

Knox County Ag News

May/June 2021



All programs and services are offered regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Cover Crop Program Renewed for 2021

The Knox SWCD is pleased to announce that the Muskingum Basin Cover Crop Initiative Program that has been popular the last several years will be renewed in 2021. Program guidelines remain basically unchanged for the 2021 cropping season. Growers may enroll up to 200 acres with an expected cost-share rate of **\$12.00** an acre for the establishment of a cover crop. Eligible cover crop types include a wide variety of small grain, grass, legume and brassicas. All cropland is eligible for submission, but priority scoring will be directed toward more sloping ground that will be in corn for silage and/or soybeans. Scoring for program eligibility will be based on a field by field assessment. Growers are urged to provide specific USDA Farm and/or Tract numbers as well as field numbers with their application. The application forms and agreements can be obtained by contacting the Knox SWCD office.

New applicants **that have not participated in the program before** can qualify for an extra \$3.00 per acre making the total per/acre incentive \$15.

For further program details, or to sign up for the program contact Rob Clendening at the SWCD office at 740-393-6724. The local application submission deadline is **Friday, June 18th.**

Reminder to Schedule No-Till Drills for Spring Planting

As usual the SWCD has available one 10' Truax no-till drill suitable for warm season grass establishment, and 2 10' John Deere 1590 drills with grass-seed attachments. The John Deere no-till drills may be used for hay, small grain and soybean plantings. **A rental agreement must be signed before the drills can be used. For your convenience we can mail these out to you in advance. Please contact the office for a copy if you think you will be utilizing the equipment.** All drills rent for \$10.00 an acre; the renter is responsible for reporting equipment acres and transport to and from the field. For more details on rental, tractor requirements, or operation of the drills you may contact the SWCD office at 393-6724.

USDA Open enrollment for CRP

USDA will open enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with higher payment rates, new incentives, and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. Additionally, USDA is announcing investments in partnerships to increase climate-smart agriculture, including \$330 million in 85 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects and \$25 million for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials. Read More on page 13.



Landowners Should Consider Enrollment in Agricultural District Program

Many local landowners confuse Agricultural Districts with the more widely utilized Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) Program, there is some justification for that confusion. Both programs are administered by the Knox County Auditor, and, the criteria for enrollment are the same for both programs. But that is about where the similarities stop.

CAUV is a property tax reduction program aimed at making sure that agricultural land is taxed at its agricultural production value and not the full market value. To be eligible for CAUV, tracts must be in agricultural use and be either 10 acres or more in size (not including an allowance for a home or other buildings), or generate an average annual gross income of \$2,500 or more in agricultural sales. The tax savings benefits for land enrolled in the program are considerable. There is however a caveat and that is that there is a “recoupment” fee of what amounts to 3 years of the difference in savings for ground that drops out of the program. CAUV is therefore best suited for ground that is intended to have more of a “long-term” commitment to agricultural production.

Agricultural Districts on the other hand, while having the same criteria for enrollment, provide none of the tax benefits of the CAUV Program. There are also no penalties for withdrawal from the program. *So why bother with signing up my ground as an Agricultural District?* Simple really, the Agricultural District law was designed to help farmland withstand the pressures of development. Ground enrolled in the program has additional protection against assessments for the construction of utilities such as water, sewer, and electric lines. The program also provides protection against nuisance law suits (although not against actions brought because of water pollution issues) and requires additional review in the case of a land taking via eminent domain. Revisions to the law in 2019 also strengthened nuisance protections for agricultural activities on land devoted exclusively to agricultural use in accordance with section 5713.30 of the Revised Code, which is Ohio’s Current Agricultural Use Valuation Program (CAUV), and, agricultural activities conducted by a person pursuant to a lease agreement, written or otherwise.

The program is just one more “tool” in the box for helping to protect agricultural land here in Knox County. Sign up for the program is really quite easy, simply stop by the Knox County Auditors office, there is a quick form to fill out and a small fee applies. Be sure that you are specific in asking for an enrollment form for the “Agricultural District” program when you sign up.



