

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

MEMORANDUM

**Emergency Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program Acreage
in Western States Impacted by Wildfires
April 4, 2017**

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Memorandum is to authorize emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands located in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas due to the impact of recent wildfires on grazing lands in those states. This action is authorized by the provisions of section 1233 of the Food Security Act of 1985, Public Law 99-198, as amended by section 2004 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79; 16 U.S.C. 3833(b)(1).

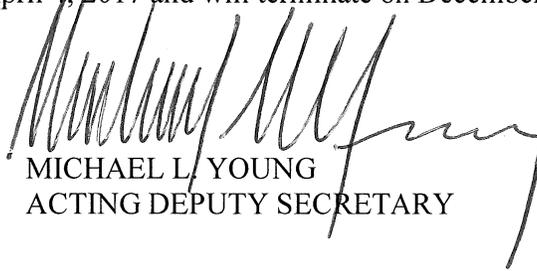
2. ACTIONS ORDERED

- a. Emergency Grazing. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is authorized to allow emergency grazing on CRP lands located in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas to assist ranchers suffering from the aftermath of wildfires in those states. This action will allow livestock to be moved to CRP acreage. This authorization is subject to certain limitations regarding Lesser Prairie Chicken habitat and conformity with certain requirements regarding modified conservation plans.
- b. Limitations Regarding Lesser Prairie Chicken Habitat. FSA is committed to providing relief to livestock producers affected by the wildfires, as well as protecting the CRP cover, which is essential to improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and providing breeding and brood-rearing habitat for birds and other wildlife. Accordingly, with respect to CRP acreage under conservation practices CP1, CP2, CP4, CP10, CP18, and CP38, that may also contain habitat for the Lesser Prairie Chicken, FSA will now allow emergency grazing if performed outside the Primary Nesting Season (PNS). FSA will also allow emergency grazing during PNS on this CRP acreage only if no grazing has occurred in the prior two years on such acreage. If grazing has occurred within the prior two years on such acreage, then FSA may allow emergency grazing if it determines that site, forage, and climatic conditions will provide both forage for livestock, and suitable habitat conditions for the Lesser Prairie Chicken.

- c. Modified Conservation Plans. As required by FSA regulations at 7 CFR 1410.63(d), all CRP participants upon whose CRP acreage emergency grazing will occur pursuant to this authorization must first obtain a modified conservation plan that includes emergency grazing requirements. The modified conservation plan must be obtained from either the Natural Resources Conservation Service or the participant's Technical Service Provider.

3. EFFECTIVE DATE AND TERMINATION

This authorization is effective on April 4, 2017 and will terminate on December 31, 2017.



MICHAEL L. YOUNG
ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY