

BEEF BUSINESS

by Shauna Hermel, editor, Angus Beef Bulletin

In this month's "Beef Business," we present some legislative wins affecting beef cattle producers.

Gray wolf removed from endangered species list

The Department of the Interior announced Oct. 29 it has removed the gray wolf from the endangered species list, signaling a successful recovery under the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA). The gray wolf spent more than four decades on the endangered species list. The population is now thriving in the lower 48 states.

State and tribal wildlife management agencies will now be responsible for the management and protection of the gray wolf.

"This is an Endangered Species Act success story," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. "The gray wolf joins more than 50 other animals, including the bald eagle, as an example of how careful management and partnerships between federal and state agencies can result in the successful recovery of a once-threatened species. The gray wolf population is now thriving, so it is appropriate to turn management over to the states, which can oversee the species in a way that is most appropriate for each region."

"The recovery and delisting of the gray wolf is an outstanding victory under the *Endangered Species Act* and should be celebrated accordingly," said National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Vice President Don Schiefelbein, who was able to celebrate the announcement in his

home state of Minnesota, which has been the stage for a number of the legal and procedural challenges that have plagued previous delisting efforts.

"[This] announcement is the culmination of decades of work done by cattle producers and landowners nationwide to protect habitat ensuring wolf recovery efforts were successful, even when impacts to their livelihoods were significant. The road to recovery and delisting has been fraught with purely political lawsuits that promoted emotion over fact, and the facts are clear: the gray wolf population is recovered, and states are well-equipped to manage this population."

"Today's announcement is welcome news for public lands ranchers who have spent decades defending their livestock from wolves while also defending previous delisting rules in court," said Public Lands Council (PLC) President Niels Hansen. "By returning gray wolves to state management, we are giving long-overdue recognition to a conservation victory under the *Endangered Species Act* and returning to a state wildlife management model that has demonstrated success for thousands of other species."

More than 1,600 species remain on the federal threatened and endangered list. Delisting the gray wolf allows the Department of the

Interior to focus resources on other species in need of recovery.

Seven recognized for stewardship

The NCBA recognized seven of the nation's top cattle operations for implementing practices that make them true stewards of land, air and water resources. Exemplifying

the commitment of all producers to protect the resources in their care and improve their operations for future generations of cattlemen

and women, those honored with regional awards through the Environmental Stewardship Awards Program are:

- Region I, SK Herefords, New York;
- Region II, Southern Cross Farms, Mississippi;
- Region III, Euken-Myers Family, Iowa;
- Region IV, Double C Cattle Co., Oklahoma;
- Region V, Beatty Canyon Ranch, Colorado;
- Region VI, Boies Ranch, Nevada; and
- Region VII, Johnson Farms, South Dakota.

Each will advance to be considered for the 2021 National Environmental Stewardship Award, to be announced in 2021.



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“Cattle producers are the original stewards of the land. For generations, cattlemen and cattlemen have shared a commitment to improving their operations with an understanding that better management techniques improve the productivity of our farms and ranches. Those improvements allow us to produce high-quality beef while also giving back to our communities in the form of beautiful open spaces, wildlife habitat and, of course, a high-quality beef product,” said NCBA President Marty Smith. “These seven operations provide an excellent demonstration that agricultural stewardship can improve habitat and the environment everywhere across the nation.”

Established in 1991, by the NCBA to recognize outstanding land stewards in the cattle industry, the Environmental Stewardship Award Program is sponsored by Corteva Agriscience, McDonald's, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Cattlemen's Foundation (NCF).

Vytelle adds genetic analytics to portfolio

On Oct. 27, Vytelle announced the exclusive licensing of the Synomics Insights Platform to increase the accuracy of predicting cattle performance using phenotype and genomics data.

“Vytelle will now be able to offer cattle producers the ability to correlate elite phenotype performance to unique genetic trait combinations,” said Kerryann Kocher, company CEO. “Combining this capability with our GrowSafe

Systems phenotype data capture platform, Vytelle will offer cattle producers new intelligence to correlate genome to phenotype. As a result, producers can more rapidly multiply their elite genetics using our modern *in vitro* fertilization system, providing them a complete solution.”

The Synomics platform can process thousands of diverse data sets and analyze large-scale genotypic, phenotypic and environmental data.

Vytelle and Synomics are part of the Wheetheaf Group, an international investor in food and agriculture focused on creating efficiencies in the production and distribution of food and developing innovative business models and technologies to deliver affordable, nutritious and safe food that sustains both human health and the health of the planet.

