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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Colorado USDA Newsletter - May 9, 2023

Farm Service Agency | Natural Resources Conservation Service | Risk Management Agency

Table Of Contents

- [From Colorado FSA's State Executive Director, Kent Pepler](#)
- [Colorado Farm Service Agency is Hiring!](#)
- [Myth-Busting FSA's New Revenue-Based Disaster and Pandemic Assistance Programs](#)
- [USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service](#)
- [USDA Expands Margin Protection for Corn and Soybean Farmers](#)
- [USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023](#)
- [USDA, Colorado Introduce Additional Conservation Practice to Address Regional Drought Concerns](#)

- [Maps for Acreage Reporting are Available](#)
- [USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for Producers Facing Inclement Weather](#)
- [USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program](#)
- [NRCS Refines Nutrient Management Strategies to Improve Conservation Outcomes](#)

From Colorado FSA's State Executive Director, Kent Pepler

I hope spring planting is going well for you. Moisture is questionable at our farm near Mead. We are moving a lot of loose dirt with the trash whips and planting down to the knuckle, so we shall see!

The sign up for ERP 2 is not quite as lively as we thought it might be and we do realize this is a busy time of year. Washington DC is asking us to double down on our communications efforts concerning ERP 2. You will see an ERP 2 Myth-buster article in this newsletter a little further down. This should help us all to understand this important program better.

We realize this program has a bit of a twist with it being income based rather than production based. I think we might need to get used to these types of formats for future programs. Producers will have to take a bigger personal responsibility in the future doing things like self-certification and decision making, rather than relying on their long-time trusted county employees. The workload in the counties are already heavy, and county employees can't be expected to be the know-all-end-all for all of us, even though they try their hardest to be just that for us producers. With regards to ERP 2, I like the rest of you will be seeing my accountant soon to see if we are eligible.

If you have questions or concerns about ERP 2 or any of our programs, please call your local county office. I am sure they will be glad to help.

Until next time, good luck and be safe.

KP

Colorado Farm Service Agency is Hiring!

The Farm Service Agency is accepting applications for the following positions. Interested individuals may apply using the below links to [USAJOBS](#)

PERMANENT POSITIONS:



- **County Executive Director:**
 - [Weld County](#), Open 04/25/23-05/10/23 -Recruitment Incentives May Be Authorized
- **County Program Technician:**
 - [Baca County](#), Open 04/20/23-05/11/23
- **Farm Loan Specialist**
 - [Logan County](#), Open 05/05/23-05/15/23
- **Upcoming Permanent Position Announcements**
The following announcements will be coming soon. Be watching USAJobs for these announcements:
 - County Program Technician in Otero County
 - County Program Technician in Lincoln County
 - Farm Loan Officer Trainee in Lincoln County
 - County Executive Director Trainee (Location negotiable)

TEMPORARY POSITIONS (These are currently open positions)

To apply for one of the below listed temporary positions, please contact Claudia Drechsel at claudia.drechsel@usda.gov or 720-544-2878 for more information.

- Temporary County Program Technician in Lincoln and Moffat Counties (Location negotiable)
- Temporary County Program Technician in Baca County

If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please share this information with them. Contact Claudia Drechsel at claudia.drechsel@usda.gov or 720-544-2878 if you have specific questions regarding the positions.

Myth-Busting FSA's New Revenue-Based Disaster and Pandemic Assistance Programs



In January, we announced two new programs designed to assist producers who experienced revenue losses from 2020 and 2021 natural disasters or the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs are revenue-based and feel a little different from our regular programs, but the goal is to

better support farmers.

Both the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\)](#) Phase Two and the [Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program \(PARP\)](#) offer a holistic approach to disaster assistance and provide economic support for producers who bear the financial brunt of circumstances beyond their control.

With the rollout of any new program, there is a learning curve for producers and employees alike. ERP Phase Two and PARP are no exception. To encourage producer participation in these valuable programs, I'm going to do my best to debunk some myths and misconceptions surrounding ERP Phase Two and PARP.

