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USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement

SAFE helps producers achieve critical conservation goals, while receiving financial benefits

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is welcoming new and modified proposals from conservation partners for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative, a part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) focused on effectively managing wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners.

Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water

health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.

Expanded Practices

To help improve the planning and implementation of the SAFE initiative, FSA is adding two new practices with the assistance of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FSA's sister agency. In partnership with FSA, NRCS employees across the country provide CRP participants with critical conservation planning assistance, which will now include managing for early successional habitat cover establishment or management, as well as wildlife habitat planting. These additional eligible practices will enable SAFE partners to better target a wide variety of wildlife species, such as the Northern bobwhite, lesser prairie-chicken, and the New England cottontail.

As part of this year's SAFE signup, FSA will also authorize cost-share assistance for producers who would like to re-enroll acres in CRP but need assistance updating their vegetative cover to align with NRCS practice standards for early successional habitat or wildlife planting.

Submitting Proposals

Eligible entities for SAFE include government entities, non-profits, or private organizations.

Additionally, partners with SAFE projects with both General and Continuous CRP practices must submit modified proposals to continue in the program.

New and modified proposals for SAFE projects must be submitted to the FSA State Office in Washington in June. Contact your State Office for the state-specific deadline. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

SAFE is part of the Continuous CRP signup, and producers can begin enrolling in new or updated SAFE programs beginning October 1, 2022. Meanwhile, the Continuous and Grassland signups are currently open, and producers can learn more by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#). To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

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.

CRP complements other USDA conservation programs, including several programs offered by NRCS for working lands and conservation easements. Earlier this month, NRCS released its [Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savannas Framework for Conservation Action](#) to help guide voluntary conservation work over the next five years across 25 states, including over 7 million acres of new conservation practices on productive, working lands, and will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to make our nation a leader on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. The

plan will accelerate voluntary conservation efforts for the Northern bobwhite quail and the grassland and savanna landscapes that the species calls home.

NAP Coverage for 2023 Nursery Crops

For crops that are not insurable with catastrophic level coverage (CAT) through your crop insurance agent, the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage is an available tool to help mitigate financial risk. NAP covers non-insurable crops which are damaged, lost or prevented from being planted due to a natural weather-related disaster condition. NAP can also cover certain species of nursery grown crops, grown in either containers or in the field, if Federal crop insurance coverage is not available for a particular species in the county which it is grown.

Under NAP, nursery crops are considered value loss crops. This means nursery crops can have inventory losses associated with a disaster event and may sustain a loss in value rather than production losses which sustain a loss in yield. The same coverage level options available under NAP for yield-based crops are also available for value loss crops. For value loss crops, NAP provides a catastrophic level (CAT) of coverage for losses that exceed 50 percent of the inventory value of the crop before a disaster. Under “buy-up” options, higher levels of coverage are available to cover 50 to 65 percent, in 5 percent increments, of the lesser of the total value of eligible crop inventory at the time of disaster or the maximum dollar value for coverage sought for the crop. In order to elect a higher level of coverage on value loss crops, producers must determine their maximum dollar value of coverage on the crop up front when applying for NAP coverage.

NAP service fee is \$325 per crop per county, up to \$825 per county, not to exceed \$1,950 per producer with NAP covered crops in multiple counties. A waiver of the NAP service fee is available to beginning, limited resource, and traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers. NAP service fees or waiver forms must be received by FSA by the application closed date for the crop in order to be considered timely. Producers with a waiver may also receive a 50 percent reduction on NAP premium fees.

Producers who elect a higher level of coverage must “buy-up” and pay a premium in addition to the service fee. Premiums are typically paid after NAP coverage is obtained. Premium costs for buy-up coverage on value loss crops will be calculated based on the lesser of either of the following:

- The applicable payment limitation (\$300,000 for buy-up) X 5.25% premium fee = \$15,750 maximum premium per individual or legal entity, or
- The maximum dollar value of coverage selected X coverage level X 5.25% premium fee for each NAP crop with buy-up coverage selected.

NAP payment limitation for basic coverage remains at \$125,000 per individual or legal entity.

NAP coverage for eligible 2023 crops should be purchased at least 1 day before the crop is planted, but no later than the established NAP application for coverage closing date. **The 2023 NAP application closing date for nursery crops is May 31, 2022.** Before applying for NAP coverage on nursery crops, check with your local county FSA office to verify that Federal crop insurance coverage is not available in your county and that the

crop would not be considered under another crop category for FSA program purposes. Acreage reports are required for NAP coverage. The 2023 acreage reporting deadline for nursery crops is May 31, 2022.

