

Free wildfire and land services in Custer County, Montana

Printed from <https://resources.sierralogandtimber.com/montana/custer-county> on 28 August 2026.

The extension office for Custer County is inside the courthouse on Main Street in Miles City, suite nine, and it publishes an office mailbox as well as a telephone line. Heating and weatherization applications go to Action for Eastern Montana at Glendive, the agency the state names for seventeen counties across the east. Those are the only two local organisations recorded for Custer so far. Anyone with forested ground can still ring the state forestry department in Missoula, which runs the service forester network and arranges a free assessment of the ground around a house.

This summary was drafted by a machine from the listings on this page, and an editor has not rewritten it yet.

Nothing local has been verified in Custer County yet. What follows applies here because it covers Montana or the whole country.

Nationwide

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Federal agency

The federal agency to register with after a disaster, but only once the President has declared one for your county. Individual Assistance can put money toward temporary housing and uninsured losses, and disaster case management assigns a person to your file rather than leaving you to a form. Registration is at disasterassistance.gov or on the phone, and it is a separate track from your insurance claim, not a replacement for it.

Call 1-800-621-3362

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

National Weather Service

Federal agency

National public inquiry line; landowners should use their local forecast office.

Call (301) 427-9855

Visit [weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov) (<https://www.weather.gov/>)

Email nws.communications.office@noaa.gov (<mailto:nws.communications.office@noaa.gov>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory on 12 August 2026. We have not called it.

United Policyholders

Nonprofit

A nonprofit that takes no insurance industry money. Currently running in person and Zoom clinics in disaster areas, including Altadena and Pasadena.

Call (415) 393-9990

Visit uphelp.org (<https://uphelp.org/>)

Email info@uphelp.org (<mailto:info@uphelp.org>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory on 12 August 2026. We have not called it.

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Federal agency

No single general-public phone is published on the official contact page; use the web form.

Visit [fws.gov](https://www.fws.gov/) (<https://www.fws.gov/>)

US Geological Survey

Federal agency

(888) 275-8747 is 1-888-ASK-USGS.

Call (888) 275-8747

Visit [usgs.gov](https://www.usgs.gov/) (<https://www.usgs.gov/>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory on 12 August 2026. We have not called it.

USDA Forest Service

Federal agency

National headquarters line; the Pacific Southwest Region (R5) line is (707) 562-8737.

Call (800) 832-1355

Visit [fs.usda.gov](https://www.fs.usda.gov/) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/>)

Email sm.fs.r5webinquiry@usda.gov (<mailto:sm.fs.r5webinquiry@usda.gov>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory on 12 August 2026. We have not called it.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS

The phone is the California state office in Davis. Programmes are applied for at the county NRCS Service Center, and enrolment requires a farm or tract number via the Farm Service Agency.

Call (530) 792-5653

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

USDA Rural Development

Federal agency

The phone is the California Rural Development state office.

Call (530) 792-5800

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

Conservation Stewardship Program

Cost share. Cost share, from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Stewardship payments for maintaining and improving conservation systems on working land. The ACEP easement and AMA programmes run on the same periodic batching cycle.

How to apply: Sign up is continuous at your county NRCS Service Center; funding is awarded by ranking in periodic batching rounds.

Call (530) 792-5600

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

Emergency Watershed Protection

Water. Free, from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Federal help to stabilise a watershed after a disaster, which after a fire means the burn scars, the slipping slopes and the choked channels the fire leaves behind. A landowner cannot apply: a public sponsor, usually a county or a resource conservation district, applies on behalf of an area, and whether it runs at all depends on the funding available. If you have a post fire erosion problem, ring your district or county and ask whether they are pursuing it. You cannot apply for this yourself and it is not a slip of paperwork you can get round. A project has to begin with a sponsor, and the sponsors named are cities, counties, towns, conservation districts and federally recognised tribes; a private landowner applies through one of them. Nor does it start on request: the NRCS State Conservationist declares the local watershed emergency, working with the sponsor. What it then pays for is the work after the disaster, which after a fire means stabilising banks, clearing debris and protecting houses and infrastructure from what comes down the hill in the first heavy rain. So the useful call is to your conservation district or county, asking whether they are pursuing it for your area.

Who qualifies: Applications come through public sponsors such as counties and RCDs, not directly from landowners.

Call (530) 792-5600

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Cost share. Cost share, from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Financial and technical cost share for conservation practices on cropland, rangeland and private non industrial forestland. Serves raw land.

Who qualifies: Serves raw, undeveloped land. Requires a farm or tract number via the Farm Service Agency.

How to apply: Sign up is year round at your county NRCS Service Center; funding is awarded by ranking in periodic batching rounds, not first come first served. Apply as early as possible for the next cycle.

Call (530) 792-5600

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

FEMA Individual Assistance

Cost share. Free to qualifying landowners, from Federal Emergency Management Agency

Individual Assistance, disaster case management and Hazard Mitigation Assistance after a federal disaster declaration; preparedness guides at ready.gov.

Start by checking whether your county sits in a declared area: the site lists the states with an Individual Assistance declaration and you pick yours. The FEMA helpline takes calls 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. in your own time zone, seven days a week, on 1-800-621-3362. Disasters whose deadline has passed may still be open for late applications.

Who qualifies: Available only after a federal disaster declaration covering your county.

How to apply: Register at disasterassistance.gov or call.

Call (800) 621-3362

Visit disasterassistance.gov (<https://www.disasterassistance.gov/>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

Fire Weather Forecasts and Red Flag Warnings

Education. Free, from National Weather Service

Free forecasts, fire weather outlooks and red flag warnings. A red flag warning is the weather service saying conditions are right for a fire to start easily and spread fast, which makes it the day to put off burning, grinding, welding or mowing dry grass until it lifts.

The two words to tell apart are watch and warning. A fire weather watch means the conditions are possible but are not here yet and are not certain, and it is issued to give land managers and the public time to get ready. A red flag warning means the critical fire weather is already happening or is about to, and the weather service issues it together with the land management agencies. If you were planning to burn, grind, weld or mow dry grass, a red flag warning is the day to leave it.

Call (301) 427-9855

Visit [weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov/) (<https://www.weather.gov/>)

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Forest Service Landowner Assistance

Forest health. Free, from USDA Forest Service

Technical help for private forest landowners and the Forest Stewardship programme, delivered in California through the CAL FIRE partnership. State and Private Forestry money also funds local reforestation efforts such as the Feather River RCD's EFoRT.

You do not deal with the Forest Service directly for this. The programme runs through a state coordinator, and that is who to ask for. What it supports is good stewardship on privately owned forest land, including agroforestry, aimed at keeping several forest resources going at once rather than timber alone. It is not a small or experimental thing: more than 25 million acres are being managed under stewardship plans written through it.

Call (800) 832-1355

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife. Free, from US Fish and Wildlife Service

Free technical and financial assistance to private landowners for voluntary habitat restoration: wetlands, uplands and riparian work.

The fear people have about a federal habitat agreement is the one this programme answers in terms. You keep every property right you have, and you are not required to let the public onto your land. You go on owning and managing the ground while the work is done, the project is voluntary and shaped around what you want, and both technical help and money are free to you. The commitment is time rather than control: projects run for a minimum of ten years.

Who qualifies: Serves raw, undeveloped land. The landowner keeps all property rights and no public access is required; agreements run a 10 year minimum.

How to apply: Contact the California state coordinator via fws.gov/program/partners-fish-and-wildlife.

Roadmap to Recovery

Education. Free, from United Policyholders

Free guidance on insurance claims, contractors, rebuilding and avoiding scams: the little yellow book, the Ask an Expert forum, and in person and Zoom clinics in disaster areas.

This is a consumer non-profit, not an insurer or a broker: it says it does not sell insurance or take money from insurance companies. The help is sorted by disaster, with libraries for the 2025 California wildfires in Los Angeles

County and for 2026 fires in Colorado and the Spokane area, so start from the one that matches yours.

Call (415) 393-9990

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

USDA Section 502 Direct Home Loan

Cost share. Free to qualifying landowners, from USDA Rural Development

Zero down, subsidised rate as low as 1 percent, for low and very low income buyers in eligible rural areas. Funds can build, repair or relocate a home, or buy and prepare a site including water and septic. A rule effective February 10, 2026 lowered the modest home cap from 80 to 60 percent of the local FHA Section 203(b) limit and added appraised value caps, which disqualifies more higher value rural homes.

The low rate is not the rate: payment assistance is a subsidy that brings the payment down for a period, sized on your adjusted family income, and it can take the effective interest as low as 1 percent. There is a string attached that people miss, so read it twice. You have to pay back all or part of the subsidy you received when the title changes hands or when you stop living in the house. The term can run to 33 years, or 38 for very low income applicants who cannot manage the payments over 33. The money is not only for buying: it will build, repair, renovate or move a home, or buy a site and get it ready, including bringing in water and a septic system. The house cannot be worth more than the loan limit for your area.

Who qualifies: Low and very low income buyers in eligible rural areas; test the parcel and income on the USDA eligibility map.

How to apply: Check eligibility at eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov, then apply through Rural Development.

Call (530) 792-5800

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

USDA Section 504 Home Repair Loans and Grants

Cost share. Free to qualifying landowners, from USDA Rural Development

Home repair loans to around 40,000 dollars, and grants to around 10,000 dollars for owners 62 and over, to remove health and safety hazards in eligible rural areas.

The loan and the grant are different animals. The loan goes up to 40,000 dollars, is fixed at 1 percent and runs 20 years, and can be spent on repairing, improving or modernising the house as well as on removing hazards. The grant is capped at 10,000 dollars, is only for people aged 62 or over, and may only be spent removing health and safety hazards. Where the damage came from a presidentially declared disaster the grant cap rises to 15,000 dollars. One trap: a grant has to be paid back if you sell the property within three years. You must own the house and live in it, and your income has to be under the very low limit for your county.

Call (530) 792-5800

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

USGS Topographic Maps

Planning. Free, from US Geological Survey

Free topographic maps and downloads through topoView and The National Map. Worth an hour before you buy or rebuild: contours, watercourses, roads and the shape of the slope a house would sit on, at no cost and without asking anyone's permission.

There are three kinds and they answer different questions. The historical collection is scanned quadrangle maps published between 1884 and 2006, which is how you find the old track, the old ditch and the building that is no longer there. US Topo is the current national series. OnDemand topos you build yourself, choosing the area, the

scale, the format and what goes on the map. Historical maps and current US Topo sheets from 2009 onward download free through topoView in several formats, and if you would rather have paper, maps can be printed to order.

Call (888) 275-8747

Visit [usgs.gov](https://www.usgs.gov/) (<https://www.usgs.gov/>)

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Web Soil Survey

Planning. Free, from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Free soil and parcel mapping tool for any parcel: septic suitability, building limitations and vegetation