



DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Comparison of USDA’s Conservation Programs to Aid Recovery after Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a variety of recovery options – including conservation programs – to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who have been hard hit by Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton as well as their related tornadoes and flooding. In particular, this fact sheet helps clarify the restoration practices through the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which are offered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

ICON KEY

- = Yes
- = No
- = Yes or No, with caveats (see footnote)

PROGRAMS	AGENCY	FOREST LAND RESTORATION	AG LAND REHABILITATION	IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE	LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)	FSA				¹	FSA and NRCS
Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)	FSA					USFS (local forestry partners)
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	NRCS					NRCS

¹ Dairy livestock and feed relocation.

About the Programs

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) – Provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland and conservation structures damaged by natural disasters. Applicants may receive up to 75% or 90% for socially disadvantaged, limited resource or beginning farmer/ranchers of the allowable cost of approved restoration activity not to exceed \$500,000 or 50% of the agricultural value of the affected land. A 25% advance payment for all practices is available.

Additional flexibilities for producers impacted by Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton include:

- Executed Emergency Response (ER-850) authorization of emergency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) circumstances to expedite FSA approval of practices involving surface debris removal, fence restoration and non-ground disturbing activities.

- Waiver of onsite inspection requirement for non-engineering practices.
- Waiver of requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal up to 100 acres aggregate to support critical disaster recovery efforts.
- Allowance to provide cost share if land is under program contract or lifespan with another federal agency as long as prior agency does not pay for the same activity on the same land for the same disaster.

Producers should contact FSA for any questions on allowable activities.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) -

Provides technical and financial assistance to owners of non-industrial private forests to restore forest health and resources damaged by natural disasters. Applicants may receive up to 100% of the cost of approved restoration activity not to exceed \$500,000. Funding provided to the applicant will be taxable. Additional flexibilities for producers impacted by Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton include:

- Executed Emergency Response (ER-850) authorization of emergency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) circumstances to expedite FSA approval of practices involving surface debris removal, fence restoration and non-ground disturbing activities.
- Waiver of onsite inspection to remove hazard trees up to 100 acres aggregate.
- Waiver of requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal up to 100 acres aggregate to support critical disaster recovery efforts.
- Allowance to provide cost share if land is under program contract or lifespan with another federal agency as long as prior agency does not pay for the same activity on the same land for the same disaster.

Producers should contact FSA for any questions on allowable activities.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) -

Provides technical and financial assistance to producers to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. NRCS may announce disaster-specific signup periods in affected areas for producers seeking assistance. Waivers for producers impacted by Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton include early start waivers for EQIP practices, including the emergency animal mortality disposal management practice.

Restoration Practices

A variety of restoration practices may be needed to restore the natural resources and return the land to its pre-disaster use. The following tables below summarize some of the common restoration practices. Eligibility for practices will be based on the damage caused by the hurricanes and may include more practices than listed to recover from the damages. This is not an exhaustive list of available restoration activities.

To view a full list, visit farmers.gov/hurricane.



RESTORATION PRACTICES		ECP	EFRP	EQIP
FOREST LAND RESTORATION	Forest Stand Improvement	✗	✓	✓
	Riparian Forest Buffer	✗	✓	✓
	Tree/ Shrub Establishment	✗	✓	✓
	Brush Management	✗	✓	✓
	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	✗	✓	✓
	Prescribed Burning	✗	✓	✓
	Silvopasture	✗	✓	✓
	Firebreak	✗	✓	✓
	Woody Residue Treatment	✗	✓	✓
	Tree/ Shrub Site Preparation	✗	✓	✓
	Obstruction Removal	✱ ¹	✓	✓
	Precision Land Forming and Smoothing	✓	✗	✓
	Conservation Cover	✓	✓	✓
	Critical Area Planting	✱ ²	✓	✓
Forest Road Restoration	✗	✓	✗	

¹ If forested pasture is used for grazing.

² If forested pasture is used for grazing and needed for erosion control.

RESTORATION PRACTICES		ECP	EFRP	EQIP
AG LAND REHABILITATION	Precision Land Forming and Smoothing	✓	✗	✓
	Obstruction Removal	✓	✗	✓
	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	✓	✓	✓
	Fence	✓	✗	✓
	Heavy Use Protection Area	✓	✗	✓
	Grassed Waterway Restoration	✓	✗	✓
	Water and Sediment Control Basin	✓	✗	✓
	Grade Stabilization Structure	✓	✗	✓
	Fence for Livestock Management or Wildlife Exclusion	✓	✓	✓
	Watering Facility	✓	✗	✓
	Water Well	✓	✗	✓
	Pumping Plant	✓	✗	✓
	Spring Development	✓	✗	✓

RESTORATION PRACTICES		ECP	EFRP	EQIP
IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE	Irrigation Pipeline	✓	✗	✓
	Pumping Plant	✓	✗	✓
	Irrigation Reservoir	✓	✗	✓
	Water Well	✓	✗	✓
	Irrigation Land Leveling	✓	✗	✓
	Pond	✓	✗	✓
	Irrigation Field Ditch/ Irrigation Ditch Lining	✓	✗	✓
	Sprinkler System & Irrigation System	✓	✗	✓
	Microirrigation	✓	✗	✓
	ANIMAL MORTALITY	Emergency Animal Mortality Management	✗	✗
Relocation of Dairy Livestock and Feed, to Avoid Mortality		✓	✗	✗

More Information

In addition to ECP, EFRP and EQIP, USDA offers other disaster assistance, farm loan, and risk management programs to help producers recover following Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton. For a full list of programs as well as flexibilities, visit farmers.gov/hurricane. Impacted producers should contact FSA and NRCS at their local Service Center to learn more or to apply for assistance. Additionally, producers can call the FSA Call Center at 877-508-8364.

USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) has authorized crop insurance companies to provide flexibility on reporting requirements for those who are unable to report losses due to the disaster. If you have crop insurance, contact your crop insurance agent.

Additionally, NRCS offers help to communities through its [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#) which provides assistance to landowners and project sponsors following a natural disaster. EWP is designed to help people and conserve natural resources by relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by natural disaster.