Manure Spreading Setback Guidelines Change with Operation Size Status

Utilization of poultry litter/manure as a fertilizer source instead of traditional manufactured fertilizer has become an increasingly popular option in Knox County. Until recently, we had two different standards for manure application guidelines that were dependent on whether or not an operation was permitted as a Large Confined Animal Feeding Facility “Large CAFF” through the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Essentially, the guidelines for non-permitted facilities were just recommendations for best management practices. Many of our local broiler producers, and the manure they marketed, previously fell into that category.

HOWEVER, due to recent changes with many of these operations the manure application and stockpiling setback standards have now become “rules” that must be followed. If you are applying, or purchasing, manure from an operation that is large enough to meet the Large CAFF definition in the Ohio Revised Code, even if they have not yet obtained their permit, then the setback distances in the following chart must be followed. Manure from smaller operations may still be applied according to the older best management practice recommendations.

If you have questions about manure application or stockpiling setbacks you can contact the Knox SWCD office at 740-393-6724.

	1	2	3	4
	Staging Areas and Stockpiles (10)	Surface Application	Winter Applications Frozen or Snow Covered Ground (1)	Surface Incorporation within 24 Hours OR Direct Injection
Class V wells and sinkholes	300'	300'	300'	100'
Surface Waters of the State (7)	300'	35' veg. cover, 100' (2)	35' veg. cover, 200' (8)	35' veg. cover, 100' (2)
Wells	300'	300'	300'	100'
Bedrock	> 3' from bedrock	none	none	none
Public Surface Drinking Water Intake	1500'	300'	300'	300'
Springs	300'	300'	300'	300'
Neighboring residences	500'	300'	300'	100'
Flooding, Flood Plains, and Floodways (3)	do not stockpile	do not apply	do not apply	permissible (3)
Slope (4)	0-6%	if >15% see (5)	if > 6% see (1)	if >15% (5)
Field Surface Furrows (6)	300'	35' veg. cover 100' (2) or 35' (9)	200'	none
Maximum Application Rate	Liquid Manure- Based on Appendix B (AWC Chart) & Appendix F (Most Limiting Nutrient Chart). Solid Manure - Based on Appendix F (Most Limiting Nutrient Chart).			



Knox SWCD Board Searching for Candidates

This December the Knox Soil and Water Conservation District will elect **Two** Supervisors to the SWCD Board to fill terms that expires in 2021. If you are interested in helping to promote resource conservation here in Knox County we would love to hear from you!

The Knox Soil and Water Conservation District Board is the five-member governing body for the SWCD. Members are elected to staggered three year terms, serve as volunteers (without pay, but travel expenses etc. are covered) and are granted specific powers under chapter 940 of the Ohio Revised Code.

If you are interested in exploring candidacy for the SWCD Board simply contact any of the current SWCD Board members. Or, if you would prefer you may contact Rob Clendening at the SWCD office at 393-6724.

Call before you dig!

The Knox SWCD would like to remind all of our customers that the countryside is covered with utility easements and right-of-ways that provide access for the various necessities that we all have come to appreciate. As construction season approaches be sure check on the location of this important public infrastructure any time you are contemplating an excavation.

Whether digging a hole for a fence post, fixing tile lines, or building a grassed waterway or farm pond, Ohio law requires that you call the Ohio Utilities Protection Service to check on the location of buried utilities. A simple call to **811** will

alert companies with buried lines in your area of your intentions and the need to mark utility locations. Be prepared to provide the operator with the type of excavation being performed, the extent of the activity, and an exact location or address. Remember, call before you dig, it could save your life!



Field Borders Allow Farms to Filter, Clean Water & Provide Homes for Wildlife

Sometimes in a quest for bigger harvests, producers put every inch of land to work. But more land for crops or pastures doesn't always lead to bigger yields. It's best to use land for its greatest purpose, enabling more than a traditional yield. One common way producers do this through conservation is field borders. Field borders are managed strips of grass or legumes, sometimes mixed with shrubs, on the edge of cropland fields that reduce erosion, promote wildlife and improve environmental quality.

