U.S. Department of Agriculture
Disaster Assistance and Other Resources
August 2024

Office of Congressional Relations
ocr@usda.gov | (202) 720-7095

Mission Area Fact Sheets:

Congressional Inquiries: OCR@usda.gov is the appropriate point of contact for any questions regarding USDA programs for yourself or your constituents. We are pleased to assist in directing you to the appropriate USDA departments.

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) should serve as the primary point of contact for all farmers and ranchers who may be impacted by a disaster. Below is a fact sheet with basic information on many of the Farm Service Agency programs producers should consider, depending on the specifics of their circumstances. The USDA encourages producers to look through the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool which can help producers identify the type of assistance they are looking for.

- *FACT SHEET:* https://www.farmers.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/farmersgov-disaster-assistance-brochure-07-21-2022.pdf
- Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool: https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery/disaster-tool

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can provide disaster assistance to farmers, ranchers, and communities through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Technical Assistance, and the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

- *FACT SHEET:* https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/disaster-recovery
- Natural Disaster Recovery Assistance: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/nrcs-natural-disaster-recovery-assistance-factsheet.pdf

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) provides innovative crop insurance products to America's farmers and ranchers. Approved Insurance Providers (AIP) sell and service Federal crop insurance policies in every state and in Puerto Rico through a public-private partnership with RMA. AIPs work crop insurance claims, and a producer's agent is the best point of contact in times of disaster. However, producers are free to reach out to RMA if they encounter any servicing issues or have questions.

- *FACT SHEET:* https://www.rma.usda.gov/Fact-Sheets/National-Fact-Sheets/Natural-Disasters-and-Crop-Insurance

Rural Development

While the primary contact for rural communities impacted by a disaster should be FEMA, Rural Development can provide support to homeowners, businesses and communities to aid in recovery and rebuilding. RD can be helpful in providing a long-term response to disasters—through repair to homes, essential community facilities and rural water systems.

- *FACT SHEET:* https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rd_disastertoolkit-final508.pdf

State Office Direct Contacts:

- FSA: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/about-fsa/fsa-biographies/state-executive-directors/index
- RD: https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/leadership/state-directors
    - Offices: https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/offices/state-offices

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- NRCS: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/state-offices
- RMA: Regional Offices | RMA (usda.gov)

Tips for USDA Casework:

- Always include a privacy release form with your inquiries. This enables USDA to provide the best assistance possible in any instance.
- If you or your constituent has follow-up questions once you receive a signed response, please include a new privacy release form, as it is considered a new case and will ensure the follow up questions are answered.
- For casework, a letter from a Member of Congress is not always necessary. Sending an email with a description of the issue with a privacy release form to OCR@usda.gov provides USDA with more options to respond, and those options can be faster than responding to a formal letter.
- OCR@usda.gov is the appropriate point of contact for any questions regarding USDA programs for yourself or your constituents. We are pleased to assist in directing you to the appropriate USDA departments.

Earmarks (Congressionally Directed Spending Requests)

If you have any questions about Congressionally Directed Spending, please see the following contacts:

- Community Facilities – https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/offices/state-offices
  - Additional information and requirements attached.
- Water & Environmental Programs – OCR@usda.gov
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – astrid.martinez@usda.gov
- Broadband – OCR@usda.gov
  - Please send contact information, project description, and application (materials submitted to appropriators) for the recipient.
- Agricultural Research Service – No contact needed.
- Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service
  - Plant Health & Diagnostics – sherry.l.parsons@usda.gov
  - Wildlife Projects – christina.m.taylor@usda.gov
  - Animal Health Projects – eric.balcerzak@usda.gov

Disaster Assistance Programs:

Emergency Watershed Protection Program
Mission Area: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Information Link: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ewp-emergency-watershed-protection

Description: Offers vital recovery options for local communities to help people reduce hazards to life and property caused by floodwaters, droughts, wildfires, earthquakes, windstorms, and other natural disasters. Project funds address erosion related watershed impairments by supporting activities such as removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges; reshaping and protecting eroded banks; correcting damaged drainage facilities; repairing levees and structures; and reseeding damaged areas. Sponsors must submit a formal request (via mail or email) to the 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, they should contact their local NRCS office.

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EWP Recovery Buyouts
Mission Area: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Information Link: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/emergency-watershed-protection-ewp-program-buyouts

Description: EWP Recovery Buyouts provide financial assistance to purchase properties impacted by flooding caused by a natural disaster by removing and relocating people and properties out of flood prone areas. Recovery Buyouts are used where structural solutions to reduce threats from flooding and erosion are not cost-effective and/or beneficial. Once NRCS determines that buying a flood prone property would provide the best option to protect against flooding and erosion, EWP provides financial assistance to a local sponsor to purchase the property and preserve the land for the purpose of restoring the natural environment.

NRCS may provide project sponsors up to 75 percent (and up to 90 percent for *limited resource areas*) of:
- the fair market value based on an appraisal for the property,
- eligible acquisition and relocation costs, and
- site restoration costs.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program
Mission Area: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Information Link: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/disaster-recovery

Description: The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can help producers plan and implement conservation practices on land impacted by natural disasters. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland. Practices can include:
- Immediate soil erosion protection
- Minimizing noxious and invasive plant proliferation
- Protecting water quality
- Restoring livestock infrastructure necessary for grazing management
- Emergency animal mortality management.

