



News Release

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"Helping People Help the Land"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA California Agencies Offer Post-Fire Assistance; Assessments Underway
NRCS and FSA have financial and technical support programs to help communities and agricultural operations recover from recent catastrophic wildfires

DAVIS, Calif., Sept. 30, 2015 – In the wake of the Valley and Butte fires, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) staffs in California are meeting with landowners and Agencies to assess damages and offer technical and financial assistance where possible.

Assistance programs through NRCS include the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program's (EQIP) Catastrophic Fire Recovery assistance; FSA provides the Environmental Conservation Program (ECP).

Watershed Assistance

"EWP allows us to provide immediate assistance to communities to mitigate potential hazards to life and property resulting from the fires," said Carlos Suarez, NRCS California state conservationist. "It is work we can do with a local sponsor to help a damaged watershed channel water and mitigate erosion so that lives and property are protected and additional hardships are not heaped upon the devastated community."

With the high potential for winter rains, burned areas are at greater risk for erosion and mudflows and EWP-type services are key to preventing further damage. The program requires local government bodies or others to sponsor on-the-ground work including concrete barriers and debris basins, mulching, straw wattles and other damage control measures. Potential sponsors are encouraged to contact NRCS for more information.

Farmer/Rancher Assistance

EQIP and ECP programs can provide long-term support to repair livestock fencing, remove dead or dying trees, clear dense brush, install new livestock water facilities, and other agricultural services. Both NRCS and FSA are taking applications and encourage interested landowners to contact their local offices for more information.

The Valley Fire was centered in Lake, Napa and Sonoma counties and the Butte Fire was centered in Amador and Calaveras counties. While support to impacted landowners in these

areas are an immediate focus for USDA, farmers and ranchers elsewhere in the state are also eligible for post-fire assistance within 18 months of the fire.

“FSA has a number of programs to help wildfire-impacted producers get back on their feet,” said Oscar Gonzales, FSA executive director in California. “I want to encourage farmers and ranchers to contact their local FSA office to find out about resources available to them.”

For more information on available NRCS or FSA assistance, contact a local field office, or visit www.usda.gov.

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