For more information, contact your [local County USDA Service Center](#) or visit nrcs.usda.gov.



Know the Facts About Orphaned and Injured Wildlife

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A baby bird has tumbled from its nest. A young white-tailed deer is discovered at the base of a tree. A nest of immature rabbits calls a suburban yard home. These are all common situations Ohioans experience when wildlife reproduction peaks in the spring, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. Each situation has a natural solution, and professional intervention should remain a last resort.

It's important to remember that wildlife parents are devoted to their young and rarely abandon them. A young wild animal's best chance for survival is with its mother. Most wildlife taken in by people other than trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitators do not survive. In many cases, a young animal collected by a person is not lost or abandoned but was simply waiting for a parent to return.

Many species are raised by only one parent (usually the mother) who cannot be in two places at once. This means that baby wildlife must be left alone several times during the day, or even most of the time while the mother ventures off to find food for herself and her young. In the case of white-tailed deer, a doe will hide her young from predators by leaving it alone in a secluded spot, such as a grassy meadow or a flower bed. A hidden fawn has virtually no scent, and when left alone, it is difficult for predators to find it. The doe is usually nearby and will tend to the fawn during the night.

Baby birds that have fallen from their nests are among the most common encountered wildlife species removed from the wild by humans. Contrary to popular belief, human scent will not prevent the parents from returning to care for their young. Individuals should return a baby bird back to its nest and walk away so the parents can continue to feed it without fear of humans.

If you see open wounds or other injuries, or you know in fact that a young wild animal has lost its parent, research solutions before taking any action. Specific guidance on how to best help commonly encountered wildlife species is available on wildohio.gov.

State and federal laws protect and regulate wildlife in Ohio, and only trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitators, with permits issued by the Division of Wildlife, may possess and care for native wildlife. These laws are in place for the benefit of humans as well as wild animals.

To further protect young and vulnerable wild animals, keep pets under control so they do not raid nests or cause injuries. Remember to keep pets inoculated against parasites and diseases. Always check for nests before cutting down trees or clearing brush. It is best to cut trees and clear brush in the autumn when nesting season is finished. Teach children to respect wildlife and their habitat by observing wildlife from a distance.



Contact a local wildlife official before acting. Call 800-WILDLIFE (945-3543) or visit wildohio.gov to connect with the proper individuals and to learn more about species-specific guidance. Human intervention is always a wild animal's last hope for survival, never its best hope.

Good intentions can hurt. Keep wildlife in the wild.

The mission of the Division of Wildlife is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. Visit wildohio.gov to find out more.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.gov.



Plant Spotlight!

By: Brian Hackett

Perennial –

Narrowleaf Mountainmint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*)

Talk about a pollinator magnet! This is a great native perennial wildflower that does well in many different kinds of soils including clay and rocky soils. An erect, many-branched, herbaceous perennial that grows 2-3' tall and features narrow leaves and profuse terminal clusters of small, white flowers which bloom in mid to late summer. All parts of the plant emit a strong, mint-like aroma when crushed. *Pycnanthemums* have been used in teas. It is easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Mints can be vigorous and sometimes aggressive growers, so use it in an area where you don't mind some spreading or divide it in the dormant season



Shrub –

American hazel (*Corylus americana*)

This native shrub is a great shrub for woodland edges and natural hedges. Hazel is easily grown in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. This rounded, multi-stemmed shrub typically grows 8-16' tall. In spring, male flowers appear in showy, yellowish brown catkins and female flowers appear in small, reddish, inconspicuous catkins. Female flowers give way to small, egg-shaped, 1/2" long, edible nuts (maturing July-August). Highly attractive to wildlife, the nuts are eaten by squirrels, foxes, deer, northern bobwhite, ruffed grouse, turkey, woodpeckers and pheasants. The dense, low growth habit provides cover and nesting sites for birds and other wildlife. It hosts numerous Lepidoptera, including Polyphemus and lo moths.



