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Message from Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Doris Washington

Greetings

FSA is encouraging producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover. Interesting Fact: the program had its highest enrollment in history in 2021.

Due to the persistent drought conditions in the Great Plains and West, USDA is offering additional relief through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) to help ranchers cover above normal costs of hauling livestock to forage or other grazing acres. Arkansas is one of the Target States. This policy enhancement complements previously announced ELAP compensation for hauling feed to livestock. ELAP livestock and feed hauling assistance is retroactive for 2021 and will be available for losses in 2022 and subsequent years. To calculate ELAP program benefits, an [online tool](#) is currently available to help producers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation

cost increases caused by drought and will soon be updated to assist producers with calculations associated with drought related costs incurred for hauling livestock to forage

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. More information on developing proposals is available at fsa.usda.gov/crp. FSA has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners. To learn more about SAFE and its benefits, see the initiative's [fact sheet](#).

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including resources specifically for producer impacted by [drought](#) and [wildfire](#). The [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) are great resources as well. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

FSA County Offices are still available to customers. Please contact your local office to determine whether in-person or phone appointments are available. Our Staff is available to continue helping Producers with program signups, loan servicing and other important actions. Our Staff will also continue to work with our customers by phone, email and by using online tools whenever possible.

To find their local FSA office, producers can visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Visit www.farmers.gov to learn more.

Please take advantage of these opportunities and resources.

Until next time...

Message from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan

Happy Spring,

Many producers have begun putting their crops in the ground. Now is a great time to think about the next steps on your operation. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Technical Assistance Program provides farmers with the knowledge and tools they need to conserve, maintain and restore the natural resources on their lands and improve the health of their operations. NRCS offers this assistance at no cost with the goal of providing customers with information and advice to help them make informed decisions.

Customers can also choose to apply for financial assistance to get help installing conservation practices, including nutrient management (with timing, placement, methods, form), outlined in their conservation plan. NRCS can help you implement nutrient management practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for nutrient management included in EQIP and CSP contracts. EQIP and CSP contracts provide financial assistance to implement many conservation practices. NRCS can work with you to determine the proper timing and placement of nutrients to increase soil fertility on your farm.

If you have EQIP and CSP contracts, be sure to review those contracts to make sure practice implementation is on track. Reviewing your conservation plans and program contracts will

ensure you are prepared when it comes time to put your plans into action. Be sure to consult with your district conservationist at your county NRCS field office if you have any questions.

To find contact information for your USDA service center visit www.farmers.gov/service-locator.

Application Deadlines Extended for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity

USDA extended the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity after requests from many stakeholders. USDA began accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022 on February 7 and since then, the Department has heard from many stakeholders that an extension would allow them to prepare more robust applications to further development of climate-smart markets for a diverse range of producers.

New deadlines to apply via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. ET:

- First Funding Pool – May 6, 2022, Proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million
- Second Funding Pool – June 10, 2022, Proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999

Visit usda.gov for additional information, including details on Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

CEAP Report Shows a Decade of Conservation Trends

A new USDA report shows use of no-till, crop rotations, more efficient irrigation methods and advanced technologies have climbed in recent years. The NRCS report demonstrates progress made through voluntary conservation over a 10-year period. Findings from the report will inform future conservation strategies, including USDA's efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

The "Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland: A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling" was developed by USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). It found significant gains for soil health and soil carbon storage, while also identifying areas where additional and targeted nutrient management strategies are needed.

For more info, visit

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/nra/ceap/> or view this multimedia story <https://ceap-nrcs.opendata.arcgis.com/>.

Important Dates to Remember

East Arkansas Delta RCPP: Lee, St. Francis, Monroe & Phillips County Farmers and Landowners in the East Arkansas Delta RCPP project who submit applications for Conservation Planning Assistance by April 29 will receive priority. For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact your local USDA Service Center.

