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Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Approves Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance for All Counties in Alabama

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

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Sept. 23, 2024 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that all 67 Alabama counties have been approved for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) to restore and rehabilitate private forest lands impacted by severe drought and related insect infestation damage. The EFRP signup period runs from September 30, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

EFRP is a performance-based, 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.

“It’s important that forest landowners who have trees impacted by drought and insect infestation, promptly apply for Emergency Forest Restoration Program assistance during the signup period. Program funds will be obligated to eligible applications based on on-site inspections to determine the extent of the damage and restore forest health,” said Clifton Warren, FSA State Executive Director in Alabama. “Eligible landowners who haven’t previously participated in FSA programs are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible to establish farm records.”

EFRP Participation Requirements

After EFRP applications are submitted, local FSA county committees determine land eligibility based on on-site inspections performed by a local forester who will assess the type and extent of damage, and the restoration activities needed to restore forest health. FSA will approve applications based on the onsite restoration need.

Financial assistance is not provided upfront. Cost-share 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 program participant is expected to perform restoration and conservation practices based on the FSA-848A *Cost-Share Agreement* and restoration plan provided. The minimum qualifying cost of restoration is \$1,000 and the EFRP payment limitation is \$500,000.

To participate in EFRP, eligible applicants must:

- Complete restoration to meet the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and/or state forestry agency technical standards.
- Document and keep records of all costs incurred to complete the restoration activities, including costs associated with personal labor.
- 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 a 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.

Eligible EFRP Restoration/Rehabilitation Practices

For eligible program participants who have approved applications, EFRP provides cost-share assistance for the following restoration and rehabilitation practices:

- Forest stand improvement - tree removal and thinning
- Woody residue treatment - woody slash and debris removal
- Site preparation for forest restoration
- Tree planting
- Prescribed burning and firebreaks
- Conservation structures, i.e. roads, stream crossing, fence

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 Alabama state average cost, to rehabilitate and replant the trees. CRP program participants should contact their FSA county office to determine next steps.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) 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

Learn more about EFRP in this [Farmers.gov blog](#) and the [EFRP factsheet](#). 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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