USDA Extends Emergency Conservation and Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance Deadline for Hurricane Recovery in Virginia

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Virginia

RICHMOND, Va., June 12, 2025 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Virginia extended the deadline for two critical hurricane recovery programs. The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides cost-share and technical assistance to producers to restore farmland to pre-disaster conditions and the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) provides financial cost-share and technical assistance to restore nonindustrial private forestland. The deadline to apply for assistance for both programs is now Aug. 4, 2025.

"We recognize the level of devastation that Hurricane Helene caused across Virginia and understand that the recovery and restoration process takes time," said Sherina Logan, Deputy State Executive Director for FSA in Virginia. "We've extended the deadline to give producers additional time to complete applications and finalize clean up and restoration efforts."

Emergency Conservation Program

Approved ECP practices include:

- debris removal from farmland
- grading, shaping and releveling
- permanent fence restoration
- restoration of conservation practices
- emergency soil erosion control measures
- dairy relocation
- field windbreaks and farmstead shelterbelt restoration

Approved ECP applicants can receive up to 75% of the cost of the approved restoration practice. Maximum cost share for ECP is $500,000 per natural disaster event.

ECP cost share is authorized to:

- provide advance payments for up to 25% of the total allowable cost for all ECP practices before the restoration is carried out. The cost-share payment must be spent within 60 days; and
- allow producers who lease federally owned or managed lands, including tribal trust land, as well as state land, the opportunity to participate in ECP.

Conservation concerns present on the land prior to the qualifying natural disaster event are not eligible for ECP assistance.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program

Approved EFRP practices include:

- debris removal, such as down or damaged trees, to establish a new stand or provide for natural regeneration
- site preparation, planting materials and labor to replant forest stand
- restoration of forestland roads, fire lanes, fuel breaks or erosion control structures
- fencing, tree shelters and tree tubes to protect trees from wildlife damage
- wildlife enhancement to provide cover openings and wildlife habitat

Assistance for EFRP is not provided upfront. Cost-share is reimbursed for up to 75% of the lesser of the actual costs incurred or allowable cost after a restoration activity is complete. Maximum cost share for EFRP is $500,000 per natural disaster event. If an EFRP application is approved, the program participant is expected to perform restoration and conservation practices based on the FSA-848A Cost-Share Agreement and restoration plan provided.

To participate in EFRP, eligible applicants must:

- complete restoration to meet USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practice standards and specifications, or an associated and comparable state forest agency standard; and
- keep records of all costs incurred to complete the restoration activities, including costs associated with personal labor.

To meet eligibility requirements, nonindustrial private forestland must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned or leased by a nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land.

To expedite approvals of restoration work for ECP and EFRP, FSA has waived the onsite inspection for non-engineering ECP practices and for all EFRP forest types to remove hazard trees, surface debris and fence repair to expedite needs determinations and approvals of restoration work. Additionally, FSA waived the requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal (non-ground- disturbing activities) to support critical disaster recovery efforts. Producers should contact FSA with questions on eligibility, allowable activities and applying for ECP and EFRP assistance.

More Information

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov/protection-recovery. USDA disaster assistance information can also be found on farmers.gov, including the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet, and Farm Loan Discovery Tool. Additionally, FarmRaise partnered with FSA to launch an online education hub comprised of videos, tools and interactive resources, including farm loan information and Livestock Indemnity Program and Emergency Livestock Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program decision tools.

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

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