



## In This Issue:

- [Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines](#)
- [From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks](#)
- [Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA](#)
- [USDA Reminds Montana Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports](#)
- [Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance](#)
- [USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online](#)
- [USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council \(IAC\) for the Rocky Mountain Region Announces to MT Producers about Technical Assistance Specialist Position Vacancy](#)
- [USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Veterans Webinar Series](#)
- [NRCS Encourages Landowners to Start Planning Now for Participation in the Conservation Stewardship Program and Other Conservation Opportunities](#)
- [NASS Notifies Producers About Collecting Data for the June Acreage Report](#)

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## Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines

USDA in Montana reminds agricultural producers of important Farm Service Agency (FSA) program dates. Contact your local service center to apply and with any questions. Visit online at [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) and [fsa.usda.gov/mt](https://fsa.usda.gov/mt).

**\*Note:** The Acreage Reporting Date for Spring Alfalfa Seed, all other spring seeded crops, Perennial Forage, Hemp, Grazing acreage and CRP acres is **15 days before the onset of harvest or grazing, or July 15, whichever is earlier.**

**June 2, 2025:** Acreage Reporting Date for Nursery Crops for the ensuing crop year.

**August 1, 2024:** Deadline to request a farm reconstitution or farm transfer for 2024.

**Sept. 2, 2024:** NAP application closing date for fall and spring seeded Canola and all Value Loss Crops.

**September 30, 2024:** Acreage Reporting Date for Value-loss and controlled environment crops (except nursery).

**Sept. 30, 2024:** NAP application closing date for all annual & perennial grass & mixed forage, garlic, rye, speltz, triticale & wheat. Please note that the acreage reporting date for your NAP covered crops is the earlier of the

established FSA acreage reporting date for the crop or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported.

[Back to top](#)

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## From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks

May is more than a time producers are actively planting in their fields. It is also a time to celebrate the near end of a school year. With graduation around the corner, I wanted to congratulate all of our young people who have worked tirelessly to accomplish such an achievement. Whether our young people are graduating from high school, college, or university, I would just like to say, well done! I would also like to give a special shout out to all the 4-H and FAA members that are leading the way for the future of agriculture here in Montana! The youth truly are our future and it will be them that carry on the time honored agriculture traditions that have made Montana such a special place.

[Back to top](#)

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## Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

Producers are encouraged to call their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of their time and to make sure FSA staff is available to tend to their important business needs. Please call your local FSA office ahead to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that might be needed during your appointment. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator).

[Back to top](#)

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## USDA Reminds Montana Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Montana who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting should make an appointment with their U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) service center before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

### How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Montana:

15 days before the onset of harvest or grazing, or July 15, whichever is earlier for the following examples: Spring Alfalfa Seed, all other spring seeded crops, Perennial Forage, Hemp, Grazing acreage and CRP acres.

September 30, 2024: Value-loss and controlled environment crops (except nursery).

June 2, 2025: Nursery Crops for the ensuing crop year.

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your local FSA office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

### **Acreage Reporting Details**

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made. Check with FSA at the local USDA Service Center for more information on continuous certification.

### **New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov**

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and these [video tutorials](#).

#### **More Information**

Producers can make an appointment to report acres by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

[Back to top](#)

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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](#).

[Back to top](#)

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## **USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that most farm loan borrowers will soon be able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) in early February. Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, especially for producers who may have limited time during the planting or harvest seasons to visit a local FSA office; modernize and improve customer service; provide additional customer self-service tools; and expand credit access to assist more producers.

On average, local USDA Service Centers process more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year. Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay their loan installment. Farm loan payments can now be made at the borrower's convenience, on their schedule and outside of FSA office hours.

Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities. This new service for producers means that farm loan employees will have more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

The Pay My Loan feature can be accessed at [farmers.gov/loans](https://farmers.gov/loans). To use the payment feature, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#). This initial release only allows individuals with loans to make online payments. For now, borrowers with jointly payable checks will need to continue to make loan payments through their local office.

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made various improvements including:

- The [Online Loan Application](#), an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.
- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), which reduced loan applications by more than half, from 29 pages to 13 pages.

[Back to top](#)

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## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) and/or or visit [fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

[Back to top](#)

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## Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region Announces to MT Producers about Technical Assistance Specialist Position Vacancy

Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region Announces to MT Producers about Technical Assistance Specialist Position Vacancy

### Position Summary:

Reporting to the respective Interregional Manager, IAC Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists provide direct assistance with USDA program access to Tribal producers, Tribal entities, and Tribal governments - outreach, eligibility, and program application support. Other forms of assistance provided include agriculture and natural resource management planning, project development support, partnership leveraging, government-to-government relations, planning, and supplemental resources identification. TA Specialists have a background in agriculture, Tribal food systems, natural resources management, community development, education, outreach, Tribal relations, and/or other applicable areas. The position is well suited for self-starters who excel independently and as part of a team and are willing to travel extensively at times. IAC expects TA Specialists to meet producers and Tribal clients face to face, whenever possible, and to function well within a remote work environment.

