

Federal Funding for Human-Wildlife Conflict Avoidance

A Guide for Landowners and Livestock Producers





DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

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Cover photo

Defenders of Wildlife coexistence experts demonstrate the installation of fladry—
a proven method for increasing pasture security—at a workshop in Montana.

Introduction

Before the first Europeans arrived in what is now the U.S. and pushed their settlements westward, a diversity and abundance of wildlife flourished. Species such as bison, elk, pumas (aka mountain lions, cougars, panthers), bears and wolves were present in large numbers across North America. However, habitat destruction, over-hunting and the slaughter of predators viewed as detrimental to the welfare of people resulted in the elimination of some species from all but the most remote areas.

Over the past few decades, wolves and other species have repopulated former habitat across the U.S., including areas occupied by people. This has led to conflicts and raised concerns over how people and wildlife can share landscapes. Interactions between wildlife and people living in the same environment are inevitable. Finding solutions that address negative interactions, reduce the potential for future negative interactions and help avoid social conflicts are core to Defenders' efforts to support sustainable shared landscapes—for people and wildlife.

Since the 1980s, Defenders has taken a pioneering role in creating funding opportunities and advocating for federal funding and other support for landowners living with predators. Today, the federal government has various funding programs that can help landowners avoid conflicts with predators, like wolves and grizzly bears. However, federal funding for programs that seek to address this issue has decreased in recent years. Finding ways to address human-wildlife conflict that benefit both people and wildlife is at the forefront of Defender's vision for the future.

Several federal programs fund human-wildlife conflict avoidance, but these programs and the application processes can be cumbersome and difficult to navigate. Figuring out how or if you can use multiple programs can also be confusing, and little guidance is available to help you determine which program is the most appropriate for your needs.

This document—based on information gathered through online research, surveys and interviews with field experts, landowners and agency staff—addresses these challenges. It briefly describes the key administrators of the programs and provides all the information you need on each program offered, including important details, eligibility information, how to apply and links to relevant websites.

