



- [From Lisa's Desk:](#)
- [USDA Expands Eligibility, Enhances Benefits for Key Disaster Programs](#)
- [FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#)
- [Keeping Livestock Inventory Records](#)
- [USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service](#)
- [USDA Announces Availability of Inflation Reduction Act Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture](#)

From Lisa's Desk:

Hello Washakie and Hot Springs County Producers:

Please read the following articles regarding disaster programs and give the Washakie-Hot Springs County office if you have questions or need assistance with an application. The phone number is 307-347-2456 ext. 2.

Best wishes and stay warm,

Lisa Bower

County Executive Director



USDA Expands Eligibility, Enhances Benefits for Key Disaster Programs



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made updates to several conservation, livestock and crop disaster assistance programs to give more farmers, ranchers, and tribes the opportunity to apply for and access programs that support recovery following natural disasters. Specifically, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded eligibility and enhanced available benefits for a suite of its programs. These updates will provide critical assistance to producers who need to rebuild and recover after suffering catastrophic losses of production and infrastructure due to

natural disasters.

FSA has updated the following programs: The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP), the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Conservation Disaster Assistance Updates FSA updated ECP to:

- Allow producers who lease Federally owned or managed lands, including tribal trust land, as well as State land the opportunity to participate.

- Provide advance payments, up to 25% of the cost, for all ECP practices before the restoration is carried out, an option that was previously only available for fence repair or replacement. The cost-share payment must be spent within 60 days.

Additionally, Congress also authorized the Federal government to pay 100% of the ECP and EFRP cost for damage associated with the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire in New Mexico. This fire burned over 340,000 acres from April 2022 to June 2022 and was the largest wildfire in recorded history in New Mexico. ECP and EFRP cost-share assistance is typically capped at 75%. This policy change for 100% cost-share applies only to those locations impacted by the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire.

ECP and EFRP provide financial and technical assistance to restore conservation practices like fencing, damaged farmland or forests.

Livestock Disaster Assistance Updates

FSA also expanded eligible livestock under ELAP, LFP and LIP. Specifically, horses maintained on eligible grazing land are eligible for ELAP, LFP and LIP. Many family farms and ranches use their forage to raise horses to augment their other agriculture endeavors. FSA recognizes that animals maintained in a commercial agriculture operation, add value to the operation and could be available for marketing from the farm. FSA regulations have been updated to include these animals as eligible livestock

Horses and other animals that are used or intended to be used for racing and wagering remain ineligible.

Ostriches are also now eligible for LFP and ELAP. FSA is making this change because ostriches satisfy more than 50% of their net energy requirement through the consumption of growing forage grasses and legumes and are therefore considered "grazing animals."

This change for ostriches is effective for the 2022 program year for both LFP and ELAP. ELAP requires a notice of loss to be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss is first apparent. Because this deadline may have passed for 2022, FSA is extending the deadline for filing notices of loss through March 31, 2023.

LIP and 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. LFP provides benefits for grazing losses due to drought and eligible wildfires on federally managed lands.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. Basic NAP coverage is equivalent to the catastrophic level risk protection plan of insurance coverage, which is based on the amount of loss that exceeds 50% of expected production at 55% of the average market price for the crop.

Previously, to be eligible for NAP coverage, a producer had to submit an application (Form CCC-471) for NAP coverage on or before the application closing date. For 2022, if a producer has a *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* (Form CCC-860) on file with FSA, it will serve as an application for basic coverage for all eligible crops having a 2022 application closing date and all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage will be waived for these producers.

FSA will notify all eligible producers who already have the CCC-860 certification form on file of their eligibility for NAP basic coverage for 2022. To potentially receive NAP assistance, producers who suffered losses due to natural disasters in 2022 should file an acreage report as well as a notice of loss with the FSA at their local Service Center.

Producers who are interested in obtaining NAP coverage for 2023 and subsequent years should also contact their local FSA county office for information on eligibility, coverage options and applying for coverage.

Reporting Losses

Producers impacted by a natural disaster should report losses and damages and file an application with their [FSA county office](#). Timelines for reporting losses and applying for payments differ by program.

For LIP and ELAP, producers 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 LFP, producers must provide a completed application for payment and required supporting documentation to their FSA office within 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the grazing loss occurred.

For NAP, producers should contact their local FSA office for guidelines on submitting a notice of loss and filing an acreage certification.

More Information

The updates to these programs build on other Biden-Harris administration efforts to improve disaster assistance programs, including additional flexibility in obtaining Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) basic coverage for socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource and veteran farmers and ranchers.

