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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 and fsa.usda.gov/mt.

June 2, 2024: Acreage Reporting Date for Nursery Crops for the ensuing crop year.

June 17, 2024: 2024 County Committee Election Nomination Period opens.

June 19, 2024: Office closure for Juneteenth federal holiday.

June 28, 2024: Last day of CRP Grasslands signup

July 15, 2024: The Acreage Reporting Date for Spring Alfalfa Seed, all other spring seeded crops, Perennial Forage, Hemp, CRP acres and Grazing acreage is **15 days before the onset of harvest or grazing, or July 15, whichever is earlier.**

July 4, 2024: Office closure for Independence Day federal holiday.

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

August 1, 2024: Final Date to return nomination forms for the 2024 County Committee Election Cycle to the Count Offices or for nominations to be post marked.

Sept. 2, 2024: Office Closure for Labor Day federal holiday.

Sept. 3, 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.

Oct:14, 2024: Office closure for Columbus Day federal holiday

Oct. 31, 2024: OCCSP signup is open now until October 31, 2023.

***Note for ELAP Notice of Loss-** If you are hauling feed/livestock/water due to a qualifying drought during the 2024 grazing period, a new NOL is required - even if you already submitted a NOL prior to the 2024 grazing period.

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From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks

Spring storms provided us with some much-needed moisture. However, it also provided some difficulties for our farmers to finish seeding and made late spring calving for our ranchers a challenge. Our state has already begun to experience the stresses of drought in nine of our counties. In this Montana FSA June newsletter, I encourage you to read the articles related to the following:

- Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses
- USDA Reminds Montana Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports
- Disaster Assistance for 2024 Livestock Forage Losses in 8 Montana counties

If you experience livestock losses or prevented planting with your operation, I encourage you to please contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) to let them know.

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USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program General Signup for 2024

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can now sign up for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (Grassland CRP). The signup runs from today through June 28, 2024. Grassland CRP, offered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), is a voluntary working lands conservation program that enables participants to conserve grasslands and provide important conservation benefits for wildlife, soil health and carbon sequestration, all while continuing most grazing and haying practices.

More than 2.3 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners were accepted through the 2023 Grassland CRP signup. That signup reflects the continued success and value of investments in voluntary, producer-led, working lands conservation programs. The current total participation in Grassland CRP is 8.64 million acres, which is part of the 24.8 million acres enrolled in CRP opportunities overall.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024 (Pub. L. 118-22), which generally extended the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through Sept. 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including CRP, to continue operating.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the June 28 deadline.

Other CRP Options

FSA is also accepting applications for the [Continuous CRP](#) signup, which opened in January 2023. Under this enrollment, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

Additionally, FSA also offers financial assistance to producers and landowners enrolled in CRP to improve the health of their forests through the [Forest Management Incentive](#) (FMI), which can help participants with forest management practices, such as brush management and prescribed burning.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the [Transition Incentives Program](#) (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

[Producers and Landowners Can Now Sign Up for USDA's Grassland Conservation Reserve Program](#)

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Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2024 livestock losses, you must file a notice and provide the following supporting documentation to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation
- Livestock beginning inventory documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1%; Non-Adult Beef Cattle 799 pounds or less = 4.10% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle 800 pounds or more = 1%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application for payment by March 3, 2025.

For more information, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) and/or visit fsa.usda.gov

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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](#).

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Disaster Assistance for 2024 Livestock Forage Losses in 9 Montana counties

9 MT Counties Triggered; U.S. Drought Monitor Updated Weekly

Livestock producers in **9 Montana counties** are eligible to apply for **2024 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)** benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass, and forage sorghum. LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or leased land, or fire on federally managed land. County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought, or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. The following **9 Montana counties** have triggered the 2024 LFP drought criteria: **Cascade, Glacier, Judith Basin, Lewis and Clark, Meagher, Mineral, Pondera, Sanders and Teton**

Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2025, for 2024 losses.

Producers in **Beaverhead, Broadwater, Cascade, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Glacier, Granite, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Park, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders and Teton** counties are eligible to apply for benefits under the **2024 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** for losses relating to feed transportation, livestock transportation and water transportation costs. The deadline for filing a notice of loss under ELAP will be the same as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 30 calendar days following the program year of which the loss occurred. Applications for payment and notices of loss must be completed no later than January 30, 2025, for 2024 losses.

For additional information about ELAP and LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the local USDA Service Center and/or visit www.farmers.gov and/or fsa.usda.gov/mt.

