



## USDA Approves ECP and EFRP Assistance in 5 Illinois Counties

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**SPRINGFIELD, Illinois, January 23, 2024** - U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that three Illinois counties are accepting applications for the [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and two Illinois counties are accepting applications for the [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) to address tornado and severe storm damages.

The approved counties for ECP signup are **Moultrie, Fulton** and **Crawford**. Signup for ECP will begin January 29, 2024, and end March 15, 2024. The approved counties for EFRP signup are **McDonough** and **Hancock**. Signup for EFRP began January 2, 2024, and will end March 29, 2024.

"These programs help cropland producers and private forest landowners clean up and restore their farmland and forests damaged by tornados and severe storms," said Scott Halpin, State Executive Director for FSA in Illinois. "I encourage all eligible landowners to apply for assistance by the deadline. If you haven't participated in FSA programs, contact your local FSA office as soon as possible to complete the process of establishing customer and farm records and to determine program eligibility."

### **Emergency Conservation Program**

ECP provides financial assistance to help them restore their farmland to pre-disaster conditions. Approved ECP applicants may receive up to 75% of the cost of an approved restoration activity. Program applicants who qualify as limited resource, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive up to 90% cost-share. FSA may provide advance payments, up to 25% of the cost, for all ECP practices before the restoration is carried out.

Approved ECP practices under this authorization include:

- EC1 - Debris Removal
- EC3 - Restoring Permanent Fences

Producers who incurred damage must apply for assistance and receive written approval before starting any reconstructive work. FSA's National Environmental Policy Act and environmental compliance review process must also be completed before any restoration activities begin. Producers who submit applications for assistance after reconstructive work has been completed may not qualify for ECP assistance, but all affected producers are encouraged to apply to determine eligibilit

FSA county committee evaluation of ECP applications is based on an on-site inspection of the damaged land, taking into consideration the type and extent of damage. An on-site inspection does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be provided.

The use of ECP funds is limited to activities that return the land to the relative pre-disaster condition and the payment limitation for ECP is \$500,000 per disaster event. Conservation concerns present on the land prior to the eligible disaster event are not eligible for ECP assistance.

### **Emergency Forest Restoration Program**

EFRP provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. The approved EFRP practice under this authorization is EF3 - Mixed Forest Restoration.

Because EFRP funds are allocated based on the number of applications submitted to FSA and the extent of damage as determined by on-site inspections, producers in need of EFRP assistance should submit applications to FSA as soon as possible.

After applications are received, local FSA county committees determine land eligibility using on-site damage inspections that assess the type and extent of damage and approve applications.

To meet EFRP eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster event occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land. The natural disaster event must have resulted in damage that, if untreated, would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and materially affect future use of the land.

### **More Information**

For more information on ECP, EFRP and other disaster recovery assistance, please contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit the [disaster protection and recovery](#) page on [farmers.gov](#).

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