Tree –

Wild Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Wild black cherry, or simply black cherry, is a keystone tree species for us here in Ohio. They are second only to oaks in terms of the number of Lepidoptera that they host, 381 species! Easily grown in average, medium, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. It is one of the largest of the cherries, typically growing to 50-80' tall. It is perhaps most noted for its profuse spring bloom, attractive summer foliage and fall color.





Weather and herbicides – what to do (or not) this week

Source: Dr. Mark Loux, OSU

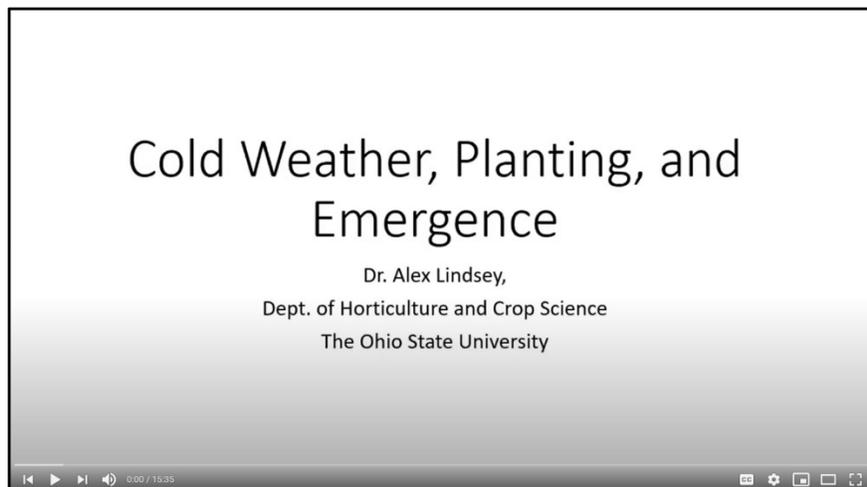
While this article was originally written for the week of April 19, the information will still apply for any additional cold snaps we get throughout the planting season.

Current forecast is for fairly warm temperatures through late evening Tuesday evening, followed by a substantial drop in temperatures and chance of snow, followed by cold/cool temperatures through the weekend. Primary question concerning this scenario seems to be whether it is okay to apply wheat or burndown herbicides prior to this cold snap. Some things we know about herbicides and cold weather:

- Herbicides applied to an emerged crop just prior to or during cold weather may be more injurious compared with favorable weather conditions. During cold weather when plants are not actively growing or growing slowly, the rate of translocation and metabolism of herbicide by the plant slows down, which can mean an accumulation of herbicide that is not being metabolized. This can increase the risk of crop injury since metabolism of herbicide by the crop, or conversion to an inactive form, is what allows that herbicide to be safely used on the crop in the first place. For some herbicides, there is such a large margin of safety with regard to crop safety that this is all inconsequential. For others the margin is narrower and issues such as cold weather and sprayer overlaps are more important. The inclusion of safeners in herbicide formulations reduces the risk of injury, usually by increasing the rate of metabolism, but may not completely solve issues that arise because of adverse weather or too high a dose. So with regard to this week and risk of injury to wheat, we would recommend avoid applying herbicide once the cold weather starts (from Wednesday on), until warm weather resumes.

Read more at <https://u.osu.edu/knoxcountyag/agricultural-news/>

Cold Weather Impact on Corn and Soybean Planting and Emergence



View video at <https://u.osu.edu/knoxcountyag/agricultural-news/>



Soil Moisture & Corn Seed Depth

Source: Bob Nielsen, Purdue Univ.

Bottom Line: Uniformly adequate soil moisture at seeding depth is important for assuring rapid and uniform germination of a newly planted corn crop. Take time to assess soil moisture at your selected seed depth on the day of planting. If soil moisture is not available or unevenly available at your normal seeding depth, then consider planting deeper than normal if soil moisture is available at those deeper settings.