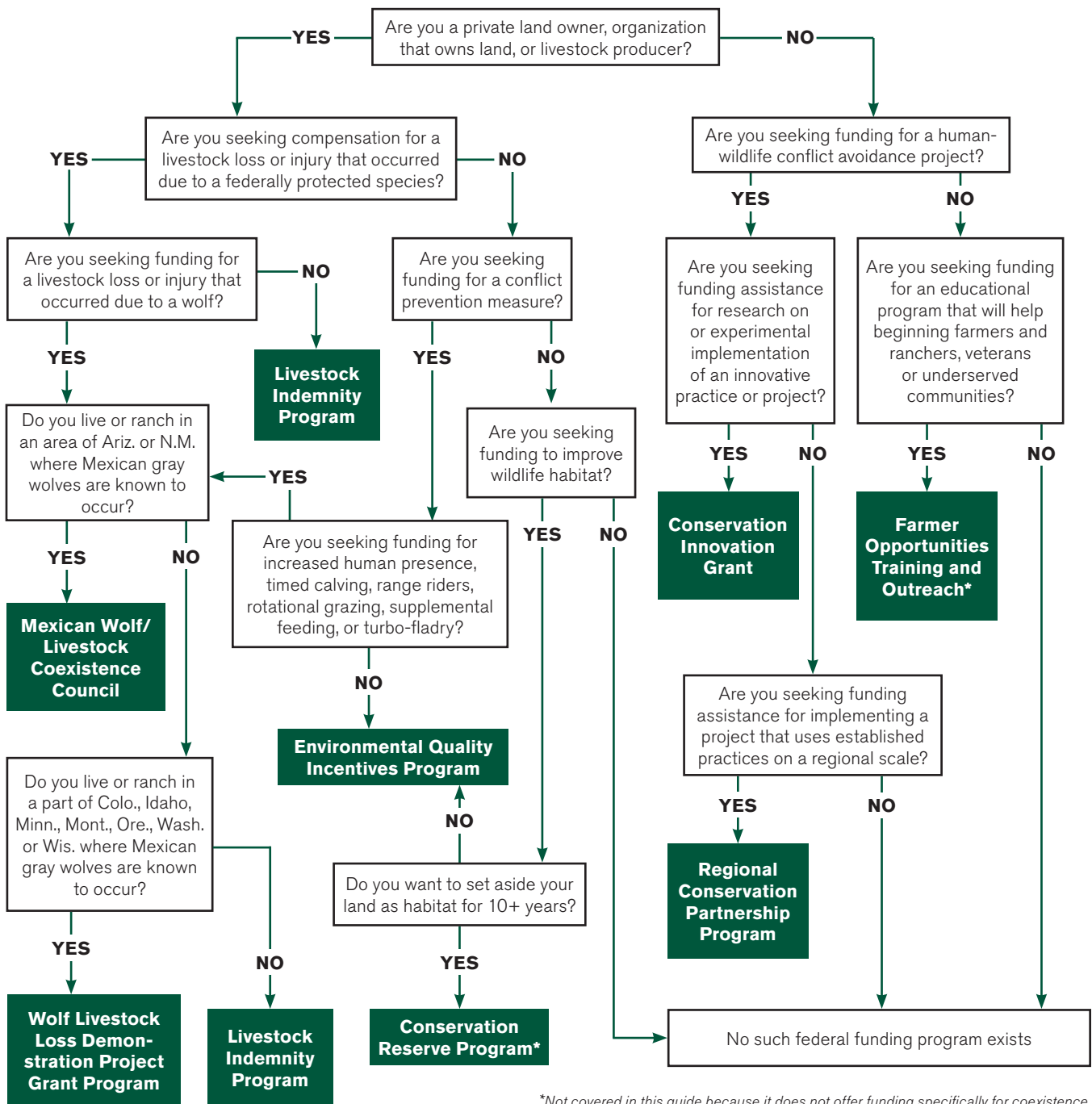


USFWS

FIND YOUR PROGRAM

Use the program-comparison chart on the next page to get started. It will help you quickly navigate the many different federal programs available for funding human-wildlife conflict avoidance and find the one that best suits your needs.

Find the Federal Coexistence Payment Program That Best Suits Your Needs



*Not covered in this guide because it does not offer funding specifically for coexistence.

Key Federal Coexistence Payment Program Administrators

United States Department of Agriculture

Created in 1862, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a federal executive department that oversees everything from food to natural resource conservation. Fourteen different agencies under USDA administer the Farm Bill and other agriculture-related responsibilities.

The two primary USDA agencies that oversee Farm Bill programs are the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). While both are federal agencies, they work through state and county offices to provide on-the-ground technical assistance and support to landowners, producers and other entities eligible for Farm Bill programs.

Farm Service Agency

FSA was created during the Great Depression in 1933 to provide loans and price support programs for farmers in a time of economic instability and uncertainty. FSA has expanded to include many more programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, that help farmers and producers around the globe.

FSA administers its programs through state and county offices. The county offices are run by farmers and ranchers who serve as county committee members. These committee members participate in the decision-making process for their local community, decide which programs are implemented in their county and oversee loans and payments.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

NRCS administers many Farm Bill conservation programs. It provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to conserve natural resources. The agency was founded in 1933 as the Soil Erosion Service, but its scope gradually expanded and it was renamed in 1994.

Each state has an NRCS office that typically oversees field staff that work out of county offices. These county offices work directly with program participants to provide on-the-ground support. County offices are staffed with paid employees. Due to chronic underfunding, these staff members may be paid through other agencies or nongovernmental organizations.

Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council

Although not a federal program, the Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council (Coexistence Council) oversees the disbursement of federal funds from the Mexican Wolf/Livestock Interdiction Trust Fund (Trust Fund) to qualified applicants who have a conflict with Mexican wolves. The Coexistence Council consists of 11 members, all volunteers who represent livestock producers, tribes, conservation organizations and county coalitions.

The goal of the Coexistence Council is to generate long-term financial support for livestock producers to foster cooperative conservation and recovery of the Mexican wolf populations in the southwestern U.S. Funding is awarded to initiatives that address management, monitoring and other nonlethal conflict prevention. Producers who have livestock losses due to Mexican wolf depredations also receive compensation.

