



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Montana Newsletter - August 2023

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## Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines

USDA in Montana reminds agricultural producers of important Farm Service Agency (FSA) program dates. Contact your local service center to apply and with any questions. Visit online at [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) and [fsa.usda.gov/mt](https://fsa.usda.gov/mt).

**Aug. 1, 2023:** Deadline to request a farm reconstitution or farm transfer for program year 2023.

**Aug. 1, 2023:** County Committee (COC) Nomination period for the 2023 Election Cycle Closes.

**Aug. 11, 2023:** ODMAP signup deadline. You can also read the [News Release](#) for more information.

**Aug. 14, 2023:** Deadline for USDA Tribal Advisory Committee Nominations. Specific information and nomination instructions are available in [the Federal Register](#). Read the [full press release](#).

**Aug. 31, 2023:** Routine (Non-Emergency) CRP haying needs to be complete, including removal of the bales, by August 31.

**Sept. 1, 2023:** Application closing date for **2024** NAP coverage for fall and spring seeded Canola and all Value Loss Crops.

**Sept. 30, 2023:** Application closing date for **2024** NAP coverage for all perennial forage, fall and spring seeded garlic, rye, speltz, triticale, wheat, and mixed forage crops. *Please note that the acreage reporting date for your NAP covered crops is the earlier of the established FSA acreage reporting date for the crop or **15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing** of the specific crop acreage being reported.*

**Oct. 31, 2023:** OCCSP signup is open now until October 31, 2023. You can read the [News Release](#) to learn more about OCCSP.

**Nov. 1:** Last day of 2023 CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Grazing Period (prior approval required)

**Early November:** 2023 County Committee Election Ballots to be Mailed to Voters

**Nov 15:** 2023 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other Fall Seeded Small Grains. Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2022 reports for these crops.

**Dec. 4:** Voted FSA County Committee Election Ballots to be returned to the FSA County Office or post-marked.

**Dec. 31:** 2023 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline for Honey

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when loss is apparent for **livestock and farm-raised fish** losses.

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **15 days** of when loss is apparent for **honeybee** losses.

**\*Note for ELAP Notice of Loss-** If you are hauling feed/livestock/water due to a qualifying drought during the 2023 grazing period, a new NOL is required - even if you already submitted a NOL prior to the 2023 grazing period.

LIP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when the loss is apparent.

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## From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks

Time has flown by this year and harvest is approaching Montanan producers quickly. It seems just like yesterday, that our producers were out planting their spring seeded crops and we were filled with excitement and hope for the potential the year had to bring.

Harvest is a time of gathering. Not just for crops, but for families and neighbors to come together. In all my travels throughout the year, I continue to be amazed at the communities around Montana and how they come together to support each other. I have also witnessed communities teaching Montana's proud agricultural traditions to our youth.

I am extremely grateful for all the work that you do to sustain and grow agricultural commodities here in Montana and I wish you a safe and successful harvest season.

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## FARM/RANCH USDA BORROWER TRAINING Through Western Dakota Technical College

Western Dakota Technical College will be holding FSA Borrower Training in Billings, MT August 29-31. The class schedule will allow individuals to travel to Billings on Tuesday morning and back home on Thursday afternoon.

Class times will be:

Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>: 1:00-5:00pm

Wednesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>: 8:00am-5:00pm

Thursday, August 31<sup>st</sup>: 8:00am-12:00pm

Classes will be held at Montana State University. More information about the room location will be sent to registrants closer to the start date. Lunch will be provided on Wednesday as well as snacks and drinks on Tuesday and Thursday.

