

March 2016

USDA e-News

California Edition



United States Department of Agriculture

Welcome to USDA e-News, California Edition, a multi-agency newsletter providing California's producers and other interested parties with current information.

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Featured Item

Application Deadline for 2016 Conservation Stewardship Program is March 31

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is making available \$150 million this year through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and private landowners interested in participating are encouraged to get their applications in soon. Although applications are accepted all year, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners should submit applications by March 31, 2016, to ensure they are considered for this year's funding. Applications received after that date will be considered for future funding. A detailed CSP program description and application for producers are available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/financial/csp/>

Updates

NRCS Continues Financial Assistance to Protect Salt River Watershed

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California will again offer continued financial assistance to agricultural producers to improve water quality in the Salt River Watershed. This is the fifth year that the NRCS National Water Quality Initiative is providing accelerated assistance to landowners in this watershed. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit an application as soon as possible for consideration. In addition to Salt River, NRCS California is also providing national water quality funding for the Calleguas Creek Watershed in

Ventura County. Interested farmers and ranchers in Humboldt County should contact Jon Shultz at (707) 442-6058 Ext 108 and in Ventura County contact Dawn Afman at (805) 984-2358 Ext 101

March Crop Insurance Deadlines

USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds producers that the final dates to apply for crop insurance are fast approaching. The last day to purchase or change your policy is **March 15, 2016** for barley, mint, oats, potatoes and wheat. Producers need to purchase, review, or modify their crop insurance policies before these sales closing dates have passed. Crop insurance provides protection against crop production losses due to natural perils such as drought, hail, and excessive moisture. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. In order to receive premium subsidies, the insured must certify that they meet [Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation](#) requirements (AD-1026) with Farm Service Agency (FSA). For more information contact your agent or you can find an agent online at the RMA [Agent Locator](#).

USDA Enrollment Period Begins for Safety Net Coverage in 2016

Producers who chose safety-net coverage from Agriculture Risk Coverage or Price Loss Coverage programs can visit Farm Service Agency county offices to sign contracts to [enroll in coverage](#) for 2016. The enrollment period will continue until **August 1, 2016**.

Reminder: Notice of Damage

As winter rains continue throughout California, Risk Management Agency and Farm Service Agency (FSA) remind insured producers that a written notice of damage or loss of production is to be filed **within 72 hours of initial discovery** of damage or loss of production. This also applies to producers enrolled in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. These notifications provide the opportunity for the insurance provider to inspect the crop and determine the extent of damage or potential production before the crop is harvested or otherwise disposed of. In the event of damage or loss, producers should contact either their insurance agent or [local FSA office](#) as appropriate.

Updates from the Southwest Climate Hub

The latest bulletin from the Southwest Climate Hub is available [online](#).

Funding Opportunities

NRCS & CARCD Launch Outreach Mini Grant Program

NRCS California and CARCD are offering a first-of-its kind mini grant (pilot) program. The vision is to create more resource conservation by reaching out and involving historically underserved farmers and ranchers at the field level. CARCD is administering the program that is open to RCDs and other nonprofits interested in working towards these objectives in conjunction with their local NRCS field office. Quality projects are sought that will result in tangible, documented outcomes. However, given the small size of these grants, it is intended that they will provide a modest infusion of resources to support a broader outreach strategy. Funds are

available to support educational activities, materials, workshops, field days, seminars, tours, demonstrations, brochures, fact sheets and other opportunities to expand conservation awareness and participation to all.

Time Lines: Proposed activities and final reports and invoices must be submitted as follows:

- 2nd Round of Applications Due: July 1, 2016
- 2nd Round Projects must be complete and final reports submitted by December 31, 2016

The application and additional information can be found [here](#).

NRCS Announces New Federal Funds to Improve Forest Health in Los Angeles County

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for a special forest health initiative in Los Angeles County. Federal funding will assist private forestland owners in mountain communities surrounding the Angeles National Forest. The Angeles National Forest project area will be centered on private land or tribal land in Lake Hughes, Green Valley, Juniper Hills, Pinion Hills, Wrightwood, and other neighboring communities. For more information or to determine if you are eligible, please contact the NRCS Lancaster Service Center at (661) 942-5503.