WILDLIFE SERVICES

Wildlife Services (WS) does not administer a funding program, but it does play a key role in helping people and wildlife coexist. The mission of WS, which operates under USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is to provide federal leadership and expertise to the resolution of wildlife conflicts. Staff at regional and state offices work to develop programs and conduct research through local field stations. Producers dealing with depredations on livestock and seeking the documentation needed for compensation or assistance with implementation of preventive measures frequently work with WS.

Livestock Indemnity Program

Program Details

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) helps livestock producers who have suffered abnormal losses due to disease, adverse weather and wildlife reintroduced by or protected under federal law. Assistance is in the form of compensation of 75% of the average national market value of the animal the day before it died. To receive compensation, producers must apply through FSA and submit detailed animal management records and file any eligible losses within 30 days of the loss occurrence.

Only losses in excess of normal are compensated by LIP. FSA has state standards that represent “normal mortality,” but producers also need documentation of all mortality that occurs during the calendar year. For example, if a producer were to lose 30 calves out of their 300 total calves to an extreme weather event, and it was determined that 3% was the “normal” loss due to the event, the normal mortality threshold would be 10 {300 x 3%}. The producer would be compensated for 20 animals {30-10=20}.

FSA then applies the 75% compensation to all animals that fall within the specific weight and age ranges. Using the example above, those 20 eligible calves would be compensated at the payment rate of a calf at less than 400 pounds. The 2018 payment rate for a calf less than 400 pounds was \$468.92, so the producer would receive a payment of \$9,378.40 {20 x 468.92= 9,378.92}.

The producer must file a mortality loss record with their FSA office within 30 days of the event. Eligible losses due to predation must be verified by WS, the state department of natural resources (or equivalent), or another approved source. If an approved verifier is unable to visit the producer to confirm predation, the producer can fill out additional forms to provide evidence and third-party verification. Sixty days after the end of the calendar year, the producer must file for compensation for all losses that occurred during the previous year.



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Eligibility

To receive compensation through LIP, you must demonstrate that:

- Livestock loss or injury occurred.
- Livestock lost was legally owned on the day the loss or eligible injury occurred.
- Livestock lost or injured is one of the following:
 - **cattle:** adult/non-adult beef bull or cow, adult/non-adult beefalo/bison bull or cow, adult/non-adult dairy bull or cow;
 - **poultry:** regular-size chickens/broilers/pullets, chicks, layers, small-size chickens/pullets/Cornish hens, roasters, super roasters/parts, ducks and ducklings, geese and goslings, turkeys: poult, toms, fryers, roasters;
 - **swine:** feeder pigs, lightweight barrows/gilts, sows/boars/barrows/gilts 151 to 450 pounds, sows and boars over 450 pounds;
 - **other:** alpacas, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats (bucks, nannies, kids), llamas, reindeer, caribou, sheep (rams, ewes, lambs).

How to Apply

To participate in LIP, you must register with your local FSA office and:

- Keep records and documentation of:
 - calf inventory;
 - dated photos of predator presence;
 - evidence of all livestock mortality (including normal mortality to serve as a baseline);
 - all records of eligible losses.
- Request an official visit to verify the loss is due to depredation by eligible wildlife.
- File a mortality record with your FSA office within 30 days of the loss.
- File for compensation for all losses that occurred during the previous year no later than 60 days after the end of the calendar year.

Additional Resources

- **Website:** <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/livestock-indemnity/index>
- **2020 Fact Sheet:** https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/livestock_indemnity_program_lip-fact_sheet.pdf

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Program Details

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is designed to improve agriculture by conserving and protecting environmental resources. The program is authorized through the Farm Bill and administered by NRCS. Through the program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers who want to apply one of NRCS’s conservation practices on their production lands. Producers wishing to participate must apply through their local NRCS office.

EQIP aids owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial forest lands, as well as tribes. Participation in EQIP is voluntary and requires applicants to have records with FSA to prove their eligibility before working with an NRCS representative.

