

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Director Dan Steinkruger authorized 54 Nebraska counties for emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for 2013 due to drought conditions.

Among the 54 counties approved is Chase County, along with Perkins and Dundy Counties to the north and south.

The authorization for 2013 began Tuesday for both emergency haying and emergency grazing, which coincides with the end of the primary nesting and brood rearing season in Nebraska.

Provisions of a CRP contract prohibit harvesting of the conservation cover for the life of the contract except in certain emergency situations when the Secretary of Agriculture authorizes emergency haying and grazing.

Emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres is intended to provide assistance to livestock producers who are suffering forage losses due to severe drought.

“Drought has been ongoing in Nebraska counties for more than a year and forage losses have impacted livestock producers to the extent of drastic herd reductions,” said Steinkruger.

“In 2012 USDA opened CRP acres for emergency haying and grazing and Nebraska farmers and ranchers utilized over 300,000 acres under the program to provide forage to livestock,” he said.

“Eligible producers who are interested in emergency haying or grazing of CRP must request approval before haying or grazing eligible acreage,” said Steinkruger.

Producers must also obtain a modified conservation plan from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that outlines permitted practices. Many of the limitations and requirements of CRP emergency haying and grazing were waived in 2012; however for 2013 there will be a 25 percent reduction in the annual rental payments and no haying or grazing will be allowed on practice CP25(Rare and Declining Habitat).

Along with other restrictions, CRP participants are not allowed to sell the hay; however, if the participant is not a livestock producer he or she may rent or lease the haying or grazing privilege to an eligible livestock producer.

Steinkruger noted, “FSA is continuing to utilize our available program options to assist Nebraska farmers and ranchers whose livestock are impacted by the drought.”

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on CRP emergency haying and grazing. Additional information is also available on the web at [www.fsa.usda.gov/ne](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ne).