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Choice of seeding depth for corn is often paid scant attention by growers during the rush of planting their crop. Human nature being what it is, we tend to simply leave the planter's depth control setting at the same position as it was in previous years. While it is true that a seeding depth of 1.5 to 2 inches is a fairly all-purpose range that works well in most situations, certain conditions merit more attention to seeding depth, the most common factor being soil moisture.

Read more at <https://u.osu.edu/knoxcountyag/agricultural-news/>

Nutrient Removal for Field Crops in Ohio

Source: Harold Watters, OSU Extension

An update for nutrient recommendations for Ohio's major field crops (corn, soybean, wheat, and alfalfa) was published in 2020 as the Tri-State Fertilizer Recommendations for Corn, Soybean, Wheat, and Alfalfa. This fact sheet builds on that information, and expands it to include recommendations for other agronomic crops grown in Ohio.

Read more at: <https://u.osu.edu/knoxcountyag/agricultural-news/>

**from one state value.*

¹ *Tri-State Fertilizer Recommendations for Corn, Soybean, Wheat, and Alfalfa*

² *Forages/hay is presented as 10% moisture content except where noted.*

Table 1. Regional averages of nutrient removal in harvested portions of agronomic crops.

Crop	Average nutrient removal			
	Unit	N	P ₂ O ₅	K ₂ O
Grains				
Barley (grain)	lb/bu	0.94	0.39	0.51
Barley (straw)	lb/ton	14.7	3.4	48.7
Buckwheat	lb/bu	1.12	0.22	0.23
Canola	lb/bu	2.35	0.76	0.58
Corn ¹	lb/bu		0.35	0.20
Millet (grain)	lb/bu	1.18	0.27	0.28
Oats	lb/bu	0.65	0.36	0.44
Oat (straw)	lb/ton	14.2	3.7	51.0
Rye (grain)	lb/bu	4.72	0.48	0.60
Rye (straw)	lb/ton	11.3	3.1	22.9
Grain sorghum	lb/bu	0.92	0.39	0.39
Soybean ¹	lb/bu		0.80	1.15
Spelt	lb/bu	0.98	0.27	0.25*
Sunflower	lb/cwt	2.66	0.92	1.06
Wheat (grain) ¹	lb/bu		0.50	0.25
Wheat (straw) ¹	lb/ton		3.70	29.0
Forages²		N	P₂O₅	K₂O
Alfalfa ¹ 100%DM	lb/ton		12	49
Legume hay	lb/ton	47.5	10.7	41.0
Legume-grass hay	lb/ton	39.0	12.0	40.3
Cool-season grass hay	lb/ton	35.4	12.0	48.1
Corn stover	lb/ton	18.9	6.3	32.6
Corn silage ¹ 35%DM	lb/ton		3.1	7.3
Sudan/Sorghum-sudangrass hay	lb/ton	30.7	9.4	45.1
Sudan/Sorghum-sudangrass silage	lb/ton	36.1	12.5	57.6



2020 eFields Report

High quality, relevant information is key to making the right management decisions for your farm. The eFields program at The Ohio State University was created to provide local information about critical issues for Ohio agriculture. The 2020 eFields Research Report highlights 218 on-farm (6 from Knox County), field scale trials conducted in 39 Ohio counties. Research topics included nutrient management, precision crop management, cover crops, and forages. Other information about crop production budgets, planting progress, and farm business analysis was also included. New in 2020 was the addition of soil health and water quality trials.



The 2020 report is now available in both a print and e-version. To receive a printed copy, stop by the Knox County Extension office. The e-version can be viewed and downloaded at go.osu.edu/eFields with the online version readable using a smartphone or tablet device.

Visiting Raptors

By Kay Everett, Knox County Master Gardener

I have one of the few properties in my neighborhood that is still a wooded lot. I am also surrounded by vacant lots on three sides. Since I live in such an environment, it also means that I am inundated with rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, voles, moles, skunks, mice and any variety of birds. Herds of deer dash through my property on their way to the lake.