FY22 Arkansas Technical Assistance Projects Notice of Funding Opportunity USDA-NRCS-AR-MULTI-22-NOFO0001138 - Arkansas NRCS State Office is seeking support from and opportunities to partner with likeminded natural resource conservation partners. The overall intent of this solicitation is to solicit partnerships to provide technical services that address the key conservation objectives and focus areas described further in this document. Assistance Listing: 10.902 Soil and Water Conservation, 10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program, 10.924 Conservation Stewardship Program, 10.931 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, 10.069 Conservation Reserve Program, and 10.903 Soil Survey Program. Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on Friday, April 29, 2022. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Funding to Establish and Improve Waterfowl Habitat: NRCS, in Arkansas in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will provide \$2 million in fiscal year 2022 to benefit waterfowl through the implementation of Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 646-Shallow Water Development and Management to counties within the Lower Mississippi Alluvial valley. NRCS accepts program applications on a continuous basis but sets dates to batch and rank applications as funding allows. Farmers and landowners in Arkansas who submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 11, 2022, will be considered for this round of funding.

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Signup: This assistance, available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), will help agricultural producers plan and implement voluntary conservation practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change on working lands. NRCS accepts program applications on a continuous basis but sets dates to batch and rank applications as funding allows. Farmers who submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 13, 2022, will be considered for this round of funding.

Conservation Innovation Grants: Approximately \$300,000 in funding is available through the state Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies within Arkansas. CIG funding opportunity can be found at: www.grants.gov. The announcement number is USDA-NRCS-AR-CIG-22-NOFO0001181. Applications must be entered into grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. on June 8, 2022.

Thank a Farmer for Food, Fiber, Fuel, and Our Future

By Doris Washington, Arkansas State Executive Director for United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency and Mike Sullivan, Arkansas State Conservationist for United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service

March 22 was National Ag Day, a time for us to thank farmers, ranchers and foresters for feeding, sheltering and powering our nation. We also want to celebrate and recognize the pivotal role of Arkansas producers in mitigating climate change through voluntary conservation efforts.

Climate change is happening, evidenced by persistent drought, frequent tornadoes and storms, and larger and more powerful wildfires. Our agricultural communities are on the frontlines. Now is the time for us to act, and Arkansas producers are doing their part.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is focused on providing producers tools to help mitigate climate change. As part of this, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken proactive steps to improve programs.

USDA bolstered the [Conservation Reserve Program](#), providing an incentive for climate-smart practices and investing in partnerships to better quantify the benefits of this program.

With our [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), USDA launched a new cover crop initiative as well as a new conservation incentive contract option, all with a goal to make available additional funds to help producers conserve natural resources.

And finally, USDA is enhancing [Federal crop insurance](#) to support conservation. In 2021 and 2022, the Department provided producers with a premium benefit for acres planted to cover crops.

You might be wondering, why so much emphasis on cover crops? Cover crops help soil sequester more carbon, a key tool for mitigating climate change; they prevent runoff, leading to cleaner water; and they boost production through improved soil health. But cover crops are just one tool, and producers in Arkansas are also using Irrigation Water Management, Prescribed Grazing, Nutrient Management, and Residue and Tillage Management.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/climatechange/?cid=nrcseprd1881023>

Our Staff work one-on-one with producers to conserve natural resources, grow and improve their operations, and manage risk. This year's National Ag Day theme is "Growing a Climate for Tomorrow." We know from firsthand experience – farmers are doing this. Every day, we encourage you to thank a farmer, rancher and forester for food, fiber, and fuel – and our future.

Ask USDA available to answer questions about FSA programs

Ask USDA is now available as a tool for FSA customers to ask questions about FSA programs and services.

Ask USDA, available at ask.usda.gov is similar to AskFSA, which was decommissioned Sept. 21, but it also provides information for all USDA programs. Ask USDA allows USDA customers to search for and read answers about FSA programs and services in the same location as they read about other USDA programs and services.

Customers are able to submit questions through email, chat, and phone if they need more information. This improved customer service approach provides a one-stop shopping experience that covers all of USDA's many programs.

USDA Farm Service Agency Offers Text Alerts to Producers

Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that farmers and ranchers in Arkansas now can receive notifications from their county office through text messages on their cell phone.

