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From Darla's desk...

Greeting Park County farmers and ranchers!!!



On Wednesday, the Park County Committee counted ballots for LAA #2. Adam George was elected to represent LAA #3. 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 and ranchers who are elected by local producers.

**Thank you Adam George for your willingness to serve
the farmers and ranchers of Park County!**

With winter approaching, please remember to take pictures of any dead animals and keep good records. The LIP program is one that requires extensive records and proof of death.

Sheep producers, the wool rate is currently at \$0.40 per pound. The deadline to submit an application for a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) on your 2023 wool is January 31, 2024. Please contact the office if you have questions or need more information.

Important Dates to Remember:

December 25 – Office closed for Christmas

January 1 – Office closed for New Year's

January 15 - Office closed for Equality Day

January 30 - Deadline to submit 2023 ELAP applications

January 31 - Deadline to submit LDP applications for 2023 wool

Within 15 days of noticing crop loss - File NAP Notice of Loss

USDA to Provide More Than \$3 Billion to Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters



The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in 2022.

Background

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328) that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by eligible natural disasters that occurred in calendar year 2022.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

ERP 2022 program benefits will be delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. FSA intends to make both tracks available to producers at the same time. This two-track approach enables USDA to:

- Streamline the application process.
- Reduce the paperwork burden on producers.
- Proactively include provisions for underserved producers who have not been well served by past emergency relief efforts.
- Encourage producer participation in existing risk management programs to mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events.

It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks. To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1

ERP 2022 Track 1 leverages existing federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments for eligible crop producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs.

Although FSA is sending pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who have crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA, producers indemnified for losses resulting from 2022 natural disasters do not have to wait to receive the application before requesting ERP 2022 assistance. Effective Oct. 31, 2023, producers can apply for ERP 2022 benefits whether they have received the pre-filled application or not. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

USDA estimates that ERP Track 1 benefits will reach more than 206,000 producers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,500 producers who obtained NAP coverage for the 2022 crop year.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist eligible producers who suffered an eligible decrease in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year using revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. In cases where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, Track 2 provides an alternative method for establishing revenue. Likewise, Track 2 affords producers of crops that are used within an operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop a method for establishing revenue for the purpose of applying for ERP 2022 benefits. Producers are not required to submit tax records to FSA unless requested by the County Committee if required for an FSA compliance spot check.

Although not required when applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, applicants might find the following documents useful to the process:

- Schedule F (Form 1040)
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Track 2 targets gaps in emergency relief assistance for eligible producers whose eligible losses were not covered by crop insurance or NAP including revenue losses too small (shallow loss) to be covered by crop insurance.

Producers interested in applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, should contact their local FSA county office. Additional reference resources can be found on FSA's [emergency relief website](#).

Additional Required Forms

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. Producers can apply for ERP 2022 starting Oct. 31, 2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Required forms:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs* (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2022 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm the status of their forms can contact their local FSA county office.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops.

More Information

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and through your local [FSA county office](#).

Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.



To participate in the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. For the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your Park County USDA Service Center at 307-754-9411 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Producers in Wyoming Encouraged to Apply for Conservation Assistance to Improve Irrigation, Conserve Water

Agricultural producers in Wyoming interested in conservation practices to manage soil moisture, improve irrigation efficiency, or otherwise conserve ground and surface water resources are encouraged to apply for assistance through U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation programs. Wyoming has 3 priority areas for the [WaterSMART Initiative \(WSI\)](#), a joint effort between Bureau of Reclamation and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to coordinate investments in the western US to help farmers conserve water and become more resilient to drought impacts.

"The WaterSMART Initiative provides additional funding for producers looking for help with practices to improve irrigation and conserve water," said Jackie Byam, NRCS State Conservationist in Wyoming. "We encourage producers in Wyoming to contact their local office to learn about the WaterSMART Initiative as well as our many other programs.

NRCS and the Bureau of Reclamation have identified nine new priority areas for fiscal year 2024. In total, \$29.7 million in EQIP funding is available through the initiative in [45 priority areas in 16 states](#) including Wyoming

Priority areas in Wyoming include: Heart Mountain Irrigation District, Lovell Irrigation District, and Hanover Irrigation District Area.

The collaboration between NRCS and the Bureau of Reclamation is a priority of the [National Drought Resilience Partnership](#). NRCS makes funding for WSI available to producers in priority areas in the American West through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The funding helps producers apply conservation practices to complement projects funded by the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART programs. Reclamation's WaterSMART investments help states, tribes, and local entities plan for and implement projects that increase water supply by providing funds to modernize existing infrastructure and otherwise build drought resilience.

Common practices to save water in irrigated agriculture include:

- Irrigation water management to build drought resilience;
- Irrigation pipeline to replace open canals;
- Sprinkler irrigation systems, low pressure types reduce water demand;
- Pumps, higher efficiency types reduce water demand;

To learn more about NRCS programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also apply for NRCS programs, manage conservation plans and contracts, and view and print conservation maps by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](#).

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team in Park County is already working on operating loans for spring 2024 and asks potential borrowers to submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.



FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new operation, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures, and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.



Park County USDA Service Center

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County Committee

Emily Karst - Chairperson
Lynn George - Vice-Chairperson
Vacant - Regular Member

Next County Committee Meeting: To Be Determined