Once an applicant’s eligibility is determined, an NRCS conservation planner will start the consultation process. During consultation, the conservation planner will evaluate the current condition of the land and resources the applicant is looking to improve. This consultation is free for the landowner, even if it is determined that an NRCS conservation practice cannot be implemented at that time.

After the site visit, the NRCS conservation planner enters the information gathered during the site visit and consultation into the Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool (CART) to create a plan for the landowner that uses NRCS conservation practices to address resource concerns. Landowners planning projects that utilize more than one NRCS conservation practice and/or address more than one resource concern are often given higher funding priority. Therefore, landowners are encouraged to discuss all their options with their NRCS conservation planner.

Once a plan is agreed upon, the landowner works with their NRCS conservation planner to submit an application through either the local, state or federal funding pool. Applications are accepted throughout the year and the amount of funding a landowner can receive varies by funding pool, region, state and project. Due to the volume of applications NRCS receives each year, the application may not be accepted the first year, but the same application can be resubmitted for several years until funding is approved.

After the application is approved, the landowner is responsible for implementing the project. NRCS will assist



USDA

the landowner in determining the work needed to be done, but it is the landowner's responsibility to solicit bids from contractors and find the right people for the job. NRCS will then reimburse the landowner. Landowners are also responsible for meeting the agreements of the NRCS contract and showing evidence of outcomes through reporting. NRCS will work with landowners to determine the best way to demonstrate outcomes.

Eligibility

If you are an agricultural producer, owner of non-industrial private forestland or a member of a Native American tribe, you can apply for EQIP funding through your local NRCS Service Center. You must own or control eligible lands, such as croplands, grasslands, rangelands, pasture, wetlands and non-industrial private forests, for the entire duration of the EQIP contract.

Each state has different application ranking criteria, priority resource concerns, eligible NRCS conservation practices, payment rates, eligibility and other requirements. More information about state processes, practices and requirements is available on each state's EQIP webpage.

An advance payment option is available under EQIP for historically underserved producers (HUPs), a category that includes beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran and limited resource farmers and ranchers. This option limits out-of-pocket conservation costs for eligible producers and provides at least 50 percent of the contracted payment amount prior to the implementation of the practice. Advanced payment funds must be expended within 90 days of receipt. HUPs may also qualify for a higher payment rate.

How to Apply

In general, to apply for EQIP you must:

- Establish or update records with FSA that indicate that you:
 - control or own the land;
 - meet adjusted gross income and payment limitation provisions;
 - comply with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.



USDA

- Provide evidence of Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher status.
- Work with an NRCS conservation planner during a one-on-one consultation. The conservation planner will evaluate the current condition of the land and resources during this consultation and determine which NRCS conservation practices or systems will best address the resource concern and management goals.
- Complete a state application with the assistance of your local NRCS representative. The application will be evaluated at either the national, state or local level, depending on the funding pool through which you applied.

Additional Resources

- **Website:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>
- **Advance Payment Option:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd1502414#>
- **2019 Fact Sheet:** https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCSConsumption/download?cid=nrcseprd1469022&ext=pdf
- **List of EQIP-eligible Conservation Practices:** https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Project Grant Program

Program Details

The Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) provides federal funding in the form of grants to eligible states and tribes to support livestock producers whose livestock interact with wolves. Funding is intended to support both proactive, nonlethal activities to reduce loss due to predation, as well as compensation for livestock losses proven to be caused by wolves. Funds are awarded via a competitive grant program that disperses funds equally between nonlethal activities and mortality compensation.

Grants are awarded directly to states or tribes, each of which has established application procedures for private applicants. Livestock producers, individual ranchers, corporations and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for compensation and prevention funds. Currently, the states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, New

Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin have state programs to manage and distribute funds.

Eligibility

Each state participating in the Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program has its own eligibility requirements and application process. In general, you must be a resident or pay taxes to the state to which you are applying for either the compensation and/or the prevention funding.

How to Apply

The table below lists the programs responsible for administering FWS Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program funds by state and provides links to program details, including eligible livestock and prevention practices and the application.