NAP application for coverage deadlines are also posted on the Washington State FSA website located [here](#). Contact your local county FSA office if you are interested in applying for NAP coverage, or if you have any questions regarding NAP availability or application closing dates.

Report Damage or Loss of NAP Covered Crops Immediately

If spring weather causes damage to or loss of your 2022 NAP covered crops, you must report this to your local FSA county office.

NAP notices of loss can be initiated by phone, email, or fax, but must be submitted in writing, to your local FSA county office for weather related events or adverse natural occurrences that cause damage to or loss of the NAP covered crop. To report crop damage or loss you must complete, sign, and file the loss portion of form CCC-576 with your FSA office by the earlier of either of the following:

- **15 calendar days** after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop or commodity first becomes apparent or
- **15 calendar days** after the normal harvest date.

Please note, producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA **within 72 hours** of when a loss becomes apparent.

FSA county offices can take initial NAP notice of loss notifications via phone, email, or fax. Offices will assist producers in completing the official CCC-576 Notice of Loss form as best as possible, sending the form to producers via email, fax, or mail for final review and signature. The completed and signed CCC-576 should then be returned to the county office as soon as possible via email, fax, or mail. **A CCC-576 is not considered filed until it has been signed and returned to FSA.**

As the 2022 crop year progresses, it is imperative that a notice of loss is filed (for all affected NAP covered crops) within the timeframe noted above for each weather-related event or adverse natural occurrence. This will ensure FSA is notified that your NAP covered crop or crops have been damaged or lost. If the loss event is approved, remember to provide your crop production to your local FSA county office within 60 days after harvest or request an appraisal within 60 days of the normal harvest date so that the payment portion of form CCC-576 can be filed timely.

When a covered crop is lost or damage is significant, replanting is required if feasible and the final planting date has not passed. **When you determine that a NAP covered crop will be destroyed, abandoned, or not taken to harvest as intended, you must report this to your local FSA office as soon as possible** so a field visit can be conducted by a certified loss adjuster. Once the crop appraisal has been completed, the loss adjuster will

release the field and you can destroy the covered crop acres and replant to a different crop or harvest the acres for a different use.

Remember, failure to timely notify your FSA county office of NAP covered crop damage or loss will result in denial of NAP payment benefits. Destroying NAP covered crop acres or harvesting for a different use without a loss adjuster appraisal will result in those acres being determined ineligible for NAP payment benefits.

If you have any questions about NAP policy requirements, contact your local [county FSA office](#) for more information.

Drought Impact Reporting Tool

The National Drought Mitigation Center would like to see and hear about impacts to your area, whether that be from a lack of precipitation, or excessively wet conditions. Please visit their website: <https://droughtimpacts.unl.edu/Tools/ConditionMonitoringObservations.aspx>

Reports with photographs can be submitted regarding drought impacts to your area and the database allows you to view other reports of impacts that have been submitted. A tutorial video is available to explain how to submit reports as well.

These public reports are taken into account when creating the drought monitor weekly report. This is an opportunity for your voice to be heard! Washington state has had zero reports submitted so far in 2022. Public participation is highly encouraged!

CRP Grassland Signup

Farmers and ranchers may continue to apply to enroll grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup through May 13. The signup began on April 4th, 2022. Through CRP Grasslands, participants retain the right to graze, harvest hay, or harvest seed from the enrolled land, while receiving an annual rental payment for maintaining the existing permanent cover. Timing of haying may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds but grazing generally will not be. Participants may also receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices such as cross fencing and livestock water developments.

The minimum CRPG rental rate is \$13 per acre. CRPG annual rental payments are subject to the same payment limitation as regular CRP and will be enrolled for either a 10 or 15 year contract period.

FSA will rank applications using a number of factors including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland, and predominance of native species cover, and cost. The 2018 Farm Bill set aside 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment within the overall CRP acreage cap.

Please contact your local office for more information on CRPG and how to make an offer by the deadline of May 13th, 2022.