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Producers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Please contact your local FSA Office (visit farmers.gov/service-locator) if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the new text message option.

USDA Encourages Producers to Enroll in Grassland CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting next week through May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover. The program had its highest enrollment in history in 2021 and is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader effort to equip producers with the tools they need to help address climate change and invest in the long-term health of our natural resources.

[Grassland CRP](#) is a federally funded voluntary working lands program. Through the program, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides annual rental payments to landowners to maintain and conserve grasslands while allowing producers to graze, hay, and produce seed on that land. Maintaining the existing permanent cover provides several benefits, including reducing erosion, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and capturing and maintaining carbon in the soil and cover.

FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. The annual rental rate varies by county with a national minimum rental rate of \$13 per acre for this signup. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

Grassland CRP National Priority Zones

Because Grassland CRP supports not only grazing operations but also biodiversity and conserving environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion, FSA created two [National Priority Zones](#) in 2021: the Greater Yellowstone Migration Corridor and Dust Bowl Zone. As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's focus on conservation in important wildlife corridors and key seasonal ranges, for this year's signup, FSA is expanding the Greater Yellowstone Wildlife Migration Corridor Priority Zone to include seven additional counties across Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, to help protect the big-game animal migration corridor associated with Wyoming elk, mule deer, and antelope.

Offers within one of these National Priority Zones will receive an additional 15 ranking points and \$5 per acre if at least 50% of the offer is located in the zone.

Alongside Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can also enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

Broadening Reach of Program

As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans, will receive 10 additional ranking points to enhance their offers.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, non-profit, and private entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

More Information on CRP

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the May 13 deadline. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The working lands signup announced today demonstrates how

much it has evolved from the original program that was primarily intended to control soil erosion and only had the option to take enrolled land out of production. The program has expanded over the years and now supports a greater variety of conservation and wildlife benefits, along with the associated economic benefits.

USDA Updates Eligibility for Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has clarified the definition of a spot market sale and hog eligibility under the [Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program](#) (SMHPP), which assists producers who sold hogs through a spot market sale from April 16, 2020, through Sept. 1, 2020. Hog producers will also now be required to submit documentation to support information provided on their SMHPP application. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications through April 29, 2022, which is an extension of the April 15, 2022, deadline previously set for the program.

USDA is offering the SMHPP in response to a reduction in packer production due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices. The program is part of USDA's broader [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers.

SMHPP Program Updates

When the pandemic disrupted normal marketing channels, including access to packers, producers sold their hogs through cash sales to local processors or butchers, direct sales to individuals and third-party intermediaries, including sale barns or brokers. The use of third-party intermediaries was the only available marketing alternative for many producers and are now included in SMHPP. The only direct to packer sales that are eligible for SMHPP are those through a negotiated sale. Hogs sold through a contract that includes a premium above the spot-market price or other formula such as the wholesale cut-out price remain ineligible. Hogs must be suitable and intended for slaughter to be eligible. Immature swine (pigs) are ineligible.

FSA will now require documentation to support the accuracy of information provided on the FSA-940 Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application, including the number of hogs reported on the application that were sold through a spot market sale and how the price was determined for the sale.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. To ensure SMHPP funding availability is disbursed equitably to all eligible producers, FSA will now issue payments after the application period ends. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be factored.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP by April 29, 2022, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application, along with required supporting documentation. Producers can visit farmers.gov/smhpp for examples of supporting documentation, information on applicant eligibility 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 their local FSA office, producers should [visit farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator). Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

USDA Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules Unchanged in 2018 Farm Bill

Fruit, vegetable and wild rice producers will continue to follow the same rules for certain Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs.

If you intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on more than 15 percent of the base acres of an ARC enrolled farm using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of an ARC enrolled farm using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

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 local County USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.


Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
 - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.



Arkansas NRCS Solicits Conservation Innovation Grant Proposals

Mike Sullivan, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state conservationist, announced approximately \$300,000 in funding is available through the state Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies within Arkansas.

State, tribal, and local governmental entities; non-governmental organizations; and individuals may apply. Project proposals must be submitted by June 8, 2022 and should demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource concern. Project results are expected to improve and create conservation technologies, management systems and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems).

