

Marginal Pastureland

This document summarizes the definition of “Marginal Pastureland” provided by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Florida to assist FSA in determining land eligibility for marginal pastureland in Florida

Definition:

Only “Marginal Pastureland”, including grazing land not previously planted to forage and not devoted to a riparian buffer (CP22), wetland buffer (CP29), or wildlife habitat buffer (CP30), is eligible to be enrolled.

Marginal Pastureland for Florida must meet both of the following criteria:

1. Immediately adjacent and/or parallel to one of the following and meet one of the following criteria:

- Perennial Stream or River
- Seasonal Stream or River
- Permanent Water Body, which includes:
 - Lake
 - Pond

2. Have a significant soil or economic limitations for use, and meet one of the following criteria:

- Extremely Droughty Soils: soils classified VIs or greater
- Steep & Highly Erodible Soils: soils classified IVe or greater
- Poorly Drained Soils: soils classified as Vw or greater

Criteria for eligible lands:

Perennial Stream or River

- 1 Maintains the presence of water throughout the year. An on-site field visit may be required to make the determination.

Seasonal Stream or River

- 1 Maintains the presence of water for only part of the year but longer than would result from a rainfall event and must have a defined stream channel. USGS maps shall not be used to determine seasonal streams and rivers. An on-site field visit may be required to make the determination.

Permanent Water Body

- 1 Lake or Pond that provide at least seasonal flow of surface water from the water body off the farm. Permanent water bodies maintain the presence of water throughout the year.

Extremely Droughty Soils

- 1 Soils with very low forage production potential due to deep water tables and/or very low water holding capacity. This will include all soils classified as VIs or greater. The low production potential limits the economic return and the sustained use as pasture on these sites.

Steep & Highly Erodible Soils

- 1 Soils with limited potential for forage production and utilization and have a high potential for soil erosion. This will include all soils classified IVe or greater. Reduced forage yields, limited utilization by animals, and severe erosion concerns exist on these sites.

Poorly Drained Soils

- 1 Soils with limited potential for forage production and utilization as pasture due to poor drainage and long periods of inundation. This includes all soils classified as Vw or greater, unless drainage systems have been installed and maintained. These areas usually result in low forage yields or limit utilization due to the high water and long periods of inundation. As a result these areas cannot sustain profitable use of these areas as pasture.

Citations:

NRCS-National Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997

FSA-Agricultural Resource Conservation Program, Handbook 2CRP revision 5, 2010

Criteria for Ineligible Lands:

Ineligible Water Bodies:

- 1 A pond that is less than 5.0 acres and does not provide at least a seasonal flow of surface water from the water body off the farm is not eligible
- 1 Water bodies that do not provide a permanent water cover throughout the year in all years are not eligible

Ineligible Lands:

- 1 Cropland
- 1 Forestland
- 1 Woodland
- 1 Rangeland*
 - o Land that occurs in its natural ecological state, refer to NRCS 26 Ecological Communities
- 1 Terrace channels
- 1 Grass or sod waterways
- 1 Gullies
- 1 Narrow or wide washes
- 1 Roadside ditches
- 1 Well, spring or seep
- 1 Wetlands, of any type
- 1 Marshes, swamps or sloughs
- 1 Center pivot irrigation corners
- 1 Irrigation canals or ditches
- 1 Tail water recovery pit/system

Ineligible Lands due to Management:

- 1 Areas where forage has been planted and produces marginal yields because of overgrazing.
- 1 Areas where soil amendments have been applied at rates which reduce forage yields.
- 1 Areas with reduced forage yields due to lack of normal weed management activities.
- 1 Areas where sod has been lifted and normal management practices have not been applied.

Citations:

NRCS-National Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997

FSA-Agricultural Resource Conservation Program, Handbook 2CRP revision 5, 2010

Rational:

It is understood that the definition of “Marginal Land” was based on normal management activities that would permit sustained use at economically viable levels.

The definition shown above was derived from combining the definition of “Marginal Land” and “Pasture” as written in the National Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997. The definitions shown below are clearly written and leave little room for creative interpretation.

Marginal Land:

“Land of questionable physical or economic capabilities for sustaining a specific use.”

Pasture:

“Grazing lands comprised of introduced or domesticated native forage species that are used primarily for the production of livestock. They receive periodic renovation and/or cultural treatments such as tillage, fertilization, mowing, weed control, and may be irrigated.”

For the purpose of this document the following statement defines the term “questionable physical capabilities”.

A site where it is not economically feasible to apply normal management practices (e.g. grazing, mowing, fertilizing, liming, seeding, scattering droppings, contour furrowing, water table control) or other methods of management designed to overcome the site's physical limitations and improve vegetation yield, quality, or utilization for grazing purposes

Cropland and woodland are land uses that were established for distinctly different purposes than pasture and do not meet the definition of pasture. Similarly, Rangeland and Forestland are types of land, which do not meet the pasture definition. Therefore, it is not logical to include these types of land into the definition of “Marginal Pasture”

Because the soil classification system considers factors which are influenced by hydrology, parent material, topography, and climate, it is the best available tool for identifying areas to be considered “Marginal Pasture”.

While many of Florida soils have limitations which preclude the successful establishment and management of individual species, very few of these soils will have limitations that preclude the sustained use of all forages. For example, many soils in south Florida are too wet to permit establishment and sustained use of bahiagrass. However, these same soils are well adapted to forage species that have been agronomically selected and bred to perform well on wet sites. Therefore, it is very difficult to classify these soils as having a significant limitation for forage production.

Citations:

NRCS-National Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997

FSA-Agricultural Resource Conservation Program, Handbook 2CRP revision 5, 2010