FSA to Accept New and Modified SAFE Proposals

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New and modified proposals for SAFE projects must be submitted to the FSA State Office in Spokane, Washington in June. Contact your State Office for the state-specific deadline. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

SAFE is part of the Continuous CRP signup, and producers can begin enrolling in new or updated SAFE programs beginning October 1, 2022. Meanwhile, the Continuous and Grassland signups are currently open, and producers can learn more by contacting their

local [USDA Service Center](#). To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

Livestock Forage Program: Signup and Availability

LFP provides financial assistance to eligible livestock producers when producers suffer grazing losses due to drought conditions reaching an intensity level of D2 for 8 consecutive weeks, or a D3 or D4 for any given length of time. Payments are based upon intensity levels and the duration at which the drought remains at that intensity level.

Eligible livestock owners or contract growers must have risk in the livestock, and also provide the eligible grazing land physically located within an eligible county. This includes land that is owned or leased with the intent of grazing. All forage ground must be accounted for on the applicant's acreage report (FSA-578) and must be filed by the reporting deadline of July 15. Late filed acreage reports will be subject to late file fees and provisions.

Current levels of payment rates are as follows for eligible livestock producers:

1-month payment	3-month payment	4-month payment
Columbia	Klickitat	Adams
	Lincoln	Asotin
	Walla Walla	Benton
		Franklin
		Grant
		Kittitas
		Yakima

All livestock producers within eligible counties wishing to file an application should contact their local FSA office to request an application. Producers must be prepared to provide documentation to support their LFP application. This includes inventory records for livestock, leases, grower contracts, etc.

2021 Marketing Assistance Loans Still Available

FSA Marketing Assistance Loans are still available for certain harvested commodities. A loan can provide you with interim financing to meet cash flow needs without selling your harvested crop at a time when market prices are at harvest-time lows. Your 2021 harvested farm-stored or warehouse-stored commodity is used as collateral for the loan. Marketing Assistance Loans mature 9 months after the month loan funds are disbursed to you, with repayment due at loan maturity. Before moving farm-stored loan collateral, you must contact the county FSA office and obtain an authorization to move the collateral. Producers who have a commodity pledged as collateral for a marketing assistance loan can purchase a commodity certificate that can be immediately exchanged for the outstanding loan collateral in situations when the loan rate exceeds the exchange rate. Producers who are eligible for marketing assistance loans can obtain a loan deficiency payment (LDP) in lieu of a loan. LDP's are available when the posted county price for a crop falls below the county loan rate. You can check the daily LDP rates online at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/Index> .

FSA is still accepting requests for 2021 MALs for some eligible harvested commodities. The final date to request a MAL for 2021 corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, rice, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, and sunflower seeds is **May 31, 2022**.

For a commodity to be eligible for a loan or certificate, you must have beneficial interest in the commodity which is defined as having title, possession, and control of the commodity. The quality of stored collateral must be maintained, and you are responsible for loss or damage to the commodity through the term of the loan. To retain eligibility for an LDP when beneficial interest in your harvested crop will be lost upon delivery, you must file form CCC-633 EZ Page 1 with your local FSA office prior to loss of beneficial interest.

If you are interested, please contact [your local FSA county office](#) to learn more about Marketing Assistance Loans.

2022 Wool Triggers Loan Deficiency Payments

Wool producers may be eligible for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) through the Farm Service Agency. LDPs are direct payments made in lieu of a marketing assistance loan when the Commodity Credit Corporation determined value, based on the current local price, is below the applicable loan rate. For wool, the local prices and loan rates are set at a national level. The payment is the difference between the price and loan rate times the eligible quantity. Wool LDP rates are updated on a weekly basis and can be found online [here](#). Use the Weekly Commodity Rates icon to open the dropdown which includes the "Wool and Mohair LDP Rates" spreadsheet.

Unsold wool shorn during the 2022 calendar year may be eligible for a 2022 LDP. For a commodity to be eligible for an LDP, the producer must have beneficial interest in the commodity, defined as having title, possession, and control of the commodity, and responsible for loss of or damage to the commodity. All related application forms must be completed at the local FSA office prior to loss of beneficial interest. Additional eligibility requirements must be met before an LDP payment can be paid. This includes a 2022 FSA-578 acreage report for all crop acres, a CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income

Certification, a CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan, an AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Certification, and a direct deposit form or waiver.

