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## From Brenda's Desk

With fall just around the corner and harvest in full swing there is a couple reminders to be aware of. A flash flood has occurred west of Hyattville and caused damage. If you were affected by this flooding, we have the Emergency Conservation Program to help you with damages. Check out the article below for further details and signup dates.



This office is still taking application for the Livestock Forage Program for 2022 grazing. If you have not completed your application, contact the office to get this started. Big Horn County producers are eligible for 4 months' worth of grazing payments. Deadline is January 30, 2023, but the sooner you complete your application the sooner you can receive your program benefits.

If you have been hauling water or will be hauling water to livestock (that normally have a watering system that is not working due to the drought) you may be eligible for reimbursement for some of this expense. Contact this office for further details and program rules and regulations.

If you have any questions about farm programs or make any changes to your operation, please contact this office. We are here to serve your agricultural needs.

### Important Dates:

September 5, - Labor Day Office Closed  
September 21-22 – Office Closed Staff Training  
September 30 – End of Fiscal Year

## Emergency Conservation Program

Flash Flooding has caused severe damage to areas in Big Horn County. Farms and ranches suffering severe damage may be eligible for assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) administered by the Big Horn County Farm Service Agency if the damage:



- Will be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be needed to return the land to productive agricultural use
- Is unusual and is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area
- Affect the productive capacity of the farmland
- Will impair or endanger the land.

A producer qualifying for ECP assistance may receive cost-share levels not to exceed 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration measures. No producer is eligible for more than \$200,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence. The following types of measures may be eligible:

- Removing debris from farmland
- Grading, shaping, or releveling severely damaged farmland
- Restoring permanent fences
- Restoring conservation structures and other similar installations.

Producers who have suffered a loss from a natural disaster may contact Darla at the Park County FSA Office and request assistance from **August 15 to September 16, 2022**.

To be eligible for assistance, practices must not be started until all of the following are met:

- An application for cost-share assistance has been filed
- The local FSA County Committee or its representative has conducted an onsite inspection of the damaged area

The Agency responsible for technical assistance, such as Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), has made a needs determination, which may include cubic yards of earthmoving, etc., required for rehabilitation.

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## Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance

The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the conversion of land from native vegetation to commodity crop production after December 23, 1985. As part of the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, if you’re proposing to produce agricultural commodities (crops that require annual tillage including one pass planting operations and sugar cane) on land that has been determined highly erodible and that has no crop history prior to December 23, 1985, that land must be farmed in accordance with a conservation plan or system that ensures no substantial increase in soil erosion.

Eligibility for many USDA programs requires compliance with a conservation plan or system on highly erodible land (HEL) used for the production of agricultural commodities. This includes Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan, disaster assistance, safety net, price support, and conservation programs; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs; and Risk Management Agency (RMA) Federal crop insurance.

Before you clear or prepare areas not presently under production for crops that require annual tillage, you are required to file Form AD-1026 “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification,” with FSA indicating the area to be brought into production. The notification will be referred to NRCS to determine if the field is considered highly erodible land. If the field is considered HEL, you are required to implement a conservation plan or system that limits the erosion to the tolerable soil loss (T) for the predominant HEL soil on those fields.

In addition, prior to removing trees or conducting any other land manipulations that may affect wetlands, remember to update form AD-1026, to ensure you remain in compliance with the wetland conservation provisions.

Prior to purchasing or renting new cropland acres, it is recommended that you check with your local USDA Service Center to ensure your activities will be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

For additional information on highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation compliance, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#).

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## FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your Washakie/Hot Springs County USDA Service Center at 307-347-2456 x 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](#).

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## 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](#).



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