



DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Emergency Haying and Grazing

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorized CRP. The program is also governed by regulations published in 7 CFR Part 1410. The program is implemented by FSA on behalf of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

How It Works

HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing of CRP acres is authorized under certain conditions to improve the quality and performance of the CRP cover or to provide emergency relief to livestock producers due to certain natural disasters. There are two types of haying and grazing authorization: non-emergency and emergency.

NON-EMERGENCY HAYING AND GRAZING

In general, non-emergency haying may be utilized every three years and non-emergency grazing may be utilized every two years. Additional grazing may be available to new and beginning farmers.

EMERGENCY HAYING AND GRAZING

Emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disaster. Emergency authorization is determined based on the U.S. Drought Monitor or information submitted by the FSA County and State office.

PRIMARY NESTING SEASON

Generally, CRP acres may not be hayed or grazed during the Primary Nesting Season for certain wildlife established by state FSA committees in consultation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee. A map of Primary Nesting Seasons is available [online](#).



GENERAL AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

Emergency haying and grazing status is reviewed and authorized each Thursday using the U.S. Drought monitor. Counties are approved for emergency haying and grazing due to drought conditions on a county by county basis, when a county is designated as level “D2 Drought - Severe” according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The U.S. Drought Monitor is available online at droughtmonitor.unl.edu.

Emergency haying is authorized for up to 60 days. Emergency grazing is authorized for a single period up to the sooner of 30 days before the first freeze date or 90 days.

Requests for emergency haying and grazing may also be initiated at the county level with review and approval at the state and national FSA offices. County eligibility is based on a county FSA committee request documenting a 40 percent or greater loss in forage production.

ELIGIBLE ACRES

Emergency haying or grazing is limited to the acres physically located within the boundary of the eligible county or portion of a county. Under this authority, acres will only be authorized for a specified time and may end earlier than announced if conditions improve.



ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

Emergency haying and grazing is authorized on all practices outside the primary nesting season including practices implemented under State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) such as CP38E SAFE-Grass when such activity is specifically authorized in the SAFE agreement.

If the county is approved for Livestock Forage Program (LFP) payments only certain practices can be hayed on 50 percent of the eligible acres.

INELIGIBLE ACRES

Acres ineligible for both non-emergency and emergency haying and grazing include acres devoted to:

- Useful life easements;
- Land within 20 feet of a stream or other permanent water body; and
- Any acres where emergency haying and or grazing would cause long-term damage to the CRP cover.

MODIFIED CONSERVATION PLAN

Before CRP acres are declared eligible for haying or grazing, a modified conservation plan developed by NRCS or a technical service provider must be obtained. The modified conservation plan must be site specific, include the authorized duration and reflect local wildlife needs and concerns. The primary purpose must be to maintain vegetative cover, minimize soil erosion and protect water quality and wildlife habitat quality.

FILE REQUEST BEFORE STARTING

CRP participants requesting emergency or non-emergency managed haying and grazing must file a request with their county FSA office indicating the acres to be hayed or grazed before the activity begins.

PAYMENT REDUCTION

No payment reduction is required for emergency haying and grazing.

For non-emergency haying and grazing payment reductions may apply.

For More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements or restrictions may apply. To find more information about FSA disaster assistance programs, visit [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator).