

**Subject:** Request 2025-FSA-08431-F - Bocinsky - Additional Clarification Needed  
**Date:** Monday, August 11, 2025 at 09:20:10 Mountain Daylight Time  
**From:** SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA  
**To:** Bocinsky, Kyle, SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA  
**CC:** Vander Linden, Christina - FPAC-FBC, MO, Nagel, Carol - FPAC-FBC, ND, Nguyen, Hani - FPAC-FBC, MN  
**Attachments:** image002.png

Dr. Bocinsky,

The program owner needs additional clarification as to what data you are looking for. Here is what the program owner is saying:

*This request is a bit perplexing for me, because I don't think the requestor understands that process FSA uses for LFP eligibility.*

*FSA does not use a county boundary to determine LFP eligibility. FSA and the USDM use a tabular file of counties, states, and grazing periods established for specific pasture types in conjunction with drought data received from the USDM by physical state and county, no boundary files are used.*

*FSA uses a county boundary layer to display the counties that have already been determined eligible based on USDM data and are on the tabular list of eligible counties provided by policy. The county boundary FSA uses to display the eligible counties is based off of U.S. Census data. FSA can provide that county boundary layer used I want to emphasize that that boundary layer is not used in the process for determining LFP eligibility.*

We cannot proceed further with your request until we receive additional written clarification from you. Please note that if we do not hear from you within 20 business days from the date of this email, we will assume that you are no longer interested in pursuing your request and we will administratively close your request.

If you have any questions regarding the processing of this request, please contact Government Information (GI) Specialist Christina Vander Linden at 816-823-2669. If GI Specialist Christina Vander Linden at 816-823-2669 is not available, please contact GI Specialist Hani Nguyen at 651-602-7848 or GI Specialist Carol Nagel at 701-530-2107. We can also be reached at the group e-mail address [SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov).

Sincerely,

*Patrick McLoughlin*

Patrick McLoughlin

FOIA OFFICER

FPAC-BC External Affairs Division | FOIA Team

p: (202) 590-6168

[Patrick.mcloughlin@usda.gov](mailto:Patrick.mcloughlin@usda.gov) / FOIA Team e: [SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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**From:** SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA <[SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)>

**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2025 8:58 AM

**To:** [kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu](mailto:kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu); SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA <[SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)>

**Cc:** Vander Linden, Christina - FPAC-FBC, MO <[christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov](mailto:christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov)>; Nagel, Carol - FPAC-FBC, ND <[carol.nagel@usda.gov](mailto:carol.nagel@usda.gov)>; Nguyen, Hani - FPAC-FBC, MN <[hani.nguyen@usda.gov](mailto:hani.nguyen@usda.gov)>

**Subject:** Request 2025-FSA-08431-F - Bocinsky - Clarified

Dr. Bocinsky,

You have clarified your request to be for *“the county boundaries used to create the county-level eligibility data — in a geospatial file format such as an ESRI ShapeFile, GeoJSON, or similar, based on the criteria described in my request. These county boundaries are used in conjunction with the normal grazing periods (provided to me via FOIA 2025-FSA-04691-F) and US Drought Monitor weekly assessments to create the county/grazing land eligibility data (provided to me via FOIA 2025-FSA-04690-F). Because of how county boundaries may be different depending on the dataset and vintage used, it is necessary to have access to the precise county boundary data used in every determination.”*

Your request is being handled under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 (<http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/amended-foia-redlined.pdf>).

We process requests on a first-in, first-out basis. The actual processing time will depend upon the complexity of the request and whether or not it involves sensitive or voluminous records, or extensive searches and/or consultations. We also process requests on a multi-track basis. This means that simple requests, requiring minimal effort to respond, are processed in one track, and more voluminous and complex requests are processed in another track. We have placed your request in the Simple track.

Request 2025-FSA-08431-F is perfected and has been moved from pending into the Simple processing track. This request has been placed in the “Educational Use” Request Category and all fees will be waived.

The estimated date upon which we expect to provide you the requested records is on or before: August 14, 2025.

