



- [From Darla's Desk...](#)
- [USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023](#)
- [FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Ownership Loans](#)
- [Protect Your Investments in the Soil: USDA's Modernized Lav Data Mart Website Provides User-Friendly, State-of-the-Art Data](#)

## From Darla's Desk...

Happy spring to all Park County farmers and ranchers!

Please remember the deadline to file your Acreage Report is July 15, 2023. We will need to know your plant dates, intended use, and shares in each crop. Along those lines, if you have any failed crops, FSA needs to be notified within 15 days of when the loss is first apparent. This is especially important for crops covered under our Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), but applies to all crops, as it affects your crop reports, which affect your benefits you receive through FSA programs. Please call the office when you are done planting to schedule an appointment.



### Important Deadlines

May 26th - Grassland CRP signup deadline  
May 29th - Office Closed in Observance of Memorial Day  
June 2nd - ERP Phase 2 and PARP Deadline  
June 19th - Office Closed in observance of Juneteenth  
July 15th - Deadline to Report 2022 NAP production  
July 15th - Spring acreage reporting deadline

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## USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup starting **April 17 through May 26, 2023**. Among CRP enrollment opportunities, Grassland CRP is unique as a *working lands program*, allowing producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity and conservation.



Protecting grasslands with CRP not only benefits participants with annual rental payments and cost share assistance; it also contributes positively to the economy of many regions, builds biodiversity, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

More than 2.4 million acres were enrolled through the 2022 Grassland CRP Signup from agricultural producers and private landowners. That signup – the highest ever for the program– reflects the continued success and value of investments in voluntary, producer-led, working lands conservation programs. The

current total participation in Grassland CRP is 6.3 million acres, which is part of the 23 million acres enrolled in CRP opportunities overall.

Since 2021, the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers all CRP programs, has made several improvements to Grassland CRP to broaden the program's reach, including:

- Creating two [National Priority Zones](#) to put focus on environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion.
- Enhanced offers with 10 additional ranking points to producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans.
- Leverage the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities Tribal Nations in the Great Plains

## Other CRP Signups

### General CRP

[General CRP signup closed on April 7](#). The program helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

### Continuous CRP

Under [Continuous CRP](#), producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Also available is the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states but has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

## How to Sign Up

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP, or any other CRP enrollment option, should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

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## FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being



purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your Park County USDA Service Center at 307-754-9411 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Protect Your Investments in the Soil: USDA's Modernized Lab Data Mart Website Provides User-Friendly, State-of-the-Art Data

Understanding your specific soil and its dynamic properties, which can change over time due to human impacts, land management, and climate change, can be invaluable. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS), has a team of soil and data scientists who are bringing customers the best soil information using the newest technology through the Lab Data Mart.



The newly updated Lab Data Mart website, also known as the National Cooperative Lab Characterization Database, brings valuable soil data to the public's fingertips through a user-friendly, state-of-the-art interactive map. It includes data estimating soil properties such as organic carbon, clay content, calcium carbonate equivalent, and pH, which is beneficial in soil health assessments. Architects, educators, engineers, farmers, landowners, researchers, scientists, and anyone looking to learn more about their soil can access the latest data to make more informed decisions and reduce potential soil risks and hazards.

The Lab Data Mart includes mid-infrared (MIR) soil spectroscopy data gathered during soil analysis at the NRCS' Kellogg Soil Survey Laboratory, one of the largest libraries of such data in the world. MIR soil spectroscopy uses the interactions between soil matter and infrared radiation to estimate soil properties.

The Lab Data Mart's interactive map also links to a national database of soil characterization data, allowing users to locate soil samples and "pedons" analyzed in the lab. A pedon is the smallest unit of soil, containing all the soil horizons of a particular soil type. The customized data in the Lab Data Mart is downloadable to multiple applications and web services and is continuously updated as more sampled soil sites are added or re-visited.

### How Can the Lab Data Mart Help You?

- Determining carbon credits or improving carbon sequestration: The data can help you determine how much carbon is currently in the top 12 inches of soil and decide whether you want to sequester more carbon and consider methods and management practices to do so.
- Leasing or buying land: The data may help determine if your planned management practices will work; and if not, what could be the added cost to do things differently. Understanding the mineralogy of your soil can help you determine if it requires soil amendments, a new tool or piece of equipment to accomplish your goals, or a change to what you farm or your tillage operation.
- Taking a more systematic view of your land: Whether working with an NRCS conservation planner or on your own, the data helps you know more about your soil and ties into how you look at the whole ecological site.

### Who Can Help You Use Lab Data Mart and Help You Understand Your Data?

NRCS State Soil Scientists and their staff, as well as technical service providers, can assist with obtaining the data in Lab Data Mart and understanding it. Contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center for help and more information. Visit the Lab Data Mart website, or learn more about NRCS' Soil Science.



## Park County USDA Service Center

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### FSA

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### COC MEMBERS

Emily Karst – Chairperson  
Lynn George – Vice-Chairperson  
Tim Acord – Regular Member

Next County Committee Meeting: To Be Determined