A brochure with more information about course topics is attached. Online information as well as the registration form can be found here: <https://www.wdt.edu/corporate-education-center/short-term-classes/>

At this time the cost is \$400 per participant. If we get enough registrations to cover our costs (a minimum of 10 people), we can then allow a second person from the same operation to attend for free.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Chandra Calvert:

**Chandra Calvert**  
**Director of Industry Relations & Grant Management**  
**Western Dakota Tech**  
**800 Mickelson Dr. | Rapid City, SD 57703**  
**T: 605.718.2419 | E: [chandra.calvert@wdt.edu](mailto:chandra.calvert@wdt.edu)**

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## Non-Emergency Haying and Grazing Conservation Reserve Program

USDA reminds producers that all non-emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts must be discussed and approved with your local FSA county office prior to starting the activity. Under no circumstances may non-emergency haying or grazing be permitted if such activity would cause long-term damage to the vegetative cover on the land, determined on a site-by-site basis. Available to start 12 months after cover is fully established.

- Non-emergency activities may occur according to the conservation plan during drought / natural disaster conditions, but the site conditions should be taken into consideration and the plan modified, as needed.
- Non-emergency harvesting for hay or biomass may occur only once during the approved event. **Haying/harvesting may not occur later than August 31.** Participants must leave 25 percent of the contract acres unharvested or hayed.
- Non-emergency grazing must not exceed 120 days. During the primary nesting season (PNS), there must be a 50 percent carrying capacity reduction.
- Participant may rent or sell the hay or grazing rights. However, the CRP participant is responsible for any damages to the stand.
- Non-emergency haying and grazing requires a 25 percent reduction in annual rental payment.

For more information on non-emergency haying and grazing eligible CRP contracts, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

NAP provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

To receive payment, you had to purchase NAP coverage for 202# crops and file a notice of loss the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## USDA Extends Deadline for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Until August 11

USDA's Farm Service Agency is extending the deadline for the new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) to Aug. 11, 2023. This extension gives organic dairy producers more than two additional weeks to apply for the program. ODMAP helps producers mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs, and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. This assistance will help keep organic dairy operations sustainable until markets return to more normal conditions.

Organic dairy producers should apply by August 11, 2023 at their local USDA Service Center.

[Learn more.](#)

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## USDA Accepts Nearly 2.7 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup, Bringing the Program Closer to Acreage Cap

**This year's Grassland CRP signup demonstrates the success and value of working lands conservation programs.**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting offers for nearly 2.7 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grassland signup. This program allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and further CRP conservation efforts. Grassland CRP is part of the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to address climate change and conserve natural resources.

Read the full news release here: [USDA Accepts Nearly 2.7 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup, Successfully Closing the Gap and Bringing CRP Near to Acreage Cap](#)

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## Intertribal Agriculture Council Reminds Producers about Local Events for Tribal Communities

Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region reminds Montana producers about Local Events

- **AUGUST 2-3, 2023 - IAC Rocky Mountain Regional Summit - *Navigating Meat Processing Programs, Inspections, & Grants***

At the Holiday Inn Great Falls - Convention Center, Great Falls, MT Attendees will participate in 2 days of learning sessions that focus on providing information about USDA meat processing programs, grants, and various topics surrounding health inspection requirements. This summit will delve into ranking and scoring for USDA grant applications, navigating State and Federal inspections, and discussing Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plans (HACCP).

[Register Now! \(Click Here\)](#)

Zane Not Afraid

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## Ask the Expert: A Farm Operating Loan Q&A with Jack Carlile

In this Ask the Expert, Jack Carlile, Farm Loan Manager for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), answers questions about farm operating loans and when producers should apply in order to secure funds for the current crop year.

As the Farm Loan Manager for the Cherokee County Service Center, Jack is responsible for managing the loan making and loan servicing activities for five counties in northeast Oklahoma. His office provides services for over 650 farm loan customers. Jack was raised on a cross bred cow/calf operation that his grandparents started. Over the years, each generation has added to the operation by purchasing additional pasture. The operation also grows and bales their own hay. Jack's agriculture background and degree in agriculture economics from Oklahoma State University help him better understand the financing needs of his producers.

