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## USDA Furthers President Biden’s Commitment to Wildfire Recovery with New Conservation Program Flexibilities

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**LAS VEGAS, N.M., Oct. 20, 2022,** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is waiving cost-share program requirements for agricultural producers and landowners impacted by the Hermit’s Peak and Calf Canyon Wildfire. As part of a broader effort by the Biden-Harris Administration to help with recovery made possible by the Continuing Resolution, USDA will offer a 100 percent cost share through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP), and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP).

“We understand the extent of damage the wildfire caused, and thanks to quick action by Congress, we’re able to deliver on President Biden’s commitment to help those impacted by the Hermit’s Peak and Calf Canyon Wildfire,” said Robert Bonnie, USDA’s Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. “Producers who are approved for cost-share assistance will have the cost of practices fully covered.”

These waivers are part of a broader request for assistance made by New Mexico leaders in response to the wildfire. On Oct. 13, Bonnie and other USDA officials attended a field tour and roundtable meeting organized by New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan’s office. Other USDA attendees included Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Homer Wilkes, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby, and U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore.

### **Assistance for Agricultural Producers**

NRCS provides financial and technical assistance in the recovery process by assisting producers with planning and implementing conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. EQIP can assist with financial incentive payments to implement conservation practices addressing natural resource concerns. Long-term damage from wildfires includes forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased wind erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices. Additional details will be provided regarding eligible areas and practices for the 100 percent cost share.

Meanwhile, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers ECP and EFRP that can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance for recovery practices like replacing or restoring fences, removing debris, and planting materials and labor to replant forest stands. Producers interested in applying for ECP and EFRP assistance should contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible for program details including eligibility requirements. For both ECP and EFRP, there is a \$500,000 payment limitation per program and per disaster event.

To increase access to forage for wildfire-impacted producers, FSA recently authorized Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants in New Mexico and Colorado an extended emergency use window to hay and graze certain CRP acres to provide much-needed forage access to grazing lands for livestock producers in San Miguel and Mora counties in New Mexico. Details are outlined in FSA's Sept. 29, 2022 [news release](#).

### **Assistance for Communities**

NRCS previously announced that over \$133 million of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding was used to [cover 100 percent of the cost of post-wildfire recovery efforts in communities](#) impacted by the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon wildfire. NRCS, in cooperation with local sponsors, will use [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\) program](#) BIL funds to implement much-needed aerial seeding — a successful post-wildfire conservation practice that helps reduce soil erosion, restore ground cover and establish native plant species.

### **More Information**

Producers interested in EQIP, ECP and EFRP should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#) to apply for cost-share assistance. Similarly, communities interested in EWP recovery should contact the NRCS at their local Service Center.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Wildfire Recovery](#) webpage [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America.

To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://usda.gov).

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