USDA/FSA EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM (ECP) Project

Elizabeth Fletes
San Diego State University- Imperial Valley Campus
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Advisor: Rosa Singh
County Executive Director
Farm Service Agency
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Executive Summary

This project was to assist the USDA/FSA Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). The ECP provides financial and technical support to farmers and ranchers to repair their farmland that was damaged by natural disasters. Also, it provides financial and technical support to employ measures for emergency water conservation in times of severe drought.

Project Objective

The objective of this project was for me to have an understanding of how this project operates and to participate in helping accomplish ECP’s objective. Applicants of this program must go through the following processes: application, documentation, damage determination, interview, and eligibility determination process. I decided to participate in this project, for I wanted to improve my research skills and wanted to have the opportunity to learn what USDA-FSA offers to its employees and its clients. As an intern at FSA, my set tasks were to learn how the program was managed, to determine the damage caused to cropland and water conservation structures. My other set tasks were to process applications, to submit supporting documentation, to learn the eligibility determination requirements, and to understand the payment eligibility determination method.
Project Approach

To achieve my goals and tasks, I first had to become familiar with the Emergency Conservation Program. I was able to accomplish this by reading and taking notes of the program’s management, requirements, and regulations. Moreover, I had the opportunity to participate in County Committee meetings where the implementation of the ECP were discussed, and where the committee decided what action to take to assist farmers and ranchers whose crops, and cropland were damaged by the heavy rains. In addition, I had the opportunity to visit fields that were damaged by the heavy rains to determine the degree of the damage of cropland and water conservation structures. I also had the opportunity to meet potential applicants to this program who had serious cropland and dam damage caused by this natural disaster.

Conclusion

Even though I was only able to work in this project for a short period of time, I learned a variety of valuable information from this internship. This public program and other programs managed by USDA-FSA helped me get a wide understanding of how this agency functions. My recommendation for further research is to focus on what can be done for efficient preventive precautions that farmers and ranchers can take to reduce future damage. This experiential learning internship has made me consider pursuing a USDA career in the future.