To apply, [visit the full job announcement here](#) or contact Zane Not Afraid at (406) 665-5394.

### Montana IAC Points of Contact:

Zane Not Afraid  
Inter-Regional Manager  
(406) 665-5394 [zane@indianag.org](mailto:zane@indianag.org)

Vacant  
Technical Assistance Specialist(406)-673-7480

Marlene Werk  
Technical Assistance Specialist  
(406)-673-7480  
[marlene@indianag.org](mailto:marlene@indianag.org)

[Back to top](#)

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## USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Veterans Webinar Series

Register for a free webinar series for military veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses on how to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prepare for a career in agriculture. This webinar series is designed to provide information about USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs and resources for the military community.

Each week we will cover different topics, including:

- **Tuesday, May 7, 2024:** Urban Agriculture, USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs

- **Tuesday, May 14, 2024:** Natural Resources Conservation Service programs
- **Tuesday, May 21, 2024:** Farm Service Agency loans and programs, Risk Management Agency programs

All sessions will be held **1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern.**

You only need to register once for all five webinars. It's highly recommended to attend all five webinars. [Register here.](#)

[Back to top](#)

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## **NRCS Encourages Landowners to Start Planning Now for Participation in the Conservation Stewardship Program and Other Conservation Opportunities**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering technical and financial assistance to new and existing customers to help address natural resource challenges on private lands across Montana. Through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), landowners implement conservation practices to solve problems and to attain higher stewardship levels on working lands.

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance year-round, but announcement of first round application batching dates usually occurs in the fall. Farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners interested in conservation for their property should start planning with NRCS now to be prepared when that date is announced.

The historic investment in conservation from the Inflation Reduction Act has helped NRCS to fund more CSP applications in Montana than in the past. In fiscal year 2023, Montana experienced a very high funding rate of eligible CSP applications that met the stewardship threshold requirements. More available funding helps both new customers and previously unsuccessful applicants to compete in the CSP ranking process.

CSP participants are seeing real results, including enhanced resilience to weather and market volatility, decreased need for agricultural inputs, and improved wildlife habitat conditions. Custom conservation plans developed with NRCS help meet management objectives while improving the condition of natural resources.

CSP contract payments are based on two components:

- Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation, based on the land uses included in the contract and an NRCS assessment of existing stewardship at the time of enrollment, and
- Payments to implement additional conservation activities.

Changes to the payment component for existing conservation has been adjusted to reflect conservation values more accurately on rangelands. This increased payment rate may make implementation of additional conservation activities more feasible for grazing operations.

Implementing additional conservation activities means choosing practices that build on what producers are already doing to make progress toward goals for the environment and the economic viability of the farm or ranch. For grazing systems, this could mean conducting a rangeland monitoring program, developing a drought contingency plan, or treating invasive weeds. On croplands, farmers might choose to level up from single-species to multi-species cover crop plantings, no-till seeding, or precision agriculture. There are many options for conservation enhancement activities that NRCS planners can explain and recommend based on producer goals.

Visit the local NRCS field office for more information and to begin planning. Contact your [local NRCS office](#). More information is also available at [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov) by scrolling down to State Programs and Initiatives.

[Back to top](#)

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## NASS Notifies Producers About Collecting Data for the June Acreage Report

In May, NASS will start collecting data for the June Acreage Report. Producers will start receiving questionnaires in the mail mid to late May. Enumerators will start visiting producers late May/ early June.

Montana Wheat and Barley Varieties survey will also be mailed in late May. This survey is funded and produced for Montana Wheat and Barley Committee.

County profiles were recently released and available on our website under Census of Agriculture 2022 publications.

Thank you, producers, for taking the time to share your story. To find results of NASS surveys please visit [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Montana/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/index.php)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Eric Sommer State Statistician, Montana at 1-800-392-3202.

[Back to top](#)

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### Montana

USDA Farm Service Agency  
PO Box 670  
Bozeman, MT 59771

Phone: 406.587.6872

Fax: 855.546.0264

Web: [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt)

State Executive Director:  
MAUREEN WICKS

State Committee:  
RYAN LANKFORD  
CASEY BAILEY  
JAKE MERKEL

TRACEY L. PETERSON  
LOLA RASK

**FSA Policy Reminders:** [2024 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
10 East Babcock Street, Room 443  
Bozeman, MT 59715-4704  
Phone: 406-587-6811  
Fax: 855-510-7028  
Web: [nrcs.usda.gov/montana](https://nrcs.usda.gov/montana)

State Conservationist:  
TOM WATSON

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USDA Risk Management Agency  
Billings Regional Office  
3490 Gabel Road, Suite 100  
Billings, MT 59102-7302  
Phone: 406-657-6447  
Fax: 406-657-6573  
Email: [rsomt@rma.usda.gov](mailto:rsomt@rma.usda.gov)  
Web: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

Regional Director:  
ERIC BASHORE

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**Contact information for your local office, visit:** [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).

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