A conservation plan is a step-by-step road map to address a landowner's concerns and to meet their conservation goals. The plan can address wildfire fuel loading and other contributors to wildfire on private forestland and ranchland.

For information on EQIP, emergency assistance programs, and and the Farm Bill, please visit your local NRCS office or the NRCS California website at: www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/

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USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

Catastrophic Wildfire Assistance on Private Forestland and Ranchlands

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO LANDOWNERS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Catastrophic Fire Recovery assistance can help agricultural operators recover from catastrophic fires that have happened in the past 18 months.

Priority resource concerns include immediate soil erosion protection, controlling noxious and invasive plants, protecting water quality, and restoring livestock infrastructure necessary for grazing management on forestland and rangeland.

One consequence of fire is an increased potential for soil erosion. Not only does fire destroy the litter and plants covering the ground, but severly hot fires actually cause a water-repelling condition called hydrophobicity that accelerates erosion even more.

Practices to control soil erosion at burned forest and range sites include using damaged trees or woody residues to slow runoff water, creating check dams in drainages, spreading straw to protect the soil, and reseeding efforts.

The management and rotation of livestock can also help facilitate recovery of burned sites most at risk for erosion and weed proliferation. In some cases, range planting may be necessary if range cover is absent.

Lastly, forestland and rangeland access roads and culvert systems may need to be repaired due to fire suppression activities. Emergency access roads or trails, created for fire suppression, may need to be addressed as these can become a source for dirt and other material into nearby water bodies.

Interested landowners are encouraged to work with their local NRCS office to create a conservation plan and apply for assistance to help recover from the damaging effects of wildfire. Available practices include, but are not limited to, planting conifer seedlings, spreading woody residue and/or mulch, building new livestock watering facilities, replacement of damaged irrigation equipment, and removing dead or dying trees.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

The NRCS works with forest and woodland owners to develop a conservation plan customized to meet the owner's objectives for their land. The conservation plan will address resource concerns and propose improvements that can be voluntarily implemented on the landscape. Conservation planning provides direction to forest and woodland owners to achieve goals and improve natural resources. Landowners with a conservation plan may receive priority for Farm Bill funding.

HOW TO APPLY

Persons interested in NRCS assistance should contact their local NRCS field office. Applications may be submitted within 18 months of the fire's occurence. Eligible projects will be evaluated, prioritized and selected for funding as budget allocations permit. Submitting an application does not obligate the landowner to participate.

Top Practices Available Through The EQIP Catastrophic Wildfire Recovery Program

BRUSH MANAGEMENT

Removal of woody debris to restore natural plant community balance, restore vegetative cover, and enhance wildlife habitat.

FENCING

Establishing a fence serves as a constructed barrier to livestock, wildlife, or people. Regulates animal movement for improved pasture productivity.

CONSERVATION COVER

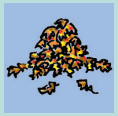
Maintaining a permanent vegetative cover to reduce soil erosion while improving water, air, and soil quality; pest management; and adding wildlife habitat.

WOODY RESIDUE

The treatment of residual woody material that is created due to management activities or natural disturbances.

CLEARING AND SNAGGING

Removal of vegetation along the bank (clearing) and/or selective removal of snags, drifts, or other obstructions (snagging) from natural or improved channels and streams.



MULCHING

Using ground cover to manage soil moisture, soil temperature, erosion, and weeds. Provides vegetative cover, and improves soil condition.