Tribal Set-Aside Funds for Business Grants Now Available

USDA Rural Development is currently accepting applications for Native American set-aside funds for its [Rural Business Development Grants](#) (RBDG). Applications must be received in the local or state office by **Monday, April 18, 2016**. RBDGs can be used to support technical assistance, training and other activities that help develop or expand small, rural businesses. Native American set-aside funds are available to federally recognized Tribes and other eligible entities if at least 75% of the beneficiaries are Native American. Complete are available on the Rural Development [website](#). Questions may also be directed to Martin Zone at (530) 792-5829 or martin.zone@ca.usda.gov.

Funds to Address Tree Mortality on Private Forestlands

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has launched an initiative to assist private forestland owners address tree mortality and other drought-related damage to improve forest health. Approved conservation practices include treating or removing woody residue from dead or dying trees, forest stand improvement, and tree plantings. Landowners of non-industrial private conifer forestlands in **Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno Tulare and Kern counties** are eligible to apply for assistance. Funding is being made available through the NRCS [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#). Eligible landowners are encouraged to contact their local county NRCS service center for more information and to apply:

- Fresno County - (559) 276-7494
- Kern County - (661) 336-0967
- Madera County - (559) 674-4628
- Mariposa County - (209) 966-3431
- Tulare County - (559) 734-8732
- Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties - (209) 223-6535

Wildlife Habitat Restoration Funds

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is making available about \$50 million nationwide this year in financial assistance to partner with agricultural producers who want to restore and protect habitat for seven focus species, including two California species: greater sage-grouse and the southwestern willow flycatcher. NRCS is also investing about \$535,000 in California on habitat restoration for the southwestern willow flycatcher, a small Neotropical migratory bird that lives in riparian areas and wetlands in the arid Southwest. NRCS financial assistance covers part of the cost to implement conservation practices. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#).

Incentives for Nut Farmers to Adopt Low-Emission Harvesters

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering a new incentive option for almond and walnut farmers (and potentially others) to use cleaner harvesting technology. Eligible farmers may receive an incentive of \$10.52/acre for up to three years for eligible harvesters. The new low-emissions harvesting opportunity is funded through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Additional information on the specific models of harvesters and how to apply for the program are available at your [local NRCS field office](#).

Reports and Publications

NASS Reports

[Valencia Orange Report](#) (3/9/2016)
[Crop Production](#) (3/9/2016)
[Final Grape Crush Report](#) (3/10/2016)
[Honey Production](#) (3/22/2016)
[Olive Inventory](#) (3/22/2016)
[Fruit & Nut Review](#) (3/30/2016)
[Livestock Review](#) (3/30/2016)
[Field Crop Review](#) (3/31/2016)
[Poultry Report](#) (3/31/2016)
[Prospective Plantings](#) (3/31/2016)

Other Activities and Events

2015 Certified Organic Survey Continues

NASS continues data collection for the 2015 Certified Organic Survey to provide more data for the industry. The survey questionnaire was mailed the first week of February to organic farmers and ranchers in California. This information will be used to help determine programs, research, and support to better meet the needs of organic agriculture producers in California and the U.S. California alone accounted for 41 percent of all organic sales in 2014. For more information, visit www.nass.usda.gov/ca or call Curt Stock in the Pacific Regional Office at 916-498-8935.

Nationwide Conservation Survey Ongoing

NASS is contacting California farmers and ranchers through early March 2016 as part of the second phase of the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). CEAP measures the environmental benefits associated with implementation and installation of conservation practices on cultivated and non-cultivated agricultural lands, according to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the lead agency for the project. NASS conducts the survey for CEAP under a cooperative agreement with NRCS. For more information, visit www.nass.usda.gov/ca or call Michael Landis in the Pacific Regional Office at 916-498-8940.

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Contact Us

If you would like to receive a copy of future newsletters or if you have relevant information for California producers that you want to include in a future issue of this newsletter, please email one of the contacts listed below. Please be advised that not all activities may be published.

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