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Reminders for FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security

Farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans are responsible for maintaining loan collateral. Borrowers must obtain prior consent or approval from FSA or the guaranteed lender for any transaction that affects real estate security. These transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind
- Easements of any kind
- Subordinations
- Partial releases
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#).

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Using FSA Direct Farm Ownership Loans for Construction

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) are a resource to 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.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans can be used to construct, purchase or improve farm dwellings, service buildings or other facilities, and to make improvements essential to an operation.

Applicants must provide FSA with an estimate of the total cost of all planned development that completely describe the work, prior to loan approval and must show proof of sufficient funds to pay for the total cost of all planned development at or before loan closing. In some instances, applicants may be asked to provide certified plans, specifications or contract documents. The applicant cannot incur any debts for materials or labor or make any expenditures for development purposes prior to loan closing with the expectation of being reimbursed from FSA funds.

Construction and development work may be performed either by the contract method or the borrower method. Under the contract method, construction and development contractors perform work according to a written contract with the applicant or borrower. If applying for a direct loan to finance a construction project, the applicant must obtain a surety bond that guarantees both payment and performance in the amount of the construction contract from a construction contractor.

A surety bond is required when a contract exceeds \$100,000. An authorized agency official determines that a surety bond appears advisable to protect the borrower against default of the contractor or a contract provides for partial payments in excess of the amount of 60 percent of the value of the work in place.

Under the borrower method, the applicant or borrower will perform the construction and development work. The borrower method may only be used when the authorized agency official determines, based on information from the applicant, that the applicant possesses or arranges to obtain the necessary skill and managerial ability to complete the work satisfactorily and that such work will not interfere with the applicant's farming operation or work schedule.

Potential applicants should visit with FSA early in the initial project planning process to ensure environmental compliance.

For more eligibility requirements and information about FSA Loan programs, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region Reminds MT Producers about IAC Rocky Mountain Youth Regional Summit

The Rocky Mountain Youth Regional Summit will include 2 days of informative sessions, along with on-site demonstrations. Topics will range from community development, natural resources, food sovereignty, Tribal enterprise, Native climate resources, youth loans, and USDA opportunities. Breakfast and lunch will be included for attendees both days. **The event will take place June 13-14, 2024, at the Big Horn Resort located at 1801 Majestic Ln, Billings, MT 59102.**

To register for the event, contact Sunshine Tso at sunshine@indianag.org

Montana IAC Points of Contact:

Zane Not Afraid Inter-Regional Manager (406) 665-5394 zane@indianag.org	Beau LaSalle Technical Assistance Specialist (406)945-3107 beau@indianag.org	Marlene Werk Technical Assistance Specialist (406)-673-7480 marlene@indianag.org
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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.

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America's Conservation Ag Movement presents: 2024 Virtual Peer Networks

Join America's Conservation Ag Movement in a live, farmer-led networking event where you'll hear the latest from experts and innovators moving the needle in conservation ag. Glean insights and meet other like-minded farmers and ranchers in your state at these interactive virtual events.

This spring, America's Conservation Ag Movement's Virtual Peer Network series kicks off by shining a light on regenerative agriculture in the sovereign nation, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts' and Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project's C.A.R.E. program.

"Together with our partners, we are working towards a more inclusive agricultural landscape, ensuring that ALL farmers and ranchers have equal opportunities to benefit from conservation programs." – Sarah Blaney, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

The C.A.R.E. program seeks to not only improve soil health and water quality across agricultural landscapes, but also strengthen conservation organizations to better serve minority and veteran producers.

The Montana event is scheduled for June 25, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. MST. Register at <https://americasconservationagmovement.com/acam-virtual-peer-networks/>.

Speakers include:

- Timothy Rhodd, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska
- Missty Slater, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska
- Sarah Blaney, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

- Willard Tillman, Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc.
- Jimmy Emmons, America's Conservation Ag Movement and Oklahoma rancher
- Andrew Lauver, America's Conservation Ag Movement and fifth generation Iowa farmer
- NRCS technical experts and ACAM private partners

Organized by Trust in Food and Farm Journal Foundation with technical and financial support from NRCS, America's Conservation Ag Movement's public-private partnership empowers collaborators to accelerate adoption of regenerative practices, products and technologies. Learn more at <https://americasconservationagmovement.com/>.

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

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Regional Director:
ERIC BASHORE

Contact information for your local office, visit: www.farmers.gov.

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