USFWS

State agencies and programs responsible for administering FWS Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program funds

State	Name of program	Agency, service, department, or board	Website
Arizona	Arizona Livestock Loss Board	Arizona Livestock Loss Board	https://www.azgfd.com/agency/livestockboard/
Colorado*	CPW Game Damage Prevention	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/GameDamage.aspx
Idaho	Wildlife Damage Prevention & Compensation Program	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	https://idfg.idaho.gov/conservation/big-game-depredation
Minnesota	Wolf-Livestock Conflict Prevention Grants	Minnesota Department of Agriculture	http://mdawebdev.prod.acquia-sites.com/wolf-livestock-conflict-prevention-grants
Montana	Montana Livestock Loss Board	Montana Livestock Loss Board	http://liv.mt.gov/Attached-Agency-Boards/Livestock-Loss-Board
New Mexico	Wildlife Depredation and Nuisance Abatement Program	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/
Oregon	Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance County Block Grant Program	Oregon Department of Agriculture	https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/InternalServices/WolfGrantApplication.pdf
Washington	Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=220-440-180
Wisconsin*	Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/wdacp.html

*These states may not cover wolf depredations every year and therefore may not be eligible for FWS Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program funding.

Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council

Program Details

The Mexican Wolf/Livestock Coexistence Council (Coexistence Council) is an 11-member, volunteer organization that uses performance-based incentive programs to address the conflict between livestock producers and Mexican wolves. The Coexistence Council has three interdependent goals: viable ranching, self-sustaining wolf populations and healthy western landscapes. Livestock operators living in the southwestern U.S. who face conflict with Mexican wolves can apply through the Coexistence Council for compensation and funding to reduce conflict risks.

The Coexistence Council uses information about a producer's location and herds to compute a point total for each eligible producer that applies in a single year. The formula for each applicant is tallied as follows:

- **Step 1:** Core Area/2 points per core area + territory/1 point per territory + wolf pups/1 point per pup = Subtotal A
- **Step 2:** Subtotal A multiplied by 2 if an applicant is implementing conflict avoidance measures = Subtotal B
- **Step 3:** Number of livestock (cow/calf is 1; yearling is 0.5) exposed to wolves divided by 100 = Subtotal C
- **Step 4:** Subtotal B multiplied by Subtotal C = Grand Total

The grand total for an individual applicant is divided by the sum of all grand totals received in a year to develop an individual percentage. The individual percentage determines the amount of funds the producer receives for that year.



BLM

Funds are generally capped at around \$6,000 for nonlethal prevention measures and \$6,000 for compensation per producer.

The Coexistence Council funds three different types of programs: wolf presence, conflict avoidance measures, and compensation for depredation.

Funding for the presence of wolves is provided to landowners and livestock producers whose livestock graze in areas with a known Mexican wolf population. The goal is to offset the economic costs producers experience from operating in an area where wolves may occur on or near their operation. These costs include a decrease in livestock weight, increased management costs and undetected depredation events.

As the Mexican wolf population is expected to increase, so will the number of producers who come into conflict with these wolves. The Coexistence Council provides funding assistance to producers who implement wolf-livestock conflict avoidance measures. Eligible practices include, but are not limited to, increased human presence, timed calving, range riders, rotational grazing, supplemental feeding and turbo-fladry.

The third funding strategy employed by the Coexistence Council is compensation for livestock losses. For 100% compensation producers must have evidence that the loss was caused by a Mexican wolf. Probable depredations receive 50% compensation, and injured animals are compensated at the discretion of the Coexistence Council.

Eligibility

To apply for wolf presence funds, you must contact the Coexistence Council and submit evidence showing that you:

- Own or lease grazing land in known wolf territory or a core wolf area.
- Are implementing proactive conflict avoidance measures on your land.
- Have a definitive number of livestock that are exposed to wolves.



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How to Apply

If you want to apply for conflict avoidance funding for your ranch, work with the Coexistence Council representatives to determine the best approach for your property.

The Coexistence Council awards compensation funding yearly through an application process that requires you to submit evidence of the depredation event. If you suspect the loss was caused by a Mexican wolf:

- Protect the evidence from additional animals or people by covering it.
- Contact your local WS field representative, tribal investigator or the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team to investigate the death and determine if it was incurred by Mexican wolves.

