

February 2020



Farm Service Agency Electronic News Service

NEWSLETTER

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Oregon FSA Newsletter

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A Message from our SED

I hope you have all weathered the recent storms that descended upon Oregon the last few weeks. Please know that your local USDA staff is there to assist if need be, with disaster resources to help get your operation back and functioning.

If you do wish to report weather related losses please keep accurate records to document losses and contact your local USDA Service Center. In the coming weeks be looking for USDA program updates including [Livestock Indemnity Program](#), [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program](#), [Tree Assistance Program](#), [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), and farm loans.

Additionally, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) and FSA offer risk management options like the [Federal Crop Insurance Program](#) and the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#). More information is available at Farmers.gov.

Also, the *2021 USDA in Oregon* photo calendar will be distributed soon, or you can call or pick up a copy at your local USDA service center. The calendar highlights Oregon

State Committee:

Anna Sullivan, Chair
 Sam Asai, Member
 Phil Hassinger, Member
 TJ Hansell, Member
 Denver Pugh, Member

Next STC Meeting:

March 10

Sign up for important text message alerts from your local county FSA office! To subscribe, text FSANOW (372-669).

How can we help you? Submit questions or requests for further information to [Ask USDA](https://ask.usda.gov/s/) at <https://ask.usda.gov/s/>

ASK.USDA.GOV

1-833-ONE-
 USDA ASKUSDA@USDA.GOV

agriculture and includes program reminders and resources through Farmers.gov.

You can also send in your spectacular photos of Oregon agriculture for use in a 2022 photo calendar to continue showcasing your passion and commitment to agriculture (not a contest). Suggested categories are Agriculture Landscape, People in Agriculture, A Rural Workday, Agriculture Animals or Crops, and new this year is Urban Agriculture.

Photos can be submitted by e-mail to susan.riffel@usda.gov by October 31, 2021. Upon submission of each photo please include your name, county, and a category. Printed photos can also be submitted at a local USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency to be scanned. A consent form is required if a person is in the photo. Click here to download the photo calendar flyer and consent form at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Oregon/index>.

We are committed to delivering USDA programs and services to Oregon farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to COVID-19. I encourage you to [check the status of your local USDA Service Center](#). Staff members from FSA and NRCS will also continue to work with producers by phone, email, and digital tools like Microsoft Teams, Box, and OneSpan. You can learn more about how to leverage these digital offerings by visiting <https://www.farmers.gov/mydocs>.

Josh Hanning

Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans - Direct: 1.375%
Farm Operating - Microloan: 1.375%
Farm Ownership Loans-Direct: 2.625%
Farm Ownership - Microloan: 2.625%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing: 2.500%
Farm Ownership-Down Payment: 1.500%
Emergency Loans Actual Loss: 2.375%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 Year: 0.250%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 Year: 0.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 Year: 0.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 Year: 1.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 Year: 1.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 15 Year: 1.375%

Important Dates

- **CRP** General Signup continues, extended signup deadline TBD.
- **March 1:** Livestock Indemnity Program applications due (in addition to filing notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when loss is first apparent)
- **2021 CRP Non-Emergency Grazing Period** (prior approval required)
- **March 5:** Urban Ag Advisory Committee nomination packages due.
- **March 5:** Quality Loss Assistance program signup.

- **March 15:** ARC/PLC enrollment closes for 2021
- **March 15: 2021 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** Coverage Application Closing Date for all Spring Crops except Spring-Seeded Canola, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Mixed Forage
- **April 23:** CRP Grasslands Signup 203 closes
- **Sept. 30:** Continuous and CREP Signup 55 closes

March 15 is Deadline to Make Elections and Complete Enrollment in 2021 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), the Texas A&M tool allows producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2021. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data already available in the system.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, including two online decision tools that assist producers in making enrollment and election decisions specific to their operations, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#).

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Offers New Forest Management Incentive for Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available \$12 million for use in making payments to forest landowners with land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in exchange for their implementing healthy forest management practices. Existing CRP participants can now sign up for the Forest Management Incentive (FMI), which provides financial incentives to landowners with land in CRP to encourage proper tree thinning and other practices.

Right now, less than 10% of land currently enrolled in CRP is dedicated to forestland. But, these nearly 2 million acres of CRP forestland, if properly managed, can have enormous benefits for natural resources by reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality, increasing water quantity, and diversifying local farm operations and rural economies.