With a June 2, 2023, deadline to apply for both programs, it's important that we clear up confusion about how to apply, what documents are required for participation, insurance requirements and related misinformation making its way across the countryside.

Now, let's do some myth-busting.

Myth #1 – You need to submit a completed tax return to FSA to apply for ERP Phase Two or PARP.

While these programs are based on revenue losses, you do not need a tax return, completed or otherwise, to apply for assistance. In fact, we have an [ERP Phase 2 tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that walk you through the process step by step.

We understand that you may have questions for your certified public accountant or tax preparer, who was likely been hard to reach prior to the April 18 Internal Revenue Service tax deadline but we encourage you to download the program decision tools and get started. You'll probably discover that you already have on hand much of the information you need.

The following supporting materials will help you:

- Schedule F (Form 1040); and
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 for ERP and for calendar years 2018, 2019, and 2020 for PARP.

The only reason you *might* have to provide your tax returns to FSA is in the event of a spot check or a request from the FSA County Committee.

Myth #2 – You cannot receive an ERP Phase Two payment if you received a payment under Phase One.

It's possible that you can still receive ERP Phase Two benefits if you received an ERP Phase One payment. There is also a possibility that your Phase Two payment may be offset.

Myth #3 – ERP Phase Two was intended to be an additional payment to those who received payment under Phase One.

ERP Phase Two was never designed or intended to be an additional payment. Instead, it was intended to assist those producers who did not receive relief in Phase One.

Myth #4 – The required insurance coverage for two years will cost more than your projected payments.

While this is a possibility depending on your projected payment amount, you won't know for sure until you inquire about one or both programs and determine which program might best address your losses. At the end of the day, you may decide to walk away, but on the other hand, if you don't visit with our staff about all your options, you could be leaving money on the table.

For underserved producers, FSA recently made a change to the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) that allows a producer's certification on Form CCC-860 Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or

Rancher Certification to serve as an application for basic NAP coverage for all eligible crops beginning with crop year 2022. These producers will have all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage waived, in addition to a 50% premium reduction for higher levels of coverage.

Crops that are not eligible for crop insurance or NAP are still eligible for ERP Phase Two, but producers must obtain [Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#) to meet linkage requirements.

Myth #5 – The application process is complicated.

Simply because something is different does not mean it's difficult. We worked extremely hard to reduce producer burden by streamlining our application process to allow producers to self-certify their losses. To reassure you that the process is simple, straightforward and transparent, maybe it's best if you hear directly from your peers.

In addition to assistance from FSA staff, we are working with partner organizations who can further support and assist with program applications. As these partners are fully onboarded, they will be added to fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index.

Program Eligibility

The [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\)](#) Phase Two applies to producers who experienced revenue losses from eligible natural disasters in 2020 and 2021.

The [Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program \(PARP\)](#) applies to producers who experienced revenue losses in calendar year 2020 due to price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses.

If you are interested in ERP Phase Two and PARP, please reach out to your local FSA office to inquire and request assistance. Half the battle is just getting the process started. I know that most of you have field prep and spring planting on your minds but please don't let rumors, myths and misconceptions prevent you from getting the assistance you need. Contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) today! You can also call the FSA call center at 877-508-8364.

USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their 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. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

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

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- 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.

Background

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 is taking action to immediately [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) whose operations are at financial risk 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.

USDA Expands Margin Protection for Corn and Soybean Farmers

USDA is expanding its [Margin Protection insurance plan](#), adding more than a thousand counties to the insurance option that provides coverage against an unexpected decrease in operating margin for corn and soybean producers. This expansion, which is in direct response to growing interest among producers, will be available by June 30, 2023. Interested producers will need to purchase their coverage by Sept. 30, 2023, to be eligible for the 2024 crop year.

Margin Protection, first implemented for the 2016 crop year, protects against decreases in margin caused by reduced county yields, reduced commodity prices, increased price of certain inputs or any combination of these issues. It is area-based, using county-level estimates of average revenue and input costs to establish the amount of coverage and indemnity payments.

