

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
May 9, 2019
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



Funds Available to Plant Severely Weather Damaged Acres to Cover Crops

To help manage cropland damaged by Nebraska's severe spring weather, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing funds to plant cover crops on cropland acres. Producers are encouraged to apply at their local USDA Service Center by May 17, 2019, for the first window or by June 21, 2019, for the second window.

This funding will address resource concerns like erosion and water quality, resulting directly from the March 2019 severe weather damage on cropland acres. Cover crops are an excellent way to provide protection to cropland after conservation work has been completed. Cover crops can stabilize the soil and improve soil health. The highest priority cropland includes land which is unable to be planted with a cash crop and/or harvested in 2019.

Work currently being done to maintain conservation structures as well as sediment removal, debris removal or grading and reshaping can be stabilized and protected from further erosion and damage by planting a cover crop.



Deadline Extended to Apply for Funds from USDA to Help with Livestock Mortality

Ag producers now have until July 1 to apply for funding to help properly dispose of livestock killed by blizzard/flooding.

Nebraska farmers and ranchers impacted by the "Bomb Cyclone" and raging flood waters this spring are working hard on cleaning up and assessing the damages to their ag operations.

One of the more significant losses experienced by landowners has been the death of livestock. NRCS has financial assistance available to help landowners cope with the aftermath of livestock losses.

Producers who have not already disposed of livestock can apply for EQIP now. Producers can then get a waiver to allow them to begin working to dispose of deceased livestock before having an approved EQIP contract.



Request USDA Assistance to Protect Infrastructure Damaged by March Blizzard/Flooding

Assistance Request Deadline is May 20, 2019

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska is accepting requests for assistance through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program to address watershed impairments resulting from the March “Bomb Cyclone” and associated flooding. Requests for assistance must be submitted to the NRCS State Conservationist in Nebraska by May 20, 2019.

EWP is designed to install recovery measures to safeguard lives and property because of a natural disaster. NRCS has teams out now completing damage survey reports. These reports help us understand the extent of the damage and the amount of funding needed for recovery work.”

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.).

EWP work is completed through a local project sponsor. EWP project sponsors must be a legal subdivision of state government such as a city, county, state agency, town, or a federally-recognized American Indian tribe or tribal organization.

Generally, NRCS will pay up to 75 percent of the restoration costs. The project sponsor is responsible for the remaining balance of funding needs, which can include in-kind support. It’s important to note that any recovery measures already implemented by the sponsor or in process by the sponsor would not be eligible for reimbursement.



Source: Manhattan Plant Materials Center.

Eastern Red Cedar, making it a friend instead of foe

Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana* L.) has a love/hate relationship with most land owners and managers in the Great Plains region. It's success as an evergreen component in windbreaks is unprecedented due to its ability to grow in low water environments and across a wide range of soil textures and pH conditions. Eastern red cedar (ERC) provides valuable food, shelter and nesting habitat to numerous wildlife species including songbirds like the cedar waxwing and the popular game bird, the ring-neck pheasant, in addition to providing cover for small and large mammals. The windbreaks that ERC form reduces wind erosion on crop fields, protect livestock and farmsteads against the relentless wind common to the Great Plains, and prevent roadways from becoming unpassable due to drifting snow. For all these positive attributes, ERC does have a significant downside, namely how easily it spreads from seed. The invasion of ERC into rangeland is often so severe that ecological and economic thresholds are crossed, in fact from the period of 1965 to 2005, the volume of ERC in the US has increased approximately 23,000%.

The silver lining to this scenario is ERC is a dioecious species, which means it has distinct male and female plants. Using tightly controlled propagation techniques, cuttings are taken from male ERC specimens and adventitious rooting is initiated in a greenhouse setting. These rooted cuttings are used in conservation plantings without fear of introducing another seed source for your next ecological nightmare. The Manhattan, Kansas Plant Materials Center (KSPMC) is working

with the Kansas State Forest Service (KSFS) to evaluate and optimize this alternative method of ERC seedling production. To date, the KSFS has studied the effects of plant growth regulators to improve rooting success by varying the concentrations and combinations of the plant growth regulators. The KSPMC is comparing establishment success of the male cuttings to standard nursery stock and tracking the ability of the rooted cuttings to overcome plagiotropism (lateral growth inherited from the parent plant cutting). The survival rate is similar for the rooted cuttings compared to the standard nursery stock seedlings.

For more information contact the [Manhattan Plant Materials Center](#).



As a side note to this promising study, the KSPMC is well pleased with the success of the solar powered electric fence deer deterrent system to protect the ERC planting. Previous woody plant studies at the KSPMC were often impacted by deer rubs and browsing of young trees and shrubs, which severely damages the plantings or in some cases, destroys them. This ERC study is enclosed inside of a two-wire electric fence with a separate single strand of high visibility electric tape about three feet inside of the main fence. The fence within a fence arrangement fools the depth perception of deer and they perceive the fence is too tall to jump over. This fencing strategy is often used for whitetail deer herds to prevent them from over browsing food plot plantings until the plants are large enough to withstand browsing. As of this date, no deer damage has been observed in the study.

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