

## Farm Service Agency in California is Accepting Emergency Conservation Program Applications

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U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Blong Xiong today announced that 41 counties in California are accepting applications for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to address damages from the recent severe storm to eligible farmland, fences, and conservation structures/other installations. ECP signup will begin on February 13th, 2023, and end on April 14th, 2023.

The approved ECP practices under this authorization include debris removal, grading, shaping & leveling, fence restoration & restoring conservation structures & other installations. The use of ECP funds is limited to activities to return the land to the relative pre-disaster condition. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.

Counties approved for ECP: Alameda, Colusa, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Ventura, Yolo and Yuba.

ECP assists producers with the recovery cost to restore the farmland to pre-disaster conditions. Approved ECP applicants may receive up to 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration measures. Eligible socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 90 percent of the eligible cost of restoration. No one is eligible for more than \$500,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence.

Cost share assistance has now been authorized to:

- provide advance payments, up to 25% of the cost, for all ECP practices before the restoration is carried out, an option that was previously only available for fence repair or replacement. The cost-share payment must be spent within 60 days; and

- allow producers who lease Federally owned or managed lands, including tribal trust land, as well as State land the opportunity to participate.

To be eligible for assistance, practices must not be started until all the following are met:

- an application for cost-share assistance has been filed
- the local FSA County Committee (COC) or its representative has conducted an onsite inspection of the damaged area
- the Agency responsible for technical assistance, such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), has made a needs determination, which may include cubic yards of material moved, etc., required for rehabilitation

Producers with damage from such events must apply for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. FSA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review process is required to be completed before any actions are taken. Submitting an application after reconstructive work has been completed may impact eligibility for ECP.

For more information on ECP, please contact your local FSA office or visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover). To find your local FSA office visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

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