**Who can apply for FSA Farm Loans?**

Anyone can apply for FSA's loan programs. Applications will be considered on basic eligibility requirements. To apply for a loan, you must meet the following general eligibility requirements including:

- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Operator of a family farm or ranch.
- Have a satisfactory credit history.
- Unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs.
- Not be delinquent on any federal debts.

To read the full blog visit [farmers.gov/blog/ask-the-expert-farm-operating-loan-qa-with-jack-carlile](https://farmers.gov/blog/ask-the-expert-farm-operating-loan-qa-with-jack-carlile).

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## Using FSA Direct Farm Ownership Loans for Construction

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) are a resource to help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans can be used to construct, purchase or improve farm dwellings, service buildings or other facilities, and to make improvements essential to an operation.

Applicants must provide FSA with an estimate of the total cost of all planned development that completely describe the work, prior to loan approval and must show proof of sufficient funds to pay for the total cost of all planned development at or before loan closing. In some instances, applicants may be asked to provide certified plans, specifications or contract documents. The applicant cannot incur any debts for materials or labor or make any expenditures for development purposes prior to loan closing with the expectation of being reimbursed from FSA funds.

Construction and development work may be performed either by the contract method or the borrower method. Under the contract method, construction and development contractors perform work according to a written contract with the applicant or borrower. If applying for a direct loan to finance a construction project, the applicant must obtain a surety bond that guarantees both payment and performance in the amount of the construction contract from a construction contractor.

A surety bond is required when a contract exceeds \$100,000. An authorized agency official determines that a surety bond appears advisable to protect the borrower against default of the

contractor or a contract provides for partial payments in excess of the amount of 60 percent of the value of the work in place.

Under the borrower method, the applicant or borrower will perform the construction and development work. The borrower method may only be used when the authorized agency official determines, based on information from the applicant, that the applicant possesses or arranges to obtain the necessary skill and managerial ability to complete the work satisfactorily and that such work will not interfere with the applicant's farming operation or work schedule.

Potential applicants should visit with FSA early in the initial project planning process to ensure environmental compliance.

For more eligibility requirements and information about FSA Loan programs, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Kurt and PJ Myllymaki Named Montana's 2023 Leopold Conservation Award Winners

The Myllymakis raise crops and cattle on central Montana's brittle, drought-prone landscape. An uptick in high and sustained winds convinced them to change their farming and grazing practices to save their soil from erosion. They adhere to the five principles of soil health on their 5,300 acres of cropland: keep soil covered, increase plant species diversity, keep a living root in the soil as long as possible, minimal soil disturbance, and livestock integration. The Myllymakis have increased their farm's resiliency to drought thanks to conservation practices. Diversifying their soil's biology increases its ability to infiltrate water. Now valuable moisture seeps into their soil, while it runs off of fields elsewhere.

Kurt and PJ are quick to credit a Ranching for Profit workshop and technical assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service for their farm's turnaround. They also are thankful for the role family has played. Kurt's father Bruce has always been open to trying new things. Their children, Kameron and Kady, are developing their own conservation ethic when moving cattle and checking crop and soil conditions.

Get the [full story and watch the video](#) of the Myllymakis' conservation story on the Sand County Foundation website.

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## Public Comment Accepted for St. Mary Canal Modernization Project

The Milk River Joint Board of Control (MRJBOC), in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), proposes to rehabilitate and modernize the St. Mary Canal and associated infrastructure along its existing alignment to improve agricultural water management. The project may include lining



and/or reshaping select sections of the St. Mary Canal, stabilizing slide areas, and modernizing existing siphons, drop structures, wasteways, and underdrains. These measures would improve water delivery reliability, restore historic flows in the St. Mary's Canal, and mitigate the risk of infrastructure failure.

Members of the public are invited to provide input to help guide planning efforts. Public comments may be submitted from June 21, 2023, through August 7, 2023. Comments may be emailed to [milkriver.project.comments@gmail.com](mailto:milkriver.project.comments@gmail.com), submitted online at [www.milkriverproject.com/projects/watershed](http://www.milkriverproject.com/projects/watershed), left as a voice message at (406) 587-6712, or mailed to: USDA NRCS, Alyssa Fellow, Environmental Compliance Specialist, 10 East Babcock Street, Room 443, Bozeman, MT 59715.

