



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Approves Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance for All Counties in Mississippi?

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Additional conservation, farm loan and disaster recovery options available for drought-related tree loss ?

Jackson, Miss., April 15, 2024 — U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) today announced that all 82 Mississippi counties have been approved to accept applications for the [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) to address extensive private lands forest losses and damage due to severe drought and related insect infestation. The EFRP sign-up period runs from April 15, 2024, to Aug. 15, 2024.

EFRP is a cost-share program that provides financial and technical assistance to owners of nonindustrial private forestland (NIPF) to restore NIPF damaged by a qualifying natural disaster event. ??

“It’s important that producers apply for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program assistance promptly. Program funds will be allocated based on the number of applications received, as well as by on-site inspections that will determine the extent of the damage,” said Thaddeus Fairley, FSA State Executive Director in Mississippi. “I encourage eligible landowners who haven’t participated in FSA programs to contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible to establish farm records.” ?

After applications are received, local FSA county committees determine land eligibility using on-site damage inspections that assess the type and extent of damage and approve applications.?

Financial assistance is not provided upfront but is reimbursed, at no more than 75% of the lesser of the actual costs incurred or allowable cost, after a restoration activity is complete. If an EFRP application is approved, the participant is expected to perform restoration and conservation practices based on the FSA-848A Cost-Share Agreement and restoration plan provided.??

The following requirements for participation in EFRP include: ?

- Restoration must be completed to meet the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and/or state forestry agency technical standards.?
- Participants must document and keep records of all costs incurred, including costs associated with personal labor, to complete the restoration activities.??
- The minimum qualifying cost of restoration is \$1,000.?
- The program's payment limitation is \$500,000.?

In order to meet eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees.?

The land must also be owned or leased by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation, or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land.? ?

The natural disaster event must have resulted in damage that, if untreated, would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and/or materially affect future use of the land.?

Additional Assistance Available?

Landowners experiencing drought related losses, including pine decline, of eligible trees planted on [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) acres may be eligible for up to 50% cost-share, not to exceed the Mississippi state average cost, to rehabilitate and replant the trees. CRP program participants should contact the [Mississippi Forestry Commission](#) to request a site visit to assess losses and determine next steps. ?

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines. TAP complements the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes or vines is apparent.??

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary

or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low interest? [emergency loans](#)? to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs. Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.????

More Information?

?Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by [drought](#). Those resources include the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#).??

?For more information please [contact your local FSA county office](#) or visit [farmers.gov/recover](#).??

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