



## Wisconsin Farm Service Agency - July 2021

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## Important Announcements

### Dates to Remember:

- **July 5, 2021:** USDA Service Centers closed in Observance of Independence Day
- **July 12, 2021:** Start of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) [Grasslands Signup](#)
- **July 14, 2021:** NRCS Statewide [Virtual Local Working Group \(LWG\) Meeting](#)
- **July 15, 2021:** [Acreage Reporting](#) Deadline for Alfalfa and other perennial forages, Barley, Corn, CRP, Dry Beans, Forage Seeding, Grain Sorghum, Green Peas, Hemp, Mint, Oats, Onions, Pasture, Popcorn, Potatoes, Soybeans, Sweet Corn, Whole Farm Revenue Protections
- **July 21-23, 2021:** [Wisconsin Farm Technology Days](#) in Eau Claire County. Come visit the FSA booth!
- **July 23, 2021:** Deadline to submit offers for the CRP [General Signup](#)
- **Aug 2, 2021:** Last day to file Nomination Forms for the [2021 FSA County Committee Elections](#)

- **August 6, 2021:** Deadline to submit re-enrollment offers for the CRP [Continuous Signup](#), which includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers initiative signup (CLEAR30)

### **Pending Program Deadlines:**

[Coronavirus Food Assistance Program \(CFAP\)](#)

[American Rescue Plan Debt Payments](#)

### **Important Reminders for Acreage Reporting:**

- The July 15, 2021 Spring Crop Reporting Deadline is fast approaching!
- **Producers are reminded to report grazing acres to remain eligible for [disaster programs](#) such as the [Livestock Forage Program](#).**
- Please contact your local FSA office if you have questions on filing your acreage reports.

## **2021 USDA-NRCS Public Conservation Virtual Meeting Announced: Farmers, Landowners, Organizations, and Agencies Encouraged to Attend!**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin has announced one statewide virtual Local Working Group (LWG) meeting with a feedback survey to follow. The virtual meeting will be held **July 14, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.** Participants will be able to call into a teleconference line or join audio and video through an internet browser using a Microsoft Teams meeting link. Input gathered will help set priorities for U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs under the 2018 Farm Bill.

Wisconsin LWGs represent two or more counties grouped together by geography, similar land use, resources, and type of agriculture. [See a map of Local Working Groups](#). This will allow greater flexibility and access to funding for the groups.

One of the main programs discussed at the meeting will be the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a federal conservation program that helps agricultural producers in a manner that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP offers technical and financial assistance to help landowners with needed conservation practices for water quality, soil health, wildlife and other natural resources.

To join the virtual meeting choose one of the following options:

1. Teleconference: Call 1-636-352-2946, then type in access code 508714004# when prompted.
2. Video and audio through Microsoft Teams: Visit this site: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wi/newsroom/pnotice/> and then click on the Join Teams Meeting link at the top of the page. For more information on how to connect via desktop, laptop or mobile device, download these [step-by-step instructions](#).

Please take the LWG feedback survey after attending the meeting by July 30, 2021, by visiting <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wi/newsroom/pnotice/> and clicking on the survey link. A printed survey may also be requested by calling (608) 662-4422 or emailing your name and address to [april.ryan@usda.gov](mailto:april.ryan@usda.gov).

Local Working Group meetings are open to the public. Anyone interested in becoming a member in LWGs should contact their local [NRCS Service Center](#). Contact your local NRCS District Conservationist if you are interested in participating. For detailed information on local work groups, see [What are Local Working Groups](#).

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## USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program General and Grasslands Signups

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has set a **July 23, 2021**, deadline for agricultural producers and landowners to apply for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup 56. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications for CRP Grasslands from **July 12 to August 20, 2021**. This year, USDA updated both signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increase its conservation benefits, including reducing the impacts of climate change.

Both signups are competitive and will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

### General Signup

Through CRP, producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Lands enrolled in CRP also play a key role in mitigating impacts from climate change, and FSA has added a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for practices that sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

FSA is also adding a one-time "inflationary" adjustment for payment rates, as well as having more flexibility on adjusting soil rental rates.