RMA's expansion of the Margin Protection plan will add 1,255 counties for soybeans and 1,729 counties for corn. This will add coverage in 22 states for soybeans with 34 states being covered in total. It will also make Margin Protection available for corn in the

contiguous United States ([see maps](#)). The plan is available in select counties for rice (Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas), and wheat (Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

In the 2022 crop year, there were 1.7 million acres of corn and 1 million acres of soybeans insured under the Margin Protection insurance plan.

Margin Protection can be purchased by itself, or in conjunction with a Yield Protection or Revenue Protection policy purchased from the same Approved Insurance Provider that issued the Margin Protection policy. Margin Protection cannot be purchased with the Supplemental Coverage Option or the Enhanced Coverage Option.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023

USDA announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin signing up for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting today and running through May 26, 2023. Among CRP enrollment opportunities, Grassland CRP is a unique working lands program, allowing producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while conserving grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity as well as healthier soil.

More than 3.1 million acres were accepted 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, USDA's 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.
- Enhancing offers with 10 additional ranking points to producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans.
- Leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities within Tribal Nations in the Great Plains. The next article has more information on Colorado CREP.

How to Sign Up for Grassland CRP

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 the deadlines.

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

Other CRP Signups

Under [Continuous CRP](#), producers and landowners can enroll 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. Continuous CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

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 (CLEAR30) Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states but has since been expanded nationwide, giving producers and landowners across the country the opportunity to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

USDA, Colorado Introduce Additional Conservation Practice to Address Regional Drought Concerns

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Colorado are continuing and strengthening their Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partnership to support and empower Colorado's agricultural producers and landowners in reducing consumptive water use and protecting water quality, while conserving critical natural resources. Specifically, the newly revised Colorado Republican River CREP project, now available through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, will offer producers a dryland crop production practice on eligible cropland. This option will give producers meaningful tools to continue farming as they work toward permanently retiring water rights and conserving the Ogallala Aquifer for future generations.

"This project is an example of how targeted and thoughtful federal-state partnerships can help address local natural resource concerns," said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. "The Colorado Republican River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will help us meet an intertwined and complex set of challenges head-on, providing opportunities for producers to keep working lands working while reducing their water use and adapting climate-resilient agricultural practices. With the new dryland crop production

practice provided through this agreement, producers with eligible land will have both the authority and access to the necessary technical assistance to successfully transition away from irrigated production while maintaining soil health and wildlife habitat. I am deeply grateful for the State of Colorado's commitment to not just reaching an agreement but reaching the right agreement and strengthening a long-term partnership that will support Colorado producers into the future."

Through the revised Colorado Republican River CREP, USDA and the State of Colorado will make resources available to program participants who voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14-year to 15-year contracts. This CREP provides participants with two ways to enroll eligible land. Producers can enroll eligible land in "CP100, Annual Crop Production, Non-Irrigated." This practice transitions irrigated cropland to non-irrigated crop production and establishes complimentary wildlife habitat in and along the cropland. Additionally, participants within the Republican River CREP project area may enroll eligible land in "CP2, Permanent Native Grasses," "CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat," and "CP23 or CP23A, Wetland Restoration." These conservation practices remove cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to an approved conservation cover.

Through both enrollment options, producers will earn an annual rental payment and cost share on eligible components of the practice.

The dryland crop production practice is unique because producers will be able to keep these lands working while they implement conservation-minded agricultural practices including no till farming, cover crop installation and wildlife-friendly harvesting. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will work with eligible producers to develop conservation plans which include an approved annual crop rotation, minimum crop residue requirements, and management practices that support erosion mitigation and wildlife habitat. Unlike continuous and general CRP enrollment, participants with land enrolled in the CP100 may earn additional income from crops harvested from this acreage.

"By leveraging this CREP program, we can combine significant long-term reduction of consumptive water use and conservation-based dryland crop production when drought and water conservation resource concerns exist, as they so currently do," said Kent Peppler, FSA's Colorado State Executive Director. "This approach showcases that when we work to promote both production and conservation hand-in-hand, we have the capacity to create unique partnerships that benefit our economies, landscapes, and communities."

