



Wyoming Producers Can Now Apply for Assistance through New USDA- Wyoming Big Game Conservation Partnership

News Release | Wyoming | November 10, 2022

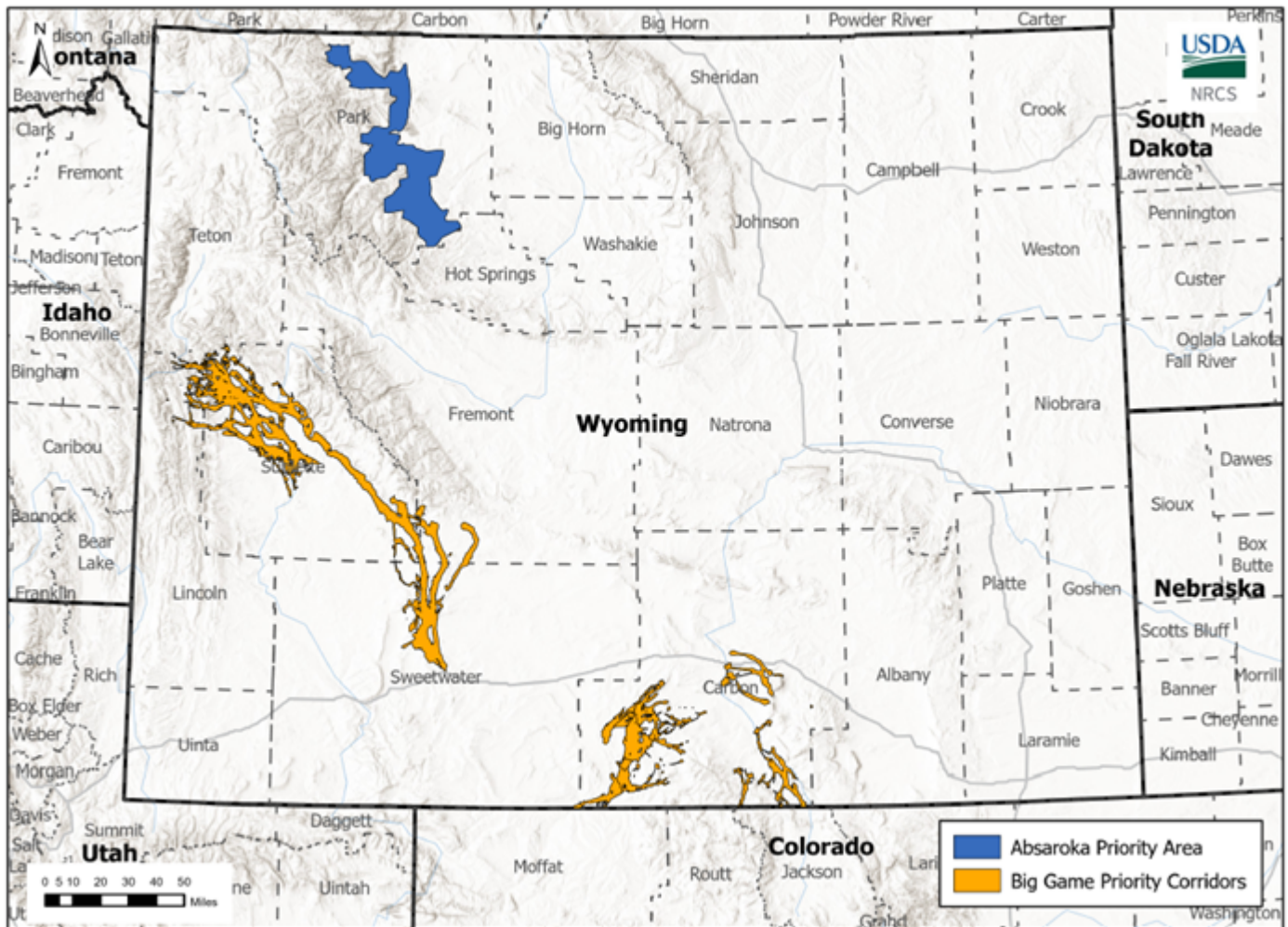
CASPER, Wyoming, Nov. 10, 2022 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications from Wyoming agricultural producers for assistance through the new Big Game Conservation Partnership. Signups are open for opportunities through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Through this partnership with the State of Wyoming, USDA is investing additional, dedicated funds in Wyoming for big game conservation, adding additional staffing and streamlining processes for producers.

"Based on extensive feedback from the state of Wyoming and stakeholders, this partnership offers producers a package of opportunities they can choose from to meet their operations' unique conservation needs," said Andi Neugebauer, NRCS Acting State Conservationist in Wyoming. "We're excited to be accepting applications for assistance through this new partnership that advances our commitment to support voluntary, locally led, producer-driven conservation efforts."

This year, NRCS is investing \$6 million in additional EQIP assistance and \$10 million in additional ACEP funding in Wyoming for big game conservation. EQIP focuses on integrating practices on working lands, such as prescribed grazing systems and cheatgrass control. ACEP assists producers who want to protect sensitive landscapes and prime farmlands from conversion to non-compatible land uses such as residential subdivision through establishment of long-term conservation easements. In addition to the opportunities announced today, producers will also be able to sign up for a habitat lease through the Grassland CRP program in early 2023.

The pilot is open to producers in Wyoming statewide, but there are several priority areas where big game migrations are known to be prevalent, especially in Carbon, Hot Springs, Lincoln, Park, Sublette, Sweetwater, Fremont, and Teton counties (see map below).

Wyoming Big Game Habitat Priority Areas 2022



While NRCS accepts applications for programs on a continuous basis, to be considered for the next funding cycles, producers should submit EQIP applications by **November 23, 2022**, and ACEP applications by **November 23, 2022**, and **January 18, 2023**.

To apply or learn more, producers should contact NRCS at their [local USDA Service Center](#) or go to farmers.gov/conservation/wildlife/migration-pilot.

Habitat Leasing through the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program

Following the EQIP and ACEP signups, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will offer a Habitat Lease through the FY23 Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup, which will provide another option for Wyoming ranchers and producers. FSA will announce signup dates soon. Grassland CRP is a working lands program, helping producers and landowners to protect grassland over a 10- to 15-year contract while enabling haying and grazing activities to continue.

As part of this Habitat Lease pilot, USDA has developed special guidance that allows better compatibility between USDA programs, enabling producers to stack different Farm Bill program benefits in ways that fit their specific requirements.

"Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for producers who want to effectively manage land for livestock and wildlife, all while providing meaningful conservation benefits," said William Bunce, FSA State Executive Director in Wyoming. "We're very excited that Grassland CRP will contribute to this important partnership, and we'll have more information to share soon."

More Information

The Big Game Conservation Partnership was announced in May 2022 and [formalized in October 2022](#) through an agreement signed by Wyoming's Governor Mark Gordon and USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. It leverages and complements other ongoing conservation efforts on working lands such as those conducted under the [Working Lands for Wildlife's](#) (WLFW) Framework for Conservation Action in the Great Plains Grasslands and Sagebrush Biome, unveiled last year by USDA. Both efforts emphasize a commitment to voluntary, incentive-based approaches; identifies and elevates the critical role of private, working lands; and stresses the importance of supporting state, tribal, and landowners to advance their conservation priorities. The pilot also further focuses FSA's commitment to assisting producers in protecting and maintaining grasslands through grazing and for supporting plant and animal biodiversity within National Priority Zones.

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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