FSA opened the [General Signup](#) in January 2021 and extended the original deadline to July 23, 2021, to enable producers to consider FSA's new improvements to the program.

### **Grasslands Signup**

[CRP Grasslands](#) helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and improves environmental quality.

FSA has updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of \$15 per acre, as well as new National Grassland Priority Zones.

### **How to Sign Up**

To enroll in the CRP General signup, producers and landowners should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) by the July 23 deadline. To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, they should contact USDA by the August 20 deadline. While USDA offices may have limited visitors because of the pandemic, Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. To work with FSA, producers and landowners should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Contact information can be found at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

### **More Information on CRP**

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary this past December.

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## **Wisconsin Producers Reminded to Complete Crop Acreage Reports**

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office 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 for Wisconsin:

- **July 15, 2021:** Alfalfa and other perennial forages, Barley, Corn, CRP, Dry Beans, Forage Seeding, Grain Sorghum, Green Peas, Hemp, Mint, Oats, Onions, Pasture, Popcorn, Potatoes, Soybeans, Sweet Corn
- **August 16, 2021:** Beans (all other types not listed), Cabbage

Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your local County FSA office to set up an in-person or phone appointment.

To file a crop acreage report, you will 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.

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

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

## Current FSA Loan Interest Rates

Current loan rates as of July 1, 2021

### Farm Loan Interest Rates:

Farm Operating - Direct	1.875%
Farm Operating - Microloan	1.875%
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.250%
Farm Ownership - Microloan	3.250%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss	2.875%

### Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL):

3-year FSFL	0.375%
5-year FSFL	0.750%
7-year FSFL	1.250%
10-year FSFL	1.500%
12-year FSFL	1.750%

Please visit the [Farm Loan Program](#) webpage for more information.

## Applying for Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

### Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above

- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

For help preparing the application forms, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

## Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for County Committee Members

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) began accepting nominations for county committee members on June 15. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by **Aug. 2, 2021**.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program, and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serving on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Producers serving on FSA county committees play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the agency. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

### More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election. They should check with their local USDA Service Center to see if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign a [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 1, 2021. To find your local USDA Service Center, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

# USDA to Invest \$5 Million in Wetland Mitigation Banks

The USDA is investing up to \$5 million in the Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP), a grant program that supports the development of mitigation banks for use by agricultural producers seeking to maintain eligibility for USDA programs. Funds are available to Tribes, government entities, nonprofits, and other organizations.

“Our goal is to make sure agricultural producers have the tools they need to successfully farm or ranch and conserve natural resources,” said Angela Biggs, State Conservationist in Wisconsin. “Wetlands are critical to our efforts to respond to the climate crisis, and wetland mitigation banks enable the restoration or creation of wetlands for the purpose of compensating for unavoidable impacts to wetlands at another location. The Wetland Mitigation Banking Program helps states, local governments, and other qualified partners restore, create, and enhance wetland ecosystems.”

To participate in most USDA programs, agricultural producers agree to comply with the wetland conservation provisions, which means producers will not farm converted wetlands or convert wetlands to enable agricultural production. In situations where avoidance or on-site mitigation is challenging, the Farm Bill allows for off-site mitigation through the purchase of mitigation banking credits.

## About the Wetland Mitigation Banking Program

NRCS awarded the first WBMP grants in 2016 and so far, has supported the creation or expansion of wetland mitigation banks in 11 states. So far, 21 wetland bank sites have been established through the program, totaling 313 acres. Several more sites have been secured and are in various stages of the restoration process. The 2018 Farm Bill provided an opportunity for funding for this program through fiscal 2023.

NRCS is prioritizing funds in states with large amounts of wetlands as well as large amounts of producers with wetland determination requests. This includes Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Awardees may use WMBP funding to support mitigation bank site identification, development of a mitigation banking instrument, site restoration, land surveys, permitting and title searches, and market research. WMBP funding cannot be used to purchase land or a conservation easement.

## Submitting Proposals

NRCS is accepting proposals through Grants.gov by **10:59 p.m. CT on August 16, 2021**.

## More Information

To learn more, visit the [WMBP webpage](#).

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