



USDA Authorizes Conservation Reserve Program Graze and Hay Donations to Wildfire-Impacted Livestock Producers in Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas

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ALBUQUERQUE, NM, March 22, 2024 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) authorizes the release of emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres nationwide to livestock producers affected by the recent wildfires in Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas.

"Many ranchers in Nebraska, Texas and Oklahoma impacted by the recent, devastating wildfires are in need of grazing acres and hay resources to sustain their herds while they work over the coming months to restore their operations," said Jonas Moya, State Executive Director for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in New Mexico, "If you have CRP acres, and want to help wildfire-impacted ranchers, please contact your local FSA office. We'll determine available emergency and non-emergency use options. Your assistance is needed and greatly appreciated."

States and counties currently affected by wildfire include:

- **Nebraska:** Custer, Lincoln and Logan
- **Oklahoma:** Beaver, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Kay, Roger Mills, Texas, Woods and Woodward.
- **Texas:** Armstrong, Carson, Gray, Hartley, Hemphill, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Moore, Ochiltree, Oldham, Potter, Roberts and Wheeler.

Although the Primary Nesting Season has already started in New Mexico, CRP participants can continue to donate emergency grazing authority to livestock producers in need during this period in counties eligible for the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) due to drought. FSA also offers non-emergency use provisions for CRP acres as an option during the Primary Nesting Season (PNS) here in New Mexico.

CRP Emergency Haying and Grazing

Earlier this month FSA expanded authorization of emergency haying and grazing of [CRP](#) acres to support the relocation of livestock for grazing purposes. There is no fee or annual rental payment reduction assessed for emergency haying and grazing.

Emergency haying and grazing is available until the beginning of the PNS in each state. Primary nesting season dates in New Mexico are March 1 through July 1. Emergency grazing can continue during the PNS with a 50% reduction in stocking rate if the county meets the Livestock Forage

Program drought eligibility trigger of D2 for eight consecutive weeks or D3 or greater on the U.S. Drought Monitor.

How to Donate CRP Grazing and Haying Rights

Eligible CRP participants who want to donate CRP acres for the purpose of emergency grazing and haying must obtain a modified conservation plan, which includes emergency grazing requirements from either USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the participant's Technical Service Provider before the CRP acres are hayed or grazed. To ensure emergency haying or grazing of CRP acres is only being utilized by livestock producers adversely impacted by the wildfire, the livestock producer must file a CCC-576 (Notice of Loss) or provide a written certification to be included in the CRP contract file.

Haying or grazing activities are not authorized if these activities will cause long-term damage to the vegetative cover on the land as determined on a contract-by-contract basis. The CRP participant is responsible for non-compliance with the CRP contract provisions.

Due to privacy laws, FSA cannot release the names of producers willing to assist livestock producers in the fire-impact areas without their written consent. CRP participants must voluntarily disclose their willingness to assist livestock producers and consent to the disclosure of their personal information before FSA can release the information to livestock producers seeking assistance.

CRP participants who are interested in donating CRP grazing and haying privileges should contact them to confirm CRP practice eligibility and obtain approval from FSA prior to grazing or haying eligible CRP acres.

Non-Emergency Grazing and Haying of CRP Acres

Non-emergency grazing and haying activities can occur according to the CRP participant's conservation plan during drought or natural disaster conditions, but the site conditions should be taken into consideration and the plan modified, as needed. Non-emergency harvesting for hay is authorized once during the approved event and no later than Aug. 31. Participants must leave 25% of the contract acres unharvested or hayed. Non-emergency grazing must not exceed 120 days. During the PNS, there must be a 50% carrying capacity reduction. For both non-emergency grazing and haying, there will be a 25% annual rental payment reduction.

CRP participants who are interested in donating CRP grazing and haying privileges; offering or utilizing non-emergency use privileges should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#) to confirm CRP practice eligibility and obtain approval from FSA prior to grazing or haying eligible CRP acres.

Additional Wildfire Recovery Program Flexibilities

In addition to CRP emergency and non-emergency grazing and haying provisions, FSA recently announced policy flexibilities for several key disaster assistance programs to aid agricultural producers who have experienced significant livestock, feed, forage and infrastructure loss from recent wildfires. [See March 8, 2024, news release for more information.](#)

Online Wildfire Recovery Resources

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Wildfire Recovery Webpage](#), [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance](#) [fact sheet](#), and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine program or loan options. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](#).

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