Only landowners and agricultural producers with active CRP contracts involving forest cover can enroll. However, this does not include active CRP contracts that expire within two years. Existing CRP participants interested in tree thinning and prescribed burning must comply with the standards and specifications established in their CRP contract.

CRP participants will receive the incentive payment once tree thinning and/or other authorized forest management practices are completed.

The incentive payment is the lower of:

- The actual cost of completing the practice; or
- 75% of the payment rate offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) if the practice is offered through NRCS conservation programs.

CRP signup is currently open. FSA will announce deadline later this year. Interested producers should contact their [local FSA county office](#).

USDA Announces Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators

Options Help More Beginning, Small and Urban Producers Gain Access to Credit

Producers can apply for a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers EZ Guarantee Loans use a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved, and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

A new category of lenders will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit

unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

For additional assistance contact your local FSA office (to find a USDA Service Center visit the [USDA Service Center Locator](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.)

Updates to Conservation Easements Strengthens Protection for Farmlands, Grasslands and Wetlands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the [final rule](#) for its [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), which enables agricultural producers and private landowners to protect farmlands, grasslands, and wetlands with conservation easements. The rule updates ACEP as directed by the 2018 Farm Bill and incorporates public comments made on an interim rule.

“Conservation easements are a critical conservation tool helping landowners sustain Oregon’s vital working landscapes and wetland ecosystems,” said Ron Alvarado, Oregon state conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). “These minor updates to the ACEP final rule are intended to improve processes that will help strengthen the impacts of our investments and continue to elevate protection of ecologically important lands in Oregon through voluntary conservation.”

ACEP is USDA’s premier conservation easement program, offering financial and technical assistance to help protect productive farm and ranch lands from conversion to other uses and to restore and protect the nation’s critical wetlands. It uses innovative conservation systems to support the restoration of wetland ecosystems and to protect working lands, helping to sequester carbon, trap sediment, and filter pollutants for clean water.

ACEP’s agricultural land easements (ALE) component assists state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and American Indian tribes that have farmland or grassland protection programs purchase conservation easements from eligible landowners. This helps protect the long-term viability of the nation’s food supply by preventing conversion of productive working farmland and grassland to non-agricultural uses or non-grassland uses.

The wetland reserve easements (WRE) component helps landowners restore and protect wetlands in agricultural landscapes that provide benefits, including increased wildlife habitat, improved water quality, reduced impacts from flooding, groundwater recharge, and more outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private and tribal landowners to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of these easements.

NRCS received more than 570 comments on the ACEP interim rule, which was published on January 6, 2020. Overall, comments expressed support for the changes made in the interim rule but requested some clarifications and additional changes. View the final rule on the Federal Register. The final rule responds to these comments and adopts the interim rule with minor changes, including:

Updates to ACEP:

- Revised the definitions for beginning farmer or rancher, eligible land, farm or ranch succession plan, future viability and maintenance to provide additional clarity, especially around succession planning.

Updates to ACEP Agricultural Land Easements:

- Incorporated priority into the ACEP-ALE ranking criteria for lands enrolled in the Transition Incentives Program under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP-TIP).
- Clarified the non-federal match requirements and added new types of costs that may be used to satisfy the non-federal match requirements.
- Modified one of the regulatory deed requirements to clarify the types of changes to the easement deed or easement area that must be approved in advance by NRCS.
- Updated the regulatory language describing the United States' inspection authority to reflect the existing right of enforcement language used in ACEP-ALE conservation easements, wherein NRCS provides the agricultural land easement holder and the landowner notice and a reasonable opportunity to participate in an inspection of the easement area.
- Revised the regulatory language to specify the minimum and maximum durations for ACEP-ALE agreements based on an eligible entity's certification status under ACEP-ALE.

Updates to ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements:

- Incorporated priority into the ACEP-WRE ranking criteria for lands enrolled in the CRP-TIP that are farmed wetland and adjoining land that has the highest wetland functions and values and is likely to return to production after the land leaves CRP.

NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked and funded during enrollment periods that are set locally.

[View the final rule on the *Federal Register*](#). For more information on how to sign up for ACEP in your state, visit your [NRCS Oregon's ACEP webpage](#) or contact your local [NRCS field office](#).

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