CIG, a component of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It does not fund research projects. CIG is an effort to address some of the state's most pressing natural resource conservation needs.

For FY 2022, Arkansas NRCS will consider offering grants in the following areas: nutrient and sediment reduction in impaired watersheds; irrigation; and soil health. Applications should be for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years.

At least 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG in FY 2022 is set aside for proposals from Historically Underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.

Selected applicants may receive grants up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Individual grant awards may not exceed \$75,000 in FY 2022. Applicants must provide non-federal matching funds for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Of the non-federal matching funds, a minimum of 25 percent must be from cash contributions; the remaining 25 percent may come from in-kind contribution.

The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found at: www.grants.gov. The announcement number is USDA-NRCS-AR-CIG-22-NOFO0001181. Applications must be entered into grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. on June 8, 2022. No applications will be accepted by mail.

For more information on CIG contact Lori Barker, state CIG program manager, at (870) 523-8986 or lori.barker@ar.usda.gov. The request for proposals and related forms are located at www.grants.gov.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces Funding to Establish and Improve Waterfowl Habitat in Arkansas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Arkansas in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will provide \$2 million in fiscal year 2022 to benefit waterfowl through the implementation of Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 646-Shallow Water Development and Management to counties within the Lower Mississippi Alluvial valley.

The sign-up is aimed at providing habitat for wildlife such as shorebirds, waterfowl, wading birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and other species that require shallow water for at least a part of their life cycle. Through this sign-up, NRCS can support the goals of agricultural

producers and increase the critical benefits that CPS 646-Shallow Water Development and Management provides. Priority will be given to agricultural land units within a 10 mile buffer of conservation estates, wildlife management areas, and National Wildlife Refuges.

NRCS accepts program applications on a continuous basis but sets dates to batch and rank applications as funding allows. Farmers and landowners in Arkansas who submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 11, 2022, will be considered for this round of funding.

The application deadline is May 11, 2022, however through Act Now, a streamlined application and contract approval approach, applications will be assessed and ranked as they are submitted to the field service center. Based on funds availability, application assessments with a ranking score of 75 points or greater will be preapproved immediately for funding. Producers are encouraged to apply at their earliest convenience.

“The Act Now funding process will allow applicants with high enough application ranking scores to strike while the iron is hot and immediately enter into EQIP contracts,” said Mike Sullivan, state conservationist. “This will enable interested and qualified applicants to perform the needed conservation treatments as soon as they are ready, willing, and able.”

For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact the local your local [USDA Service Center](#).

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All service center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS or any other service center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces May 13, 2022, Signup to Support Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry in Arkansas

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is holding a signup to support climate-smart agriculture and forestry through voluntary conservation practices. This assistance, available through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), will help agricultural producers plan and implement voluntary conservation practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change on working lands.

NRCS will rank applications for funding based on expected climate change mitigation benefits. Producers can contact the NRCS office at their [local USDA Service Center](#) to learn more about the selection process for awarding contracts. Priority conservation categories in Arkansas include:

- Building soil health and improving nitrogen management
 - Includes producers in Craighead, Mississippi, St. Francis, Lee, Phillips, Monroe, Cross, Crittenden, Woodruff, Greene, Arkansas, Jefferson, Desha, Lincoln and Chicot counties
- Improving conservation management for rice production
 - Includes producers in Craighead, Poinsett, Cross, Lonoke, Prairie, Arkansas, Mississippi, Crittenden and St. Francis counties
- Improving agroforestry, forestry and upland wildlife habitat

- Includes producers in Saline, Hot Spring, Clark, Nevada, Hempstead, Lafayette, Columbia, Grant, Dallas, Ouachita Union, Bradley, Cleveland, Jefferson, Ashley, Drew and Lincoln counties

NRCS accepts program applications on a continuous basis but sets dates to batch and rank applications as funding allows. Farmers and landowners in Arkansas who submit applications to their local NRCS office by May, 13, 2022, will be considered for this round of funding. Applications received after May 13, 2022, will be considered in later funding periods, subject to funding availability.