If the investigator attributes the cause of death to Mexican wolves, you must submit the completed Depredation Report Form, the requested claim for depredation compensation and complete contact information to the Coexistence Council within six months of the completed investigation.

Additional Resources

- **Website:** <http://www.coexistencouncil.org/home.html>
- **2014 Strategic Plan:** https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/MWLCC_Final.pdf

Partnership Opportunities

Some federal funding opportunities do not directly fund landowners and producers. Instead, organizations, universities or state agencies apply for funding and then provide programs that work directly with or support landowners and producers. These programs may be locally or regionally based, so individuals should talk to their local NRCS representative about the programs offered in their area.

Conservation Innovation Grants

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are for the development of tools, technologies and strategies to support next-generation conservation efforts on working lands and market-based solutions to resource challenges. The CIG program falls under EQIP and is often used to test the validity of new NRCS conservation practices. Individual landowners or producers with an idea for a CIG are encouraged to reach out to an appropriate eligible entity (e.g., organization, university, state agency) to discuss partnering to test solutions on their land.

Several CIG projects have sought to address human-wildlife conflict. One such project administered by Defenders, “Reducing Risk of Wolf-Livestock Interactions and Livestock Mortality in Northern California through the Use of Coexistence Practices,” looked at nonlethal ways to reduce conflict between wolves and livestock in the state. Producers living and working in the areas around Plumas, Lassen, Modoc and Shasta counties were invited to two-day training sessions on range riding and other conflict mitigation strategies. Defenders also provided producers with cattle in high-conflict areas with turbo-fladry, scare devices and other nonlethal deterrents. Follow-up evaluations showed that appropriate conflict mitigation strategies used correctly effectively reduced conflict between wolves and livestock.

If you are a landowner or producer with an idea for a CIG, reach out to an appropriate eligible entity (e.g., organization, university, state agency) to discuss partnering to test solutions on your land.



Additional Resources

- **Examples of current and past projects:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ciglanding/national/programs/financial/cig/cigsearch/>
- **Website:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) provides funding for partnerships between NRCS and entities that can provide technical and research assistance to address watershed, on-farm and regional natural resource concerns. RCPP allows NRCS to co-invest with partners to develop and implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges. RCPP projects are usually specific to a region, such as a watershed, specific landform type or multi-state area.

Producers working in a region with an active RCPP are encouraged to apply. Organizations and agencies administering RCPP projects must work with a landowner or producer as part of their contract. In return, the producer or landowner may receive cost-sharing or even cash payments for implementing any conservation practices included in the RCPP. If you want to be a part of an RCPP, you can either apply through your local NRCS office or through any of the organizations or agencies partnering with NRCS on the RCPP.

Many RCPP projects have a wildlife focus. One RCPP, “Working Lands for Florida Panther Conservation,” specifically works to address conflict between livestock and Florida panthers. This RCPP led by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission pays landowners for ecosystem services through a funding pool specifically set aside for RCPP. Producers, landowners and managers with land within the designated RCPP panther project area are eligible to receive financial assistance for implementing NRCS conservation



FWC/ARLO

practices that directly and/or indirectly benefit Florida panthers on their land. An NRCS representative works with applicants to develop a conservation plan that addresses their conflict concerns, similar to how the EQIP program is implemented. Applicants do not need to have evidence of panther presence on their land to be eligible for the RCPP project.

Additional Resources

- **List of currently funded RCPP projects:** <https://nrcs-sites.secure.force.com/>
- **Website:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/>

MEETING A NONFEDERAL MATCH

Some programs require a nonfederal financial match, which can be challenging. Partnering with organizations like Defenders may make it possible to meet this requirement. For example, in the Southwest Defenders supports 12 to 15 range rider projects each year via a cost-share program with host ranches. The goal of this project is to improve monitoring of wolves and livestock and to implement nonlethal tools and management practices to reduce the potential for conflict. The expenditures from Defenders and the in-kind donations from landowners, producers or managers can be combined and used to meet nonfederal matches for other grants and programs such as CIG, RCPP, and the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Project Grant Program.



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