

CONSERVATION Showcase

FSA, NRCS Team Up to Help Restore Gilles Farms Cropland

A couple of years ago when a levee broke, depositing yards of sediment on a field at Gilles Farms near Arrey, New Mexico, the teamwork of NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) came into play. NRCS offered the support of its technical assistance program, and FSA utilized the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to answer the needs of this vegetable and crop producer.

The damage that was caused by flooding at Gilles Farms included the yards of sediment dumped, and breakage on concrete lined ditches. What was once an alfalfa field was now a sea of alluvium, and an irrigation system was in need of repairs.

“The Sierra County FSA Committee stepped up to the plate at this point to make emergency recovery possible using ECP,” said Adrian Tafoya, Truth or Consequences NRCS district conservationist.

ECP provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters. In tandem with this funding, NRCS offered substantive levels of technical assistance through expertise and support in assessing the damage and completing plans for recovery.

For land to be eligible in a natural disaster under ECP, that disaster event must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:



Left: Field on Gilles Farm buried in sediment. Right: Field after ECP restores it to production.

- Impair or endanger the land;
- Materially affect the land's productive capacity;
- Represent unusual damage which, except for wind erosion, is not the type likely to recur frequently in the same area; and
- Be so costly to repair the federal assistance is or will be required to return the land to productive agricultural use.

To rehabilitate farmland, program participants may implement emergency conservation practices, such as debris removal and restoration of fences and conservation structures.

The efforts on the Gilles Farms are seen today in a healthy corn field and operative irrigation system. By working together, NRCS and FSA helped make it happen.