Yet something new happened this winter. I did not see nearly the quantity of squirrels or small birds foraging in my yard as I have in the past. Evidently, sometime in January two large birds built a nest in my tree canopy. I never saw or heard them as they stealthily built a big nest of fallen limbs in my highest beech.

In early April, I heard an unusual bird call. It was more of a screech than a song. I am familiar with the usual bird calls in this area. This screech pulled me out of the kitchen and onto my back deck in about 30 seconds. I looked around and then I saw a majestic bird swoop down from high in the sky and into the treetops. That is when I saw the large nest up in the crown of my tallest tree. Fortunately, the trees were still bare, or I would have missed it.

A while back, I had taken the three-hour scenic train ride through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In the park, there were several Bald Eagle nests. As I recalled those nests I saw in the park, I thought that they were remarkably similar in shape and style to the one in my yard.

I called a wildlife expert who came out and identified the nest as a red-tailed hawk nest. Although I was hoping it was an eagle nest, I was so happy to have the hawk nest. I began looking up everything I could on these beautiful birds.

Then in less than two weeks of knowing that they were there, the screeching stopped, and the birds disappeared. I have no idea what happened to them. The wildlife expert said that sometimes happens. All I know is that too soon after I become aware of their presence, these treasured birds vanished. I miss them!



Grow with Us- Become a Master Gardener Volunteer

Knox County Master Gardener Volunteer training will be held in 2021.

Becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer is an ongoing process. Your contributions to the community start during the initial course. Afterwards, you will have the skills and knowledge necessary to strengthen your relationship with the environment and the community.

To become a Master Gardener Volunteer, you will have the opportunity to complete 50 hours of classroom training and make a difference in your community by donating 50 hours of your time to service. Once you have completed these hours you will then be an official Master Gardener Volunteer.

In addition to learning the various topics, you will be able to practice your skills through many volunteer opportunities. You will have exposure to information from current research and success to specialists at The Ohio State University.



As **Master Gardener Volunteers**, we provide several resources and events for the community to help educate the public on the importance of horticulture and the issues surrounding it.

We provide annual programming for the community including events and workshops.

As **Master Gardener Volunteers**, we explore our deep horticultural roots to learn about the land on which we live the importance of preserving its beauty. We do not take without giving back, whether its form the Earth or in our own community. We strive to preserve the natural beauty of our community while sharing our love of gardening.

If you are interested in becoming a Knox County Master Gardener Volunteer, please contact Ex-

Congratulations to the 2021 Jr Fair Species Ambassadors.

Species ambassadors spend a year in their respective position educating youth and adults about these industries. Responsibilities include: attending educational events to promote the industry, assist during the Knox County Fair, promotions during fairs, festivals and parades, attend species banquets. Candidates had to fill out an application, complete an interview and preform high in skillathon, and attend the Knox County Ambassador Evening.

Canine – Nadia Smith

Jr. Dairy – Jillian Bouton

Sr. Dairy- Emily Rook

Equine King- Jesse Van Atta

Equine Queen- Anna Maglott

Equine Princess- Abby Eikleberry

Jr. Goat – Lauren Neighbarger

Sr. Goat- Anna Rhodeback

Rabbit- Hunter Myers

Sheep- Joci Totten

Swine – Connie Powell



Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks (including semi-trucks).

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water), malted small grains and maple sap or syrup. Eligible malted small grains include barley, oats, rice, rye and wheat. Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns, cold storage facilities for eligible commodities, and more.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security. **The 7-year FSFL interest rate is 1.250% for April 2021.**

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

Microloans Available to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Individuals interested in applying for a [FSA microloan](#) or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available, should contact their [FSA County office](#) to setup an appointment with a Loan Approval Official.