CFAP 2 applications due Dec. 11

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting



applications for the second round of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2) through Dec. 11, 2020. CFAP 2 provides agricultural producers with financial assistance to help absorb some of the increased marketing costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than \$7 billion in payments had already been approved by late October, according to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue.

“America's agriculture communities are resilient, but still face many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These payments, directed by President

Trump, will continue to help this critical industry recoup some of their losses from ongoing market disruptions and associated costs,” Secretary Perdue said. “This program builds upon the over \$10 billion disbursed under the first round of CFAP. Agricultural producers who have been impacted by the pandemic since April 2020 are encouraged to apply for assistance.”

Since CFAP 2 enrollment began on Sept. 21, FSA has approved more than 443,000 applications. The top five states for payments are Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois and Kansas. USDA has released a data dashboard on application progress and program payments and will release further updates each Monday at 2:00 p.m. ET. The report can be viewed at farmers.gov/cfap.

Through CFAP 2, USDA is making available up to \$14 billion for agricultural producers who continue to face market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19. CFAP 2 is a separate program from the first iteration of CFAP (CFAP 1). Farmers and ranchers who participated in CFAP 1 will not be automatically enrolled and must complete a new application for CFAP 2. FSA will accept CFAP 2 applications through Dec. 11, 2020.

CFAP 2 supports eligible producers of row crops, livestock, specialty crops, dairy, aquaculture and many other commodities, including many that were ineligible for CFAP 1. FSA's CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder, available on the website listed above, simplifies finding eligible commodities.

To find the latest information on CFAP 2, visit farmers.gov/CFAP or call 877-508-8364.

NRCS releases EQIP final rule

The USDA Oct. 23 released the final rule for its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The rule updates USDA's flagship program as directed by the *2018 Farm Bill* and integrates feedback from agricultural producers and others.

"This final rule enables us to continue helping producers manage their land in the most beneficial ways possible," said Kevin Norton, acting chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "EQIP offers producers more than 150 conservation practices and helps bridge the gap between their concerns and the opportunity to implement solutions."

NRCS provides producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement conservation practices through EQIP. Popular EQIP practices include cover crops, nutrient management, forest stand improvement, prescribed grazing, irrigation efficiency improvement, and water quality improvement practices.

Implementing conservation practices can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil, and better wildlife habitat while improving agricultural operations.

EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis. If a producer's application is funded, NRCS will offer an EQIP contract for financial assistance to help address the cost of implementing the practices. Payment rates for conservation practices are reviewed and set each fiscal year.

NRCS received nearly 600

comments on the interim final rule, which was published Dec. 17, 2019. To integrate that feedback, NRCS further updated EQIP to:

- Revise its purpose statement to expressly include addressing resource concerns for organic producers, avoiding the need for more regulatory programs and helping producers transition from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- Revise ranking protocols to expressly include consideration of an applicant's status under CRP.
- Adjust the definition for a "comprehensive nutrient management plan" to ensure only applicable natural resources need to be considered.
- Modify the requirements for an EQIP plan of operations that includes the progressive implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan.
- Modify language in the national priorities to specifically include soil health and weather and drought resilience in the national priorities.
- Modify the purpose and scope of Conservation Innovation Grants to expressly include field research.
- Authorize reduced matching requirements for Conservation Innovation Grant projects aimed at helping historically underserved producers.
- Updates to EQIP included in the interim final rule included:
- Creating incentive contracts and payments for incentive practices to better support locally led

conservation needs.

- Requiring NRCS to offer an advance payment option for historically underserved producers.
- Raising the payment cap for producers participating in the Organic Initiative to \$140,000 for contracts entered into for fiscal years 2019 through 2023.
- Expanding the Conservation Innovation Grant program, which is funded through EQIP, to include opportunities for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials and Soil Health Demonstration Trials.

The *2018 Farm Bill* created incentive contracts, which address up to three priority resource concerns within targeted watersheds and other high-priority landscapes. While typical EQIP contracts last five years, these contracts last five to 10 years.

The Farm Bill also enabled increased payments for priority practices, through which NRCS can designate up to 10 practices in each state to receive higher rates.

EQIP helps producers make conservation improvements on their working lands, and it contributes to USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture in half by 2050.

For more information, visit your state website from nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS field office.

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