Deadline Fast Approaching for Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

FSA reminds agricultural producers and landowners only days remain to sign up for Conservation Reserve Program's General Signup

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is reminding producers and landowners that the signup deadline for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) current general signup is fast approaching. Eligible producers must submit their offers by July 23, 2021.

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) made several changes to CRP to make it more appealing to all producers, including those who are historically underserved, beginning, and veterans. FSA added incentives to encourage producers to include climate-smart agricultural practices in their operations to increase natural resource and environmental benefits.

Updates to the Conservation Reserve Program

USDA’s goal is to enroll up to 4 million new CRP acres by raising payment rates and expanding the incentives offered under the program. CRP is capped at 25 million acres for fiscal year 2021, and currently 20.7 million acres are enrolled, but the cap will gradually
increase to 27 million acres by fiscal year 2023. To help increase producer interest and enrollment, FSA has:

- **Adjusted soil rental rates.** This enables additional flexibility for rate adjustments, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.

- **Increased payments for Practice Incentives from 20% to 50%.** This incentive for continuous CRP practices is based on the cost of establishment and is in addition to cost share payments.

- **Increased payments for water quality practices.** Incentive increased from 10% to 20% for certain water quality practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers and filter strips. Additionally, to mitigate climate change, FSA introduced a new annual **Climate-Smart Practice Incentive** for the general, grasslands, and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP practices include establishing trees and permanent grasses, developing wildlife habitat, and restoring wetlands. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.

### More About CRP

CRP is one of the world’s largest voluntary conservation programs with a long track record of preserving topsoil, improving water quality, sequestering carbon, reducing nitrogen runoff and preserving healthy wildlife habitat.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to control soil erosion and stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing more conservation and economic benefits. CRP marked its 35-year anniversary in December 2020.

Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks.

- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95% and 85% percent, respectively.

- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times.

- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds.

More information about the program can be obtained through this [CRP fact sheet](#).

### USDA to Provide Pandemic Assistance to Livestock Producers for Animal Losses

*FSA Will Begin Taking Applications for Indemnity Program July 20*
Livestock and poultry producers who suffered losses during the pandemic due to insufficient access to processing can apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Vilsack announced the Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP) in [recorded] remarks at the National Pork Industry Conference in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The announcement is part of USDA’s Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Livestock and poultry producers can apply for assistance through USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) July 20 through Sept. 17, 2021.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized payments to producers for losses of livestock or poultry depopulated from March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. PLIP payments will be based on 80% of the fair market value of the livestock and poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animal. Eligible livestock and poultry include swine, chickens and turkeys.

**PLIP Program Details**

Eligible livestock must have been depopulated from March 1, 2020, through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. Livestock must have been physically located in the U.S. or a territory of the U.S. at the time of depopulation.

Eligible livestock owners include persons or legal entities who, as of the day the eligible livestock was depopulated, had legal ownership of the livestock. Packers, live poultry dealers and contract growers are not eligible for PLIP.

PLIP payments compensate participants for 80% of both the loss of the eligible livestock or poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal based on a single payment rate per head. PLIP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible livestock or poultry by the payment rate per head, and then subtracting the amount of any payments the eligible livestock or poultry owner has received for disposal of the livestock or poultry under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or a state program. The payments will also be reduced by any Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 1 and 2) payments paid on the same inventory of swine that were depopulated.

There is no per person or legal entity payment limitation on PLIP payments. To be eligible for payments, a person or legal entity must have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than $900,000 for tax years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

**Applying for Assistance**

Eligible livestock and poultry producers can apply for PLIP starting July 20, 2021, by completing the FSA-620, Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program application, and submitting it to any FSA county office. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/plip for a copy of the Notice of Funding Availability and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Livestock and poultry producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.
USDA Seeks New Partnerships to Safeguard, Restore Wetland Ecosystems

Proposals from partners are due August 15

USDA is investing up to $17 million for conservation partners to help protect and restore critical wetlands on agricultural lands through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is prioritizing proposals that focus on assisting historically underserved producers conserving wetlands.<Link>

USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signups

CRP Grasslands Signup Runs from July 12 through August 20

Agricultural producers and landowners in North Carolina can apply for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup from today until August 20. This year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increased the program’s conservation and climate benefits, including setting a minimum rental rate and identifying two national priority zones.

The CRP Grassland signup is competitive, and USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Grasslands Signup

CRP Grasslands helps North Carolina landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits.

FSA has updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of $15 per acre, which will benefit 1,300 counties.

To focus on important wildlife corridors, FSA also identified National Grassland Priority Zones, providing extra incentives to producers for enrolling grasslands in important migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas – the Greater Yellowstone Elk Migration Corridor and the Severe Wind Erosion – Dust Bowl Zone. Counties within these two zones get extra ranking points as well as $5 added to their rental rate. The CRP Grasslands Ranking Factors fact sheet has additional information.

How to Sign Up

To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, producers and landowners should contact USDA by the August 20 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone
appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA’s response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

More Information on CRP

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary this past December.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership loans can 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.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is $600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your local County Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Announces Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers

FSA Will Begin Accepting Applications July 22, 2021
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing up to $200 million to provide relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that have experienced losses due to COVID-19 as part of USDA’s Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Loggers and truckers can apply for assistance through USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) July 22 through Oct. 15, 2021. The Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers program (PATHH) is administered by FSA in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized this critical assistance for the timber industry. Timber harvesting and hauling businesses that have experienced a gross revenue loss of at least 10% during the period of Jan. 1 and Dec. 1, 2020, compared to the period of Jan. 1 and Dec. 1, 2019, are encouraged to apply.

Program Details

To be eligible for payments, individuals or legal entities must be a timber harvesting or timber hauling business where 50% or more of its gross revenue is derived from one or more of the following:

- Cutting timber.
- Transporting timber.
- Processing of wood on-site on the forest land (chipping, grinding, converting to biochar, cutting to smaller lengths, etc.).

Payments will be based on the applicant’s gross revenue received from Jan. 1, 2019, through Dec. 1, 2019, minus gross revenue received from Jan. 1, 2020, through Dec. 1, 2020, multiplied by 80%. FSA will issue an initial payment equal to the lesser of the calculated payment amount or $2,000 as applications are approved. A second payment will be made after the signup period has ended based upon remaining PATHH funds.

The maximum amount that a person or legal entity may receive directly is $125,000.

Applying for Assistance

Loggers and truckers can apply for PATHH beginning on July 22 by completing form FSA-1118, Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program application, and certifying to their gross revenue for 2019 and 2020 on the application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/pathh for more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery, or via electronic means. To find a local FSA office, loggers and truckers can visit farmers.gov/service-locator. They can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Webinar

FSA will host an educational webinar on PATHH on Wednesday, July 21 at 3 p.m. Eastern. Interested participants must register for the webinar.

Selected Interest Rates for July 2021

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<tr>
<th>Selected Interest Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-Day Treasury Bill</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Loan Type</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Operating Loans - Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership Loans - Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership Loans - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher</td>
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<td>Emergency Loans</td>
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<td>Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commodity Loans 1996 - Present</td>
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