After Identifying Gaps in Previous Aid, USDA Announces ‘Pandemic Assistance for Producers’ to Distribute Resources More Equitably

USDA Reopens Program Sign-Up to a Larger Share of Producers with Plans to Expand Outreach and New Programming

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is establishing new programs and efforts to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions. The new initiative—**USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers**—will reach a broader set of producers than in previous COVID-19 aid programs. USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion toward the new programs. The Department will also develop rules for new programs that will put a greater emphasis on outreach to small and socially disadvantaged producers, specialty crop and organic producers, timber harvesters, as well as provide support for the food supply chain and producers of renewable fuel, among others. Existing programs like the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) will fall within the new initiative and, where statutory authority allows, will be refined to better address the needs of producers.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers was needed, said Vilsack, after a review of previous COVID-19 assistance programs targeting farmers identified a number of gaps and disparities in how assistance was distributed as well as inadequate outreach to underserved producers and smaller and medium operations.

USDA reopened sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has committed at least \$2.5 million to improve outreach for CFAP 2 and will establish partnerships with organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

The payments announced (under Part 3, below) will go out under the existing CFAP rules; however, future opportunities for USDA Pandemic Assistance will be reviewed for verified need and during the rulemaking process, USDA will look to make eligibility more consistent with the Farm Bill. Moving forward, **USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers** will utilize existing programs, such as the Local Agricultural Marketing Program, Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach, and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and others to enhance educational and market opportunities for agricultural producers.

Be Prepared for Annual Crop Certification

Producers are reminded to call the Knox County FSA office and make arrangements to pick up their maps for crop reporting. Appointment times are filling up fast. Call (740) 392-0891 for your maps. Appointments for acreage reporting will be required. Producers are reminded to call FSA as soon as planting is completed to report crops to help distribute workflow.



USDA Expands and Renews Conservation Reserve Program in Effort to Boost Enrollment and Address Climate Change

WASHINGTON, April 21, 2021 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that USDA will open enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with higher payment rates, new incentives, and a more targeted focus on the program’s role in climate change mitigation. Additionally, USDA is announcing investments in partnerships to increase climate-smart agriculture, including \$330 million in 85 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) projects and \$25 million for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials. Secretary Vilsack made the announcement today at the White House National Climate Task Force meeting to demonstrate USDA’s commitment to putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change.

The Biden-Harris Administration is working to leverage USDA conservation programs for climate mitigation, including continuing to invest in innovation partnership programs like RCP and On-Farm Trials as well as strengthening programs like CRP to enhance their impacts.

“Sometimes the best solutions are right in front of you. With CRP, the United States has one of the world’s most successful voluntary conservation programs. We need to invest in CRP and let it do what it does best—preserve topsoil, sequester carbon, and reduce the impacts of climate change,” said Vilsack. “We also recognize that we can’t do it alone. At the White House Climate Leaders Summit this week, we will engage leaders from all around the world to partner with us on addressing climate change. Here at home, we’re working in partnership with producers and local organizations through USDA programs to bring new voices and communities to the table to help combat climate change.”

Increasing Technical Assistance Capacity to Establish Robust Mechanisms for Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification of Soil Carbon

USDA technical assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is critical to enable producers to plan and implement appropriate conservation practices for their needs. Under this initiative, NRCS will also initiate a soil sampling protocol to help establish a baseline for soil carbon on land enrolled in CRP. To ensure increased enrollment and support for producers, USDA is increasing NRCS technical assistance capacity for CRP by \$140 million.

Additionally, in order to better target the program toward climate outcomes, USDA will invest \$10 million in the CRP Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (MAE) program to measure and monitor the soil carbon and climate resilience impacts of conservation practices over the life of new CRP contracts. This will enable the agency to further refine the program and practices to provide producers tools for increased climate resilience.

To learn more about updates to CRP, download our “What’s New with CRP” [fact sheet](#) (PDF, 122 KB).



