service Centers in Wyoming. Applications for ACEP-ALE, submitted by the eligible entity/land trust, will be accepted by the WY NRCS State Office.

“The Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act allow NRCS to support conservation that ensures cost-effective financial assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality and other natural resources benefits,” said Byam. “By getting applications in early, NRCS staff will have time to assist in planning conservation practice needs.”

All eligible applications received by January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will be evaluated, and ranked for funding in 2024. Farmers may contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning. Byam reminds farmers who are interested in practices that may require permits, such as irrigation or streambank restoration, to begin planning and seeking permits as soon as possible.

### Sign up includes the following opportunities:

- **ACEP**
  - WRE (Highly Restrictive Easement)

- ALE – General
- ALE – Big Game
- **AMA**
  - High Tunnels
  - Shelterbelts
- **CSP**
  - Beginning Farmer Rancher & Socially Disadvantaged Farmer Rancher
  - Classic Agricultural Land
  - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
  - Nonindustrial Private Forest Land
  - Organic
  - Sage Grouse Initiative
- **EQIP**
  - Beginner Farmer Rancher & Socially Disadvantaged
  - Big Game Migration
  - Colorado River Salinity
  - Conservation Incentive Contracts
  - Conservation Planning Activities (CPAs), Design and Implementation Activities (DIAs), and Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs)
  - High Tunnel
  - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
  - Joint Chief's - Valleys & Headwaters Restoration
  - Local Priorities
  - National Organic Initiative
  - National Water Quality Initiative
  - Sage Grouse Initiative
  - Source Water Protection
  - Water Management Entity
  - WaterSMART
  - Wetland/Wildlife
  - Wind River Reservation
- **RCPP**
  - Upper Colorado River – Yampa & Little Snake Basins
    - Land Management Agreements
  - Securing the Grass Highways for Wyoming Migrations
    - Easements and Land Management Agreements

Landowners interested in applying for funding 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)

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# Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.



## USDA Service Center

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Casper, WY 82609

Phone: 307-261-5436  
Fax: 855-415-3428

### District Director and Acting County Executive Director

**Sherri D. Weins**  
[sherri.weins1@usda.gov](mailto:sherri.weins1@usda.gov)

### Program Technician

**Wanda K. McLean** [wanda.mclean@usda.gov](mailto:wanda.mclean@usda.gov)

**Full Time Temp**  
**Kim Furnival**  
[kim.furnival@usda.gov](mailto:kim.furnival@usda.gov)

**County Committee:**  
**Heather Harlan, Chair**

### District Conservationist

**Kenneth Wolfley** [kenneth.wolfley@usda.gov](mailto:kenneth.wolfley@usda.gov)

### Rangeland Management Specialist

**Morgan Elsom**  
[john.elsom@usda.gov](mailto:john.elsom@usda.gov)

**William Kossert, Vice Chair  
Mitch Falkenburg Member  
Roy Jarrard, Alternate  
Brendon Grant, Alternate**

**Next COC Meeting:  
Jan 9, 2024 @ 1:00 pm.**