“Agricultural producers are the best stewards of our lands and waters, and they play a critical role in climate change mitigation,” said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist in Arkansas. “We will use this EQIP signup to deliver support for implementing critical climate-smart conservation practices to our producers. By working with our partner groups across the state, we are striving to ensure funds are equitably distributed, including to our historically underserved producers.”

For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact the local [USDA Service Center](#).

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All service center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS or any other USDA service center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment.

USDA Report Shows a Decade of Conservation Trends

A new USDA report shows use of no-till, crop rotations, more efficient irrigation methods and advanced technologies have climbed in recent years. The report from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) demonstrates progress made through voluntary conservation over a 10-year period. Findings from the report will inform future conservation strategies, including USDA’s efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

The “[Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland: A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling](#)” was developed by USDA’s Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). It found significant gains for soil health and soil carbon storage, while also identifying areas where additional and targeted nutrient management strategies are needed.

Key findings include:

- Farmers increasingly adopted advanced technology, including enhanced-efficiency fertilizers and variable rate fertilization to improve efficiency, assist agricultural economies and benefit the environment.
- More efficient conservation tillage systems, particularly no-till, became the dominant form of tillage, improving soil health and reducing fuel use.
- Use of structural practices increased, largely in combination with conservation tillage as farmers increasingly integrated conservation treatments to gain efficiencies. Structural practices include terraces, filter and buffer strips, grassed waterways and field borders.
- Irrigation expanded in more humid areas, and as irrigators shifted to more efficient systems and improved water management strategies, per-acre water application rates decreased by 19% and withdrawals by 7 million-acre-feet.
- Nearly 70% of cultivated cropland had conservation crop rotations, and 28% had high-biomass conservation crop rotations.

Because of this increased conservation, the report estimates:

- Average annual water (sheet and rill) and wind erosion dropped by 70 million and 94 million tons, respectively, and edge-of-field sediment loss declined by 74 million tons.
- Nearly 26 million additional acres of cultivated cropland were gaining soil carbon, and carbon gains on all cultivated cropland increased by over 8.8 million tons per year.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus losses through surface runoff declined by 3% and 6%, respectively.
- Average annual fuel use dropped by 110 million gallons of diesel fuel equivalents, avoiding associated greenhouse gas emissions of nearly 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents.

About the Report

For this report, farmer survey data was collected from 2003-2006 and again from 2013-2016. NRCS evaluates conservation practice adoption through the CEAP Cropland Assessment, using a combination of farmer surveys, land use and soils information, along with resource models. CEAP project findings are used to guide USDA conservation policy and program development, along with assisting conservationists, farmers and ranchers and other land stewards with making sound and science-based conservation decisions.

Download the [full report](#) or a [four-page summary of findings](#).

Next Steps

The report also revealed that cropping patterns have changed over the years in response to climate, policy, trade, renewable energy and prices, presenting a nutrient management challenge. Improving the timing and application method of nutrients can allow production demands to be met while reducing the impacts of crop production on the environment. NRCS plans to continue its focus on nutrient management conservation practices and strategies with vigorous outreach efforts to farmers and further engagement with partner groups to adjust to these changing trends.

For more information on CEAP, visit the [CEAP webpage](#) or [view this multimedia story](#).

Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for April 2022		Dates to Remember	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.250		
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.750		
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.250		
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500		
Emergency Loans	3.750	4/29/ 2022	Deadline for SMHPP (market hogs)
Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	1.875	5/13/ 2022	Grassland CRP signup deadline
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	2.125		
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	2.125		



Arkansas USDA

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NRCS Phone: 501-301-3100
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*Please contact your local Office for questions specific to your operation or county.
To find contact information for your local office visit one of the websites below.*

www.farmers.gov
www.ar.fsa.usda.gov
www.nrcs.usda.gov

FSA State Executive Director
Doris Washington

NRCS State Conservationist
Mike Sullivan

FSA State Committee Meeting: 2nd Wednesday and Thursday of each Quarter

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