[Get more details.](#)

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## USDA Seeks Proposals for Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Partners may submit Joint Chiefs' project proposals through Sept. 4

NRCS and the Forest Service are seeking proposals for Joint Chiefs' projects that will mitigate wildfire risk, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, restore forest ecosystems and ultimately contribute to USDA's efforts to combat climate change. Proposals must be submitted by Sept. 4 for fiscal year 2024 funding.

[See how to submit proposals.](#)

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## USDA NASS Conducts Montana Wheat and Barley Variety Survey

USDA NASS will be conducting the Montana Wheat and Barley Variety survey this month. This survey is paid for and used by the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. Foreign buyers use this data in their purchasing decisions. MSU uses the data to justify and promote their breeding programs. It is critical that producers participate in the survey since it is their survey.

In July and August, the Ag Production survey will be conducted, this data is used to track the condition of the various crops through the growing season. With the weather the way it has been so far this year across the country it is important that Montana Producers share their story.

Thank you, producers, for taking the time to share your story. To find results of the Wheat and Barley Varietal survey and other NASS surveys please visit: [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Montana/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/index.php)

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## USDA Expands Risk Management Options with Greater Enterprise Unit Possibilities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding its insurance coverage options for specialty crops and other actual production history (APH) crop programs. Through its Risk Management Agency (RMA), it will expand the availability of enterprise units to crops where they were previously unavailable, giving agricultural producers greater options to manage their risk.

An [enterprise unit](#) allows a producer to insure all acres of the insured crop in the county together, as opposed to other unit structures that separate the acreage for insurance. Enterprise units are attractive to producers due to lower premium rates offered to recognize the lower risk associated with the geographic diversification. In general, the larger the enterprise unit, the lesser the risk, and the greater the enterprise unit discount.

Read the full news release here: [USDA Expands Risk Management Options with Greater Enterprise Unit Possibilities | RMA](#)

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## USDA APHIS Reminders for Producers

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) wants to remind producers about the following:

- **Aug. 14 deadline for USDA Tribal Advisory Committee Nominations**
  - In case you missed it, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced it will establish a Tribal Advisory Committee and is requesting nominations for membership. The notice is among USDA's efforts to remove barriers to service for tribal governments, citizens, and tribal nations. The nomination period will be open through August 14, 2023. Specific information and nomination instructions are available in [the Federal Register](#). Read the [full press release](#).
- **USDA Asks Public to Help Check Trees for Asian Longhorned Beetle**
  - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) declares August as "Tree Check Month" for the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). USDA and its partners are asking the public to check their trees for this invasive insect and the damage it causes and limit the movement of ALB-host materials, such as firewood. August is the most important time of year to look for the beetle because it is when people are most likely to see adult beetles. Read the full release [here](#) for more information about Tree Check Month.

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## Montana

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State Executive Director:  
MAUREEN WICKS

State Committee:  
RYAN LANKFORD  
CASEY BAILEY  
STEVE CARNEY  
SARAH DEGN  
JAKE MERKEL

**FSA Policy Reminders:** [2021 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
10 East Babcock Street, Room 443  
Bozeman, MT 59715-4704  
Phone: 406-587-6811  
Fax: 855-510-7028  
Web: [nrcs.usda.gov/montana](http://nrcs.usda.gov/montana)

State Conservationist:  
TOM WATSON

USDA Risk Management Agency  
Billings Regional Office  
3490 Gabel Road, Suite 100  
Billings, MT 59102-7302  
Phone: 406-657-6447  
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Email: [rsomt@rma.usda.gov](mailto:rsomt@rma.usda.gov)  
Web: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

Regional Director:  
ERIC BASHORE

**Contact information for your local office, visit: [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).**

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