In order to request an LDP for wool, producers must complete a **CCC-633 EZ Loan Deficiency Payment Agreement and Request form**. Page 1 is the agreement which signifies an intent to request an LDP and must be completed before a producer loses beneficial interest of the eligible commodity. Page 4 is the wool request for LDP benefits and must be submitted after page 1 is completed. Once signed and approved, page 4 cannot be cancelled and payments cannot be deferred. Payments are processed after page 4 has been submitted and approved.

For more information on LDPs, visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/Index> or visit [your local FSA office](#).

2022 Crop Acreage Reporting

To comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline of July 15, 2022.

The final reporting period for this crop year is fast approaching much like the spring planting season has been to you. Producers with fall planted crops should have reported prior to December 15, 2021, and perennial crop growers had a January 15, 2021 deadline.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

County offices are making every effort to try and meet this deadline, but until producers complete their spring plantings and contact the county offices to report, FSA offices are at

a standstill. County offices are open and taking appointments. We also have virtual meetings available if that is your choice for filing.

Our virtual meetings require you that you set up an account with Microsoft Teams for the best results. This provides us with the ability to share video and computer screen content so you can observe the work we perform in loading your acreage report data. We also can provide you all forms electronically, and we can make the form so you can provide your signature with the click of a button. Once signed, your document will be returned to us within minutes through the on-line process. So, if you would like to try out a virtual meeting, contact the county office and set up an appointment.

You can also request that maps be provided to you, where you can identify the specific crop planted. You must record the planting date, type, variety, and intended use of the crop. If acreages differ from what the identified acres of the field are, you must also provide us with the change in acreage as well as what the remainder of the acreage is being utilized for. These maps must then be returned to FSA for data entry. If data is missing, we will need to reach out to you for clarification. After we get your acreage report data loaded, we will need you to review, sign, and return prior to the July 15th deadline.

Many of you may find the virtual meeting process better fits your schedule. It will reduce the burden within the county office and allow us to better serve you.

USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA now offers Microloans through the direct loan program. The focus of Microloans is on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

To qualify as a beginning producer, the individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

USDA is hiring multiple positions that close soon

Okanogan County – Farm Loan Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Okanogan, WA is accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Farm Loan Program Technician position. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm loan programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications and eligibility requirements will be posted on USA Jobs from April 21, 2022 to May 4, 2022 at www.usajobs.gov.

Location TBD – County Executive Director Trainee

Farm Service Agency has announced a Full- Time County Executive Director Trainee (CEDT) position. This is a paid position that offers one year of management and programs training. Upon completion the candidate has an opportunity to become a county office supervisor (CED). The training does require extensive paid travel and may require relocation once completed.

The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications and eligibility requirements will be posted on USA Jobs from April 19, 2022 through May 3, 2022 at www.usajobs.gov and All applicants must apply through USAJobs by the closing date.

Franklin County – Farm Loan Officer Trainee

The Farm Service Agency office located in Pasco, WA is accepting applications for a Farm Loan Officer Trainee position. This is a paid position that offers 2-year classroom and on-the-job training to develop competencies required to be a successful Farm Loan Officer (FLO). The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications and eligibility requirements will be posted on USA Jobs from April 26, 2022 to May 9, 2022 at www.usajobs.gov.

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer and Lender.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Now – July 1, 2022 – Primary Nesting Season for CRP. Activities on established CRP stands are prohibited April 1 through July 1 unless specifically authorized by FSA on a

contract-by-contract basis. This restriction does not apply to contracts where the cover is being established at this time.

May 13, 2022 – CRP Grassland signup period ends.

May 30, 2022 – Memorial Day. USDA service centers will be closed.

May 31, 2022 – Final date to request a MAL for 2021 corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, rice, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, and sunflower seeds.

May 31, 2022 – Deadline to obtain 2023 crop year NAP coverage for nursery crops and to file a 2023 acreage report on nursery crops (full list of Washington State NAP dates posted [here](#)).

June 15, 2022 – Nominations open for 2022 FSA County Committee Elections.

June 20, 2022 – Monday observance of Juneteenth. USDA service centers will be closed.

July 4, 2022 – Independence Day. USDA service centers will be closed.

July 15, 2022 – Final acreage reporting date for perennial forage, CRP, and spring-seeded crops.

July 15, 2022 – Deadline to report actual harvested production of 2021 NAP covered grass seeds, forages, and annually planted spring crops for actual production history (APH) purposes.

July 15, 2022 – Final date to report 2021 production for ARC-IC.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).