Technical Assistance for Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
Mission Area: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Information Link: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index

Description: The ECP is a disaster recovery program administered by the Farm Service Agency. Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), NRCS provides technical assistance (TA) directly or through an NRCS approved Technical Service Provider (TSP). The MOA provides for the implementation, cooperation, and responsibilities between NRCS and FSA in carrying out TA for ECP. In accordance with the FSA ECP Handbook Revision 7, Amendment 1, NRCS provides TA responsibility Restoring Conservation Structures and Other Installations. As agreed by NRCS and FSA leadership, NRCS will provide TA assistance for practices Grading, Shaping, Releveling, or Similar Measures, and Drought Emergency Measures. The Sate Executive Director (SED) and NRCS State Conservationist (STC) will determine and document additional ECP practices which NRCS will provide TA by:
- additional ECP practices for which NRCS will provide TA

- the format for which NRCS will provide a statement of actual costs incurred in providing TA, if considered necessary
- any other provision considered necessary by FSA State Office, State Technical Committee, or NRCS State Conservationist, that is consistent with and does not nullify any provision of the MOA.

Priority Housing Access for Displaced Households
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/mfh_priorityhousingdisplacedfactsheet.pdf

Description: Eligible FEMA registrants that are displaced by a Presidentially-declared disaster may receive priority placement in USDA Rural Development-financed multifamily housing properties. Priority access is available at USDA-financed properties anywhere in the US or its territories.

Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants in Presidentially Declared Disasters Pilot
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants-presidentially-declared-disasters-pilot

Description: This pilot program is available to eligible homeowners to repair damages to their home caused from Presidentially-declared disaster that occurred on or after July 18, 2022. The program expands on the §504 Home Repair Loans and Grants program by increasing the maximum grant to $15,000, allowing for certain costs incurred prior to the application, and moving a manufactured home onto the property.

Single Family Housing Rural Disaster Home Repair Grants
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-rural-disaster-home-repair-grants

Description: Established in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, this program is available to eligible homeowners to repair damages to their home caused from Presidentially-declared disaster that occurred in Calendar Year 2022. The program expands eligibility by increasing the income limit to "low-income" thresholds, increases the maximum grant to $42,920, removes the age restriction for grants and can include site preparation, moving manufactured homes and home repair expenses incurred prior to the application.

Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/emergency-community-water-assistance-grants

Description: This program helps eligible communities prepare, or recover from, an emergency that threatens the availability of safe, reliable drinking water. A presidential disaster declaration is not required. Water source projects may receive up to $1 million in grants, and water distribution projects may receive up to $150,000 in grants.

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Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grants
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/water-waste-disposal-loan-grant-program

Description: This program helps eligible communities finance drinking water systems, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and storm water drainage projects. Eligible applicants may also use Water & Waste Disposal Grant funds to meet the non-federal cost-share requirements of FEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs.

Calendar Year 2022 Disaster Water Grants Program
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/calendar-year-2022-disaster-water-grants-program

Description: Established in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, this program is available to help eligible rural communities pay expenses related to damages to rural water infrastructure caused from Presidentially-declared disasters that occurred in Calendar Year 2022. Water infrastructure projects include drinking water, wastewater, stormwater drainage and solid waste facilities. This program expands eligibility by increasing the population limit to 35,000.

Community Facilities Program Disaster Repair Grants
Mission Area: Rural Development
Information Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-program-disaster-repair-grants

Description: Established in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, this program is available to help repair essential community facilities in eligible rural areas that were damaged by Presidentially-declared disasters in Calendar Year 2022. Grants up to 75% can be used to repair facilities including damaged equipment or vehicles and purchase new equipment to repair damaged facilities. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 expanded eligibility to include projects damaged by Presidentially-declared disasters in Calendar Year 2023.

Nutrition Disaster Assistance
Mission Area: Food and Nutrition Service
Information Link: https://www.fns.usda.gov/da/disaster-assistance
Timeline Link: https://www.fns.usda.gov/da/timeline

Description: The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) coordinates with state, territory, tribal, and voluntary organizations to provide nutrition assistance to families and individuals affected by a disaster or emergency. USDA Foods are currently stored in every state and U.S. territory and may be used by state agencies or local disaster relief organizations to provide food to shelters or families/individuals who are sheltering in place. If retail food stores are operating in the impacted area, state agencies may request to operate a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). A state or U.S. territory may request additional disaster waiver flexibilities to assist existing SNAP households affected by a disaster to have their regular program benefits replaced if food purchased with benefits was destroyed. At the request of a state or U.S. territory and in the event of a Presidential Disaster Declaration for individual assistance, FNS may approve a waiver that allows SNAP households to purchase hot, prepared foods for immediate

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consumption for a period of time. In certain circumstances, FNS can also provide infant formula and food within 96 hours of a request by FEMA or a state agency.

Additional Resources:

- Index of Available FSA Disaster Assistance Programs
  - https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index
- Hub for RD Disaster Programs & Resources
  - https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/rural-development-disaster-assistance
- Veteran Small Business Certification
  - https://veterans.certify.sba.gov/
- National Minority Supplier Development Council Certification
  - https://nmsdc.org/certifications/certification-process/
- State by State FNS Disaster Assistance
  - https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/state-by-state
- Farmers.gov Email Update List
  - https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFARMERS/subscriber/new?