Dan Gibbs, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, highlighted the positive impact this agreement will have on conservation efforts in the basin. Gibbs said, "We are excited about the outcome of this collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency. This agreement will help Colorado continue to advance its conservation efforts that are leading the basin toward a sustainable future in agriculture. The dryland production alternative provides more options that attract greater participation in the reduction of irrigation while helping preserve the economy and culture of the local region."

"Through partnership with DNR and USDA, Colorado farmers and ranchers will have the opportunity to continue production while focusing on conservation efforts," said Kate

Greenberg, Colorado's Commissioner of Agriculture. "This agreement dovetails with CDA's STAR Soil Health program, which helps bring financial and technical assistance to producers interested in expanding or introducing new climate smart practices into their operations," said Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture Kate Greenberg. "Farmers and ranchers are experiencing first-hand the impacts of drought and climate change. Tools such as dryland CREP that focus on farmer-led solutions to healthy soils and water conservation are key to mitigating these effects in agricultural landscapes and providing producers options."

Interested farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners are encouraged to contact FSA at their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to participate. Find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator.

More Information

Currently, CREP has 35 projects in 27 states. In total, more than 784,800 acres are enrolled in CREP. The Colorado Republican River CREP is part of USDA's broader effort to leverage CREP as an important tool to address climate change and other natural resources challenges while expanding opportunities for producers and communities, especially those historically underserved by USDA. In December 2021, [USDA announced improvements](#) to the program as well as additional staff to support the program.

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.

Maps for Acreage Reporting are Available

Maps are now available at your local County FSA Office for acreage reporting purposes. If you wish to receive your maps by e-mail, please call your local office or email. Find your office here Farmers.gov

Please see the following acreage reporting deadlines for Colorado:

Apiculture, Fall-Seeded Small Grains	November 15 th
Apples, Grapes, Peaches	January 15 th
Onions	June 15 th
All other crops, Perennial Forage, Hemp	July 15 th

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, you must file timely acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may cause

ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

Producers are encouraged to file their acreage reports as soon as planting is completed.

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for Producers Facing Inclement Weather

Severe weather events create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. USDA offers several programs to help with recovery.

Risk Management

For producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP), we want to remind you to report crop damage to your crop insurance agent or the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

If you have crop insurance, contact your agency within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days. If you have NAP coverage, file a Notice of Loss (also called Form CCC-576) within 15 days of loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Disaster Assistance

USDA also offers disaster assistance programs, which is especially important to livestock, fruit and vegetable, specialty and perennial crop producers who have fewer [risk management options](#).

First, the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) and [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (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. And, the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) provides assistance to producers of grazed forage crop acres that have suffered crop loss due to a qualifying drought. Livestock producers suffering the impacts of drought can also request [Emergency Haying and Grazing](#) on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

Next, the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) provides cost share assistance to rehabilitate and replant tree, vines or shrubs loss experienced by orchards and nurseries. This complements NAP or crop insurance coverage, which cover the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

For LIP and ELAP, you 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 TAP, you will need to file a program application within 90 days.

Documentation

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to after the loss.

Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- Production records
- Vaccination records
- Bank or other loan documents
- Third-party certification

Other Programs

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore damaged farmland or forests.

Additionally, FSA offers a variety of loans available including emergency loans that are triggered by disaster declarations and operating loans that can assist producers with credit needs. You can use these loans to replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs.

Meanwhile, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial resources through its [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. Assistance may also be available for emergency animal mortality disposal from natural disasters and other causes.

Additional Resources

Additional details – including payment calculations – can be found on our [NAP](#), [ELAP](#), [LIP](#), and [TAP](#) fact sheets. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options.

While we never want to have to implement disaster programs, we are here to help. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local USDA Service Center. All [USDA Service Centers](#) are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments because of the pandemic.

USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program

With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) has been provided over \$2 billion for renewable

energy systems and energy efficiency improvement grants for agricultural producers and rural small business owners through 2031.

The REAP program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers can also apply for new energy-efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.

Agricultural producers are an entity directly engaged in production of agricultural products where at least 50 percent of their gross income coming from agricultural operations.

Some changes have been made to the program to include:

- The maximum grant size is increased from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for energy efficiency projects and from \$500,000 to \$1 million for renewable energy systems.
- The federal share is raised to 50% for all energy efficiency projects, all zero-emission renewable energy projects, and all projects in designated energy communities and projects submitted by eligible tribal entities.

We are currently accepting applications for the first of six quarterly competitions.

The first window closes June 30th.

For more information on the program visit - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency-improvement-guaranteed-loans>.

For projects in Colorado, contact Cindy Chadwick, cindy.chadwick@usda.gov or John Reddy, john.reddy@usda.gov.

NRCS Refines Nutrient Management Strategies to Improve Conservation Outcomes

For decades, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has supported producers and landowners in addressing their nutrient management and water quality concerns. We continue to refine our strategies as we learn more, including from data in a [recent report on cropland conservation outcomes](#) from our [Conservation Effects Assessment Project](#).

This report showed that despite many wins in conservation outcomes, there was an [increase in soluble nitrogen and phosphorus lost to the environment nationally](#) over a ten-year period. This increase was due to many factors, including changing trends in production, climate, and technology. Preventing nutrients from fertilizers and other sources from entering local waters ensures that they can be utilized by crops and benefits both water quality and farmer finances.

These findings can help NRCS more effectively support farmers nationwide by refining applied conservation to address site-specific risk for nutrient losses. In 2022, we

developed a strategic operational plan to address these changing trends, enhancing our existing nutrient management conservation efforts. This plan includes promoting [SMART Nutrient Management](#) planning and highlighting the importance of comprehensive, site-specific assessment of nutrient loss risks.

The plan also includes several [science-based nutrient management and water quality strategies](#) for improving conservation outcomes, and NRCS continues to move this work forward. To date NRCS has:

- **Updated how producers can be paid for utilizing nutrient management related practices.** NRCS has allowed payments to producers for soil, source nutrient, and water testing. Testing is key to determine the proper rate of nutrient application. NRCS has also created new payment scenarios to more closely align with the technology that farmers are encouraged to adopt, including enhanced efficiency fertilizers and precision application technology, which can help ensure nutrients are available at the right time, the right rate and in the right place.
- **Initiated development of a new mapping tool to help conservation planners identify areas on the land that can be more sensitive to nutrient loss.** The Sensitive Area Analysis Tool uses soil survey data to show the areas of a field at risk for nutrient loss that can benefit from site-specific nutrient management plans and other practices that can help mitigate nutrient losses. The tool will be available for use in early 2023. Ask NRCS at your [local USDA Service Center](#) for details.
- **Updated manure testing protocols through an agreement with the University of Minnesota** ([Recommended Methods of Manure Analysis, Second Edition](#)). These new testing protocols for manure testing take management practices into account and deliver more accurate values specific to the farm. These protocols will be used to update NRCS nutrient management policy including laboratory testing procedures and determination of accredited laboratories.
- **Led an effort to create four new, long-term assessments to better understand the importance of legacy (historical) sources of nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrate, as well as sediment.** Effective conservation options for addressing legacy sources are being evaluated. For example, NRCS is supporting a stakeholder-driven study of a perennial grass buffer to enhance plant uptake of legacy nutrients, reduce losses and improve on-farm nutrient cycling.

These and many other efforts are continuing in 2023 and beyond. The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) is providing NRCS with an additional \$19.5 billion over the next four years to help support climate-smart agricultural practices, including nutrient management. NRCS is targeting funding for nutrient management, increasing program flexibilities, and expanding partnerships to support the development and implementation of nutrient management plans. NRCS will keep partners and producers informed as we make further improvements and updates.

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