Conservation Reserve Program

USDA's goal is to enroll up to 4 million new acres in CRP by raising rental payment rates and expanding the number of incentivized environmental practices allowed under the program. CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with a long track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, and reducing nitrogen runoff, as well providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

CRP is a powerful tool when it comes to climate mitigation, and acres currently enrolled in the program mitigate more than 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). If USDA reaches its goal of enrolling an additional 4 million acres into the program, it will mitigate an additional 3 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent and prevent 90 million pounds of nitrogen and 33 million tons of sediment from running into our waterways each year.

"We want to make sure CRP continues to be a valuable and effective conservation resource for our producers for decades to come," said Vilsack. "USDA will continue to find new and creative ways of putting producers and landowners at the center of climate-smart practices that generate revenue and benefit our planet."

CRP's long-term goal is to establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, improve soil health and carbon sequestration, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a number of signups, including the general signup and continuous signup, which are both open now, as well as a CRP Grasslands and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water.

New Climate-Smart Practice Incentive

To target the program on climate change mitigation, FSA is introducing a new **Climate-Smart Practice Incentive** for CRP general and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP practices include establishment of trees and permanent grasses, development of wildlife habitat, and wetland restoration. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is annual, and the amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.



Higher Rental Rates and New Incentives

In 2021, CRP is capped at 25 million acres, and currently 20.8 million acres are enrolled. Furthermore, the cap will gradually increase to 27 million acres by 2023. To help increase producer interest and enrollment, FSA is:

- **Adjusting soil rental rates.** This enables additional flexibility for rate adjustments, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increasing payments for Practice Incentives from 20% to 50%.** This incentive for continuous CRP practices is based on the cost of establishment and is in addition to cost share payments.
- **Increasing payments for water quality practices.** Rates are increasing from 10% to 20% for certain water quality benefiting practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers, and filter strips.
- **Establishing a CRP Grassland minimum rental rate.** This benefits more than 1,300 counties with rates currently below the minimum.

Enhanced Natural Resource Benefits

To boost impacts for natural resources, FSA is:

- **Moving State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practices to the CRP continuous signup.** Unlike the general signup, producers can sign up year-round for the continuous signup and be eligible for additional incentives.
- **Establishing National Grassland Priority Zones.** This aims to increase enrollment of grasslands in migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Making Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) practices available in both the general and continuous signups.**

Expanding Prairie Pothole Soil Health and Watershed Programs

CRP has two pilot programs — the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) and the Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers 30-year contracts (CLEAR30).

- For SHIPP, which is a short-term option (3, 4, or 5-year contracts) for farmers to plant cover on less productive agricultural lands, FSA will hold a 2021 signup in the Prairie Pothole states.
- The CLEAR30 pilot, a long-term option through CRP, will be expanded from the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay pilot regions to nationwide.

Upcoming Important Dates

- April 5**—Re-opening of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) 2 as FSA will accept new and modified CFAP 2 applications. Deadline to sign-up will be announced at a later date. (FSA Office)
- April 9**—Deadline to apply for Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) program. (FSA Office)
- May 11**— Master Gardener Meeting (OSU Extension Office)
- May 15**—Clover Bud Saturday (OSU Extension Office)
- May 17**—Good Agricultural Practice Training (OSUE Morrow County) 6 pm.
- May 19**—SWCD Board Meeting, 8 PM
- May 31**—Memorial Day Holiday. **FSA/ OSU/ SWCD** Office Closed
- May 31**—Deadline to apply for 2020 commodity loans and LDP's on feed grains, soybeans, pulse crops. (FSA office)
- June 15**—County Committee Nomination Period begins. (FSA Office)
- June 16**—SWCD Board Meeting, 8 PM
- June 17**—Sheep Improvement Meeting, 8pm, Ramser 4-H Activity Center
- June 18**—Deadline for Cover Crop Contract Applications (SWCD Office)
- July 5**—Independence Day Holiday. **FSA/ OSU / SWCD** Offices closed
- July 15**—Final certification date to report burley tobacco; cabbage planted through May 31; corn, grain sorghum, hybrid corn seed, spring oats, potatoes, popcorn, sugar beets, tomatoes and other crops. Report perennial forage crops. (FSA Office)

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