Previous enhancement to the ELAP provide program benefits to producers of fish raised for food and other aquaculture species as well as cover above normal expenses for transporting livestock to forage and grazing acres and transport feed to livestock impacted by qualifying drought. And earlier updates to the LIP payment rates better reflect the true market value of non-adult beef, beefalo, bison and dairy animals.

Yesterday, FSA announced it would begin accepting applications for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and the new Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) on Jan. 23, 2023, through June 2, 2023. ERP Phase Two is designed to fill gaps in the delivery of program benefits not covered in ERP Phase One and improves equity in program delivery to underserved producers. PARP will help address gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses. Learn more in the [Jan. 9, 2023 news release](#).

Additional Resources

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance](#) fact sheet, and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine program or loan options. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, contact the local [USDA Service Center](#).

FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)

If you've suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock;
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock,
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.*

**Hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for "empty miles."*

Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.



WATER TRANSPORTATION

For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.

ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year. **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK TO FORAGE/GRAZING ACRES**

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. **Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.**

For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.

ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more information regarding ELAP, contact your Washakie-Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 ext. 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

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 livestock disaster assistance programs, 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 within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent 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 Washakie-Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 ext. 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form will be available starting March 1, 2023.

Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

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

- 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.

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 took action in October 2022 to [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) 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.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Announces Availability of Inflation Reduction Act Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture

USDA is making funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices. The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA) provided an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements. NRCS is making available \$850 million in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation



programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

The IRA funding includes an additional \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for RCPP, \$3.25 billion for CSP, and \$1.4 billion for ACEP. The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers apply conservation to millions of acres of land. Additionally, the IRA provides \$300 million to quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gases (GHG) through the collection and use of field-based data to assess conservation outcomes. Information gained through this effort will be used to improve practices and technical assistance to customers. Further guidance on this important work will be provided as the implementation of this portion of the IRA continues.

These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. To ensure we can quantify the benefits of these IRA investments, NRCS is working to support Department-wide work on Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MMRV). The IRA provided targeted funding to support this effort. In administering the Inflation Reduction Act climate investments, USDA will also support other environmental co-benefits, including – among other things – water conservation, wildlife habitat improvements, and reducing runoff.

How to Apply

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but producers interested in **EQIP** or **CSP** should apply by [their state's ranking dates](#) to be considered for funding in the current cycle. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.

For **ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)** or **Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)**, applications for the current IRA funding cycle must be submitted by **March 17, 2023**, for the first funding round. This year, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-ALE for grasslands in areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores. Meanwhile, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-WRE for eligible lands that contain soils high in organic carbon.

NRCS plans to roll out the next **RCPP** funding opportunity in early spring, which will include IRA funds from fiscal year 2023.

Other opportunities for agreements and partnerships at the state level will be announced for fiscal year 2023 in the coming months. The IRA provides funding to support those strategic partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. This will include outreach to underserved producers to ensure IRA climate funding is reaching those who have been previously unable to access conservation assistance.



USDA Service Center

NRCS/FSA
208 Shiloh Road
Worland, WY 82401

Phone: 307-347-2456

FSA:**County Executive Director, CED**

Lisa Bower 307-347-2456 x 112

lisa.bower@usda.gov

Program Technician

Sarah Sinn 307-347-2456 x 100 sarah.sinn@usda.gov

Program Technician, temp

Jennifer Ray 307-347-2456 x 105

jennifer.ray@usda.gov

Acting Farm Loan Manager (Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, Washakie)

Brian Harrell 307-240-3199 brian.harrell@usda.gov

Farm Loan Officer

Jolene Beiswenger 307-347-2456 x 111

jolene.beiswenger@usda.gov

Farm Loan Analyst

Kelli Emmett 307-347-2456 x 102

kelli.emmett@usda.gov

NRCS:**District Conservationist**

Emma Allen 307-347-2456 x 108

emma.allen@usda.gov

Civil Engineer

Allen Croft 307-347-2456 x 122 allen.croft@usda.gov

Multi County Rangeland Management Specialist

Blaise Allen 307-347-2456 x 109

blaise.allen@usda.gov

Natural Resources Specialist

Kaile Brant 307-347-2456 x 119 kaile.brant@usda.gov

Soil Conservationist

Errick Hayes 307-347-2456 x 107

errick.hayes@usda.gov

County Committee:

Julie Haun, Chairperson

Marilyn Vass, Member

Jim Butterfield, Member

Cameron Roady, Member

Billie Jo Norsworthy, Member