From Lisa's Desk:

CED Comments:

Greetings.

Retirement news:

A Special Thank You and Best Wishes to Bill Morrison, Farm Loan Manager, Washakie/Hot Springs/Big Horn Counties. After 34 years of service starting in Wray and Greeley Colorado, then moving to Sundance and Afton Wyoming before landing in Worland he has decided it is time to go fishing. Bill has been a tireless advocate for local producers and this office will miss his expertise. If you want to wish Bill good luck on his retirement, stop by the office or give him a call at 307-347-2456 ext. 2. His last day will be December 30, 2021.

Please read the following:

- We are taking LFP drought applications for grazing losses. Please contact the office for more information.
- We are taking ELAP water hauling. You need to complete a notice of loss or call in to the office to tell us you are hauling water before you start to haul water.
- ELAP for feed transportation cost program. An online tool is available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available.

Call the office if you have any questions at 307-347-2456 ext 2.

Have a blessed and joyous Christmas!

Lisa Bower
County Executive Director

USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available.
expenses is available. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
- Number of truckloads you normally haul.
- Normal mileage per truckload.
- Share of normal feed cost

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a tutorial video is available.

**Updates To ELAP**

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

- Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor; or
- Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.

**Payment Calculations**

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of $6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

**Eligibility**

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.
More Drought Recovery Information

USDA has taken additional steps to assist drought-impacted producers, including:

- Extending deadlines for crop insurance premium and administrative fees, and deferring interest accrual.
- Streamlining and accelerating losses and issuance of indemnity payments for crop insurance.
- Investing $41.8 million through a four-state pilot of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts focused on drought practices.
- Investing $15 million through a block grant to the Klamath Drought Response Agency to provide payments to producers to reduce irrigation demand.

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet, and Farm Loan Discovery Tool can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For details, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center.

Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

Farmers and ranchers can use the Farm Loan Discovery Tool on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will receive information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the Farm Loan Discovery Tool by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the “Start” button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. 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.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The Farm Loan Discovery Tool is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the My Financial Information feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.
USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

For more information, contact your Washakie/Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 x 2 or visit farmers.gov.

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**NRCS Accepting Applications for Enrollment**

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wyoming is accepting applications for enrollment into the ACEP ALE and WRE program during the 2022 funding cycle. ACEP is a voluntary Farm Bill program which provides financial assistance for conservation easements. **Producers interested in implementing conservation easements have until Wednesday, December 29, 2021 to submit applications for the 2022 funding cycle.**

While Wyoming NRCS accepts applications year-round landowners should apply by the December 29th ranking date to be considered for this year's funding. If you apply after the program ranking date, Wyoming NRCS will automatically consider your application during the next funding cycle. State-specific ranking dates for all programs can be found at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates/.

Producers must have farm records current with the Farm Service Agency and submit a complete program application to NRCS to be considered for financial assistance through ACEP.

Under the ALE program, funds are provided to eligible entities that can use ACEP funding to purchase agricultural land easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. Approved agricultural easements would prevent productive working agricultural lands from being converted to non-agricultural uses and maximize conservation of land devoted to food and fiber production. Cropland, grassland, pastureland, rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland are eligible.

Under the WRE program, funding is provided directly to landowners for the purchase of an easement, and for restoration. WRE’s would restore and enhance wetlands and improve wildlife habitat. Restoration funds are used to restore and enhance wetlands, improve habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, improve water quality, reduce flood damage, and encourage outdoor education and recreation. Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.

ACEP – ALE applications are to be submitted to the Wyoming NRCS State Office, attention Katie Vaporis, by eligible entities.

ACEP – WRE applications are to be submitted to the local Field Office by the participant.

Please contact your local NRCS Field Office, or Katie Vaporis at (307) 233-6760 for more information.
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