

**Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Report To  
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board  
April 11, 2019  
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



**Natural Disaster Recovery Assistance  
Through the Emergency Watershed  
Protection (EWP) Program**

EWP is designed to install recovery measures to safeguard lives and property as a result of a natural disaster.

Watershed impairments that the EWP Program addresses include debris-clogged stream channels, scoured or eroded bridges, and undermined and/or unstable streambanks that pose an imminent threat to public infrastructure (i.e.: bridges, county roads, etc.).



Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but all project must be sponsored by a legal subdivision of the State. This includes city, county, general improvement district, conservation district or Native American tribe or tribal organization. Sponsors are responsible for:

- Providing land rights to do repair work,
- Securing all necessary permits,
- Furnishing the local cost share,
- Implementation of work, and
- Operation and maintenance of the completed project.

Generally, NRCS will pay up to 75 percent of the restoration costs, and the sponsor is responsible for the remaining balance of funding needs, which can include in-kind support. Sponsors have 60 days from the disaster occurrence to request Federal assistance.

Potential sponsors seeking assistance through EWP should work with their local USDA service center.



## **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)**

The Emergency Conservation Program, administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency, provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and to implement emergency water conservation measures in period of severe drought.

Cost-share payments are up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved restoration practices; up to 90 percent if limited resource producers; and limited to \$200,000 per person or legal entity.

Eligible Practices include:

- Debris removal from farmland (cleanup of woody material, sand, rock and trash on cropland or pastureland);
- Grading, shaping or leveling land (filling gullies, releveling irrigated farmland and incorporating sand and silt);
- Restoring fences (livestock cross fences, boundary fences, cattle gates or wildlife exclusion fence from agricultural land);
- Restoring conservation structures (terraces, waterways, diversion ditches, buried irrigation mainlines and permanently installed ditching system); and
- Providing emergency water during periods of severe drought (grazing and confined livestock and existing irrigation systems for orchards and vineyards).



## **EQIP LIVESTOCK MORTALITY INITIATIVE**

Through the EQIP Livestock Mortality Initiative, farmers and ranchers can apply for assistance to properly dispose of livestock lost during the blizzard/flooding. Applications are being accepted now through May 1. Additional application cutoff dates may be announced if there is demand and available funding.

EQIP can also provide long-term support to repair livestock fencing and install conservation practices to reduce erosion and improve soil health. NRCS is taking applications and encourage interested landowners to contact their local office for more information.



## **USDA Announces Sign-Up Period for Conservation Stewardship Program**

The deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year 2019 is May 10, 2019.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest up to \$700 million for new enrollments and contract extensions in fiscal year 2019. The 2018 Farm Bill made several changes to this critical conservation program, which helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm or ranch to the next level. It is the largest conservation program in the United States with more than 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled.

CSP is a popular program for Nebraska's ag producers. Over 5.6 million acres are currently under contract in Nebraska. In 2018, over 550 farmers and ranchers enrolled over 1.3 million acres into CSP.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 10, 2019, to ensure their applications are considered for 2019 funding.

CSP provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe.



Chase Wickard has accepted the biologist position in Blair, NE. Chase will be working on wetland determinations through out the state. We welcome Chase to our team. He started in Blair on April 1.

# CONSERVATION

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