



Emergency Haying and Grazing

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorized CRP. The program is also governed by regulations published in 7 CFR Part 1410. The program is implemented by FSA on behalf of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation. More detailed information on CRP is available in the FSA fact sheet, “Conservation Reserve Program” or by visiting www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing of CRP acres is authorized under certain conditions to improve the quality and performance of the CRP cover or to provide emergency relief to livestock producers due to certain natural disasters. There are two types of haying and grazing authorization: managed and emergency.

PRIMARY NESTING SEASON

Generally, CRP acres may not be hayed or grazed during the Primary Nesting Season for certain wildlife established by state FSA committees in consultation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee. A map of Primary Nesting Seasons is

found at www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Conservation/PDF/mapnesting062013.pdf.

EMERGENCY HAYING AND GRAZING

Emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disaster. Emergency authorization is provided by either a national FSA office authorization or by a state FSA committee determination utilizing the U.S. Drought Monitor.

GENERAL AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

Requests for emergency haying and grazing are initiated at the county level with review and approval at the state and national FSA offices. County eligibility is based on a county FSA committee request documenting a 40 percent or greater loss in normal hay and pasture production and either:

- For drought conditions, an average of 40 percent or greater loss of normal precipitation for the four most recent months plus the days in the current month before the date of request; or
- For excessive moisture conditions, an average of 140 percent or greater increase in normal precipitation during the four most recent consecutive months plus the days in the current month before the date of request.

Emergency haying or grazing is limited to the acres physically located within the boundary of the eligible county or portion of a county. Under this authority, acres will only be authorized for a specified time and may end earlier than announced if conditions improve.

**STATE FSA COMMITTEE
DETERMINATION (DROUGHT ONLY)**

County FSA committees may request emergency haying or grazing outside the primary nesting season for all or part of a county from the state FSA committee using the U.S. Drought Monitor. The state FSA committee may generally approve emergency haying and grazing on a county-by-county basis if the county is designated as level "D2 Drought - Severe" according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The U.S. Drought Monitor is available online at <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>.

Under this state committee determination, emergency **haying** is authorized for a single period through Aug. 31. Emergency **grazing** is authorized for a single period through Sept. 30.

ELIGIBLE ACRES

Acres eligible for emergency haying and grazing includes acres devoted to the following practices: CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP10, CP18B, CP18C and CP38 if included in the approved State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) proposal.

INELIGIBLE ACRES

Acres ineligible for emergency haying and grazing includes acres devoted to:

- Useful life easements;
- Land within 120 feet of a stream or other permanent water body; and
- The following practices: CP3, CP3A, CP5A, CP9, CP11, CP12, CP15A, CP15B, CP17A, CP21, CP22, CP24, CP25, CP29, CP30, CP31, CP32, CP33, CP35A-I, CP36, CP38 in certain states, CP39, CP40 and CP42.

MODIFIED CONSERVATION PLAN

Before CRP acres are declared eligible for haying or grazing, a modified conservation plan developed by NRCS or a technical service provider must be obtained. The modified conservation plan must be site specific, include the authorized duration and reflect local wildlife needs and concerns. The

primary purpose must be to maintain vegetative cover, minimize soil erosion and protect water quality and wildlife habitat quality.

FILE REQUEST BEFORE STARTING

CRP participants requesting emergency or managed haying and grazing must file a request with their county FSA office indicating the acres to be hayed or grazed before the activity begins.

REQUIRED PAYMENT REDUCTION

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill) repealed the payment reduction for 2014 and future years. CRP participants approved for emergency haying or grazing after Feb. 7, 2014, will not be assessed a payment reduction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For more information about CRP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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- 2) *fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
- 3) *email: program.intake@usda.gov.*

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