

Conservation Reserve Program general signup ends Feb. 12

Washington, D.C. -- Agricultural producers and private landowners interested in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can sign up for the popular program beginning today, Jan. 4, 2021, until Feb. 12, 2021. The competitive program, administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

"This signup for the Conservation Reserve Program gives producers and landowners an opportunity to enroll for the first time or continue their participation for another term," FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce said. "This program encourages conservation on sensitive lands or low-yielding acres, which provides tremendous benefits for stewardship of our natural resources and wildlife."

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to their local region and the nation's environment and economy.

CRP general signup is held annually and is competitive; general signup includes increased opportunities for wildlife habitat enrollment through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative.

New cropland offered in the program must have been planted for four out of six crop years from 2012 to 2017. Additionally, producers with land already enrolled but expiring on Sept. 30, 2021, can re-enroll this year. The acreage offered by producers and landowners is evaluated competitively; accepted offers will begin Oct. 1, 2021.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The program marked its 35-year anniversary in December 2020. Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks.
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95% and 85%, respectively.
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off

the road.

Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times.

Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will continue to work with our producers by phone, email, and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Increasing demand for wheatlage causes concerns

An increasing demand for wheatlage contracts by dairies for ensilage is causing a dilemma for High Plains producers.

Drought conditions in the southwest Panhandle are creating a potential forage deficit in the region, and this is driving up the demand and price for forage silage, said Jourdan Bell, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agronomist, Amarillo.

This could mean fewer producers will be taking their wheat crop to grain harvest, opting instead to cash in on diverse forage options for livestock producers, including wheatlage.

Wheatlage is the process of cutting and ensiling wheat as a silage crop to preserve forage quality,

Bell said, and is one of the cheapest forages to produce. Wheatlage is generally chopped when wheat is at the soft dough stage and forage moisture is favorable for fermentation.

Because wheatlage provides an opportunity for producers to harvest earlier and possibly go back with a second crop or even a summer silage such as corn or forage sorghum, if they have the well capacity, there are more people looking at it as an alternative to straight grazing or grain, said Rick Auckerman, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent for Deaf Smith County. Wheatlage is typically harvested in April, whereas the wheat going to grain is harvested

in June.

Auckerman said a producer planning to contract wheatlage will typically plant higher seed populations and plan for potentially more irrigation in drier years.

"We know there are contracts out there for our producers, but we are cautioning producers to investigate before committing, as the terms may not be favorable," he said. Wheatlage contract concerns.

The number of dairies has gone up, and there is a greater demand to contract silage, Auckerman said. If the dairies don't get wheatlage contracts, they'll have to look to more expensive corn and sorghum silage to make up the difference.

A major concern is the harvest timing, Bell said. The contracts

are requesting the wheat silage be chopped at the boot stage, not the typical soft dough stage, and dried to 62% moisture, which is not advantageous for the farmer.

Green chop wheat is generally cut at the boot stage, when the head is still enclosed in the flag leaf sheath, and the moisture content at this stage is approximately 80%, she said. It is either fed directly or wilted in the field prior to ensiling. This earlier maturity stage optimizes forage quality because crude protein and digestibility are greater.

"After studies over the past several years, we know quality is impacted by environmental conditions, specifically water stress," Bell said. "And our results confirm that the nutritive value at

boot is greater than the nutritive value at soft-dough."

Therefore, harvesting at boot is desired by the dairy to access the higher crude protein and get a lower acid detergent fiber, ADF, she said. ADF is a measure of the lignin and cellulose, which are the least digestible component of forages.

Auckerman explained that the producer would be losing a lot of money, because based on tonnage, the dairies are not offering more money to reflect the higher quality of the forage. Instead of direct chopping into the truck, as it is typically done in this region, the dairies want the green chopped wheat laid down on the field to dry down from 80% to 60% moisture before moving it.

BIRTH ANNOUNCED

Cory and Taylor Newcomer of Canyon are the parents of their second child, a daughter, Charlotte Brooke, born at 10:50 a.m., Monday, Feb. 1, 2021 in Amarillo. She weighed 7 lbs., 12 oz. and was 19-inches in length. She joins an older sister Claire.

Grandparents are Tracy and Jennifer Newcomer of Vernon, Jim and Diane Drake-of Cypress, and great-grandparents are Margaret Williams of Vernon, Dru Luke of Fort Worth, and the late Charles and Beatrice James of Vernon.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Leo Luke Garza and Sue Anne Salcedo Mitchell Derwin Jones and Shirley Anne Hall

DISTRICT COURT

Cases Filed:

In the matter of the marriage of Angel Starr Nino and Omar Nino, petition for divorce
Vernon Independent School District vs. El Templo Evangelistic, delinquent taxes
Chillicothe Independent School District vs. Jacob Jones, delinquent taxes
Vernon Independent School District vs. Priscilla M. Reyes Carpenter, delinquent taxes

In the marriage of Brittany N. Shepherd and Kendrick L. Shepherd, petition for divorce
In the matter of the marriage of Charla Gene Benson and Jared Charles Benson, petition for divorce
In the matter of the marriage of Stefanie Ann Cendroski and Johnny Gene Cendroski, petition for divorce
Dismissal: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC vs, Adine F. Cordero, order of dismissal

Dr. Travis Lehman Receives Citizen of the Year Award

WGH proudly announces that our Chief of Staff, Dr. Travis Lehman, has been awarded the Citizen of the Year Award from the Vernon Chamber of Commerce for 2020!

Dr. Lehman has been a resource for our community leaders as the county health authority when decisions had to be made for public safety. He has taken countless calls and meetings to ensure public safety was a priority, even when it meant missing meals with his family or precious hours of rest. He advised those in charge to make tough decisions even when they were not popular because lives in our community depended on it. He has spent countless hours studying and following the information as it is available to ensure he is always advising our community leaders to make well informed decisions.

"Dr. Lehman is the key leader of our clinical team. Without his leadership and dedication, the hospital would simply not be able to serve the community the way we have during this global pandemic," Melanie Milner, Chairperson, Board of Trustees, Wilbarger General Hospital.

Tom Siemers, Chief Executive Officer, commented: "Dr. Lehman is the hardest working physician I have ever met! His passion for quality medicine, dedication to the community, and willingness to help anyone in the hospital is unmatched. I hope everyone recognizes Dr. Lehman for his dedication and service to our hospital and the community."

He goes above and beyond, working countless hours to care for the sick in our community. He has saved many lives and put his own at risk in the process. Dr. Lehman treats every patient like he would treat his own family and works hard to provide the very best care possible. He also has trained a staff of nurses to perform at a much higher level of expertise than ever before at Wilbarger General Hospital. His team treats patients effectively and successfully right here at home when previously they would have needed to be sent to a larger, more advanced facility. He challenges his team to develop more advanced clinical skills and has created a culture of excellence at Wilbarger General. "Every nurse knows he or she can ask Dr. Lehman any question or raise concerns. He's all about making sure every patient receives top quality care, and every clinical professional has the knowledge, skills and resources to do just that," said Tonya Price, Chief Nursing Officer/Chief Operating Officer.

Dr. Lehman has risen to the occasion when faced with a global pandemic and led his team at Wilbarger General to be a hospital our community can count on and be proud to call their own. We believe Dr. Travis Lehman has earned the honor of Citizen of the Year for 2020 for the sacrifices he has made, the leadership he has shown, and the service he provides to our community. Thank you, Dr. Lehman, for all you do for our community, and congratulations on this well-deserved honor!



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