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USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in North Dakota Impacted by Wildfires

News Release |
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|
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Fargo, North Dakota, Oct. 18, 2024 – Agricultural operations in North Dakota have been significantly impacted by recent wildfires. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events. Impacted producers should contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages.

USDA Disaster Assistance

Producers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality or sell injured livestock at a reduced price may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). Livestock producers who experience losses related to wildfire should check with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office for LIP eligibility criteria. FSA has instructed FSA County Committees and local staff to exercise maximum flexibility in determining acceptable loss documentation and to ensure LIP applications are acted on timely. Impacted producers have until March 3, 2025, to submit their notice of loss and application for payment for 2024 losses.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses and assists with above normal costs of hauling water and feed to

livestock as well as transporting livestock to forage or other grazing acres. For ELAP, producers are required to complete a notice of loss and a payment application to their local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline, Jan. 30, 2025, for 2024 calendar year losses.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines. TAP complements the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes or vines is apparent.

“Based on your reported losses or damages, our local Farm Service Agency county office staff are ready to help connect you with the programs best suited to meet your wildfire recovery needs,” said Marcy Svenningsen, State Executive Director for FSA in North Dakota. “Our staff will do our best to work with the loss documentation you have available. We understand that these are trying times, and you’re pulled in many directions, so when you’re able, please get in touch with us to begin the reporting process. The sooner we have the information, the sooner we can get county committee action on your requests for assistance. Examples of loss documentation include but are not limited to farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses.”

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.

On Oct. 9, 2024, FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux signed an Administrator’s Physical Loss Notification (APLN) making five counties in North Dakota primary and 16 contiguous counties eligible for FSA emergency loans for physical damages and loss caused by wildfires that occurred Oct. 4, 2024, through Oct. 7, 2024. Contiguous counties in Montana and South Dakota are also eligible for APLN emergency loan

assistance.

Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

The [Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#) (FSFL) provides low-interest financing so producers can build, repair, replace or upgrade facilities to store commodities. Loan terms vary from three to 12 years. Producers who incurred damage to or loss of their equipment or infrastructure funded by the FSFL program should contact their insurance agent and their local USDA Service Center. Producers in need of on-farm storage should also contact USDA.

Risk Management

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA's [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office, respectively. If they have crop insurance, producers should provide a notice of loss to their agent within 72 hours of initial discovery of damage and follow up in writing within 15 days.

For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss \(CCC-576\)](#) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

“Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are offered to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future,” said Eric Bashore, Director of USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) Regional Office that covers North Dakota. “Times of disaster can be a trying time for producers, and they should stay in close contact with their crop insurance agent. Producers can be assured that the Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events.”

Conservation

Outside of North Dakota’s [primary nesting season](#) from April 15 – Aug. 1 emergency and non-emergency haying and grazing of [Conservation Reserve Program](#) acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disasters. Producers interested in haying or grazing of CRP

acres should contact their county FSA office to determine eligibility.

FSA's [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) can assist landowners with financial and technical assistance to remove debris from farmland such as woody material, sand, rock and materials from collapsed hoop houses/high tunnels on cropland or pastureland. Through the program, FSA can provide assistance toward the restoration or replacement of fences including livestock cross fences, boundary fences, cattle gates or wildlife exclusion fences on agricultural land.

Additionally, the [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) can assist eligible owners of nonindustrial private forestland to also restore the land by removing debris, repairing forestland roads, and replacing fence. For both programs, farmers and ranchers should check with their [local FSA office](#) to find out about sign-up periods, which are set by the FSA County Committee.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is always available to provide technical assistance during the recovery process by assisting producers to plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) can help producers plan and implement conservation practices on land impacted by natural disasters.

At USDA, we serve as a partner to help landowners with their resiliency and recovery efforts," said Dan Hovland, NRCS State Conservationist in North Dakota. "Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop methods that focus on effective recovery of the land."

Assistance for Communities

Additional NRCS programs include the [Emergency Watershed Protection](#) (EWP) program, which assists local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as debris removal and streambank stabilization.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters. All projects must have an eligible project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75% of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90% within county-wide limited-

resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged waterways.
- Unstable streambanks.
- Severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure.
- Wind-borne debris removal.

Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Sponsors must submit a formal request (by mail or email) to the NRCS state conservationist for assistance within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available.

For more information, please contact your [local NRCS office](#).

In addition to EWP, Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) is another valuable service that NRCS can provide following a wildfire. NRCS technical assistance can help fire victims with planning cost-effective post fire restoration practices.

More Information

To learn more about NRCS programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also apply for NRCS programs, manage conservation plans and contracts, and view and print conservation maps by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

For more than 90 years, NRCS has helped farmers, ranchers and forestland owners make investments in their operations and local communities to improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and wildlife habitat. NRCS uses the latest science and technology to help keep working lands working, boost agricultural economies, and increase the competitiveness of American agriculture. NRCS provides one-on-one, personalized advice and financial assistance and works with producers to help them

reach their goals through voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. Now, with additional funding from the Inflation Reduction Act, NRCS is working to get even more conservation practices on the ground while ensuring access to programs for all producers. For more information, visit nrcs.usda.gov.

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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