If you have questions concerning this request, please contact Government Information (GI) Specialist Christina Vander Linden at 816-823-2669. If GI Specialist Christina Vander Linden is not available, please contact GI Specialist Carol Nagel at 701-530-2107 or GI Specialist Hani Nguyen at 651-602-7848. We can also be reached at the group e-mail address [SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov).

I appreciate the opportunity to assist you in this matter.

Sincerely,

*Patrick McLoughlin*

Patrick McLoughlin

FOIA Officer

FPAC-BC External Affairs Division | FOIA Team



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**From:** Bocinsky, Kyle <[kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu](mailto:kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 16, 2025 9:09 AM

**To:** SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA <[SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)>

**Cc:** Vander Linden, Christina - FPAC-FBC, MO <[christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov](mailto:christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov)>; Nagel, Carol - FPAC-FBC, ND <[carol.nagel@usda.gov](mailto:carol.nagel@usda.gov)>; Nguyen, Hani - FPAC-FBC, MN <[hani.nguyen@usda.gov](mailto:hani.nguyen@usda.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: Request 2025-FSA-08431-F - Bocinsky - Acknowledgement / Clarification

Good morning,

Thank you so much for the quick response. I think there is some confusion about what I'm requesting. I am not requesting producer- or field-level data. Instead, I'm requesting the county boundaries used to create the county-level eligibility data, based on the criteria described in my request. These county boundaries are used in conjunction with the normal grazing periods (provided to me via FOIA 2025-FSA-04691-F) and US Drought Monitor weekly assessments to create the county/grazing land eligibility data (provided to me via FOIA 2025-FSA-04690-F). Because of how county boundaries may be different depending on the dataset and vintage used, it is necessary to have access to the precise county boundary data used in every determination.

Happy to have a call with you about this if it is still unclear.

Thank you!

Best,  
Kyle

**Kyle Bocinsky, PhD**

**Director of Climate Extension,** [Montana Climate Office, University of Montana](#)  
**Asst. Research Professor,** [Society and Conservation, University of Montana](#)

*The University of Montana acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people.  
We honor the path they have shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.*

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**From:** SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA <[SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)>

**Date:** Wednesday, July 16, 2025 at 07:30

**To:** Bocinsky, Kyle <[kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu](mailto:kyle.bocinsky@umontana.edu)>, SM.FPAC.BC.FOIA  
<[SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov)>

**Cc:** Vander Linden, Christina - FPAC-FBC, MO <[christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov](mailto:christina.vanderlinden@usda.gov)>, Nagel, Carol - FPAC-FBC, ND <[carol.nagel@usda.gov](mailto:carol.nagel@usda.gov)>, Nguyen, Hani - FPAC-FBC, MN  
<[hani.nguyen@usda.gov](mailto:hani.nguyen@usda.gov)>

**Subject:** Request 2025-FSA-08431-F - Bocinsky - Acknowledgement / Clarification

Mr. Bocinsky,

This letter acknowledges receipt of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (copy attached) dated July 15, 2025, to the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Production and Conservation Business Center (FPAC-BC). Your request was received in this office and assigned control number 2025-FSA-08431-F. Please use this control number for all future communications regarding this request.

We are unable to begin processing your request at this time because we cannot determine precisely which records you are seeking. In your request form, you state that you are requesting

*"official geospatial county boundaries — in a geospatial file format such as an ESRI ShapeFile, GeoJSON, or similar — that were used to determine eligibility for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for each program year (2008–2025)."*

However, we need to know do you or your university have a memorandum of understanding with the USDA to receive these data points without producer consent? If yes, please provide us a copy by replying to this email.

We cannot proceed further with your request until we receive additional written clarification from you. Please note that if we do not hear from you within 20 business days from the date of this email, we will assume that you are no longer interested in pursuing your request and we will administratively close your request.

If you have any questions regarding the processing of this request, please contact Government Information (GI) Specialist Christina Vander Linden at 816-823-2669. If GI Specialist Christina Vander Linden at 816-823-2669 is not available, please contact GI Specialist Hani Nguyen at 651-602-7848 or GI Specialist Carol Nagel at 701-530-2107. We can also be reached at the group e-mail address [SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FP.FOIA@usda.gov).

Sincerely,

*Patrick McLoughlin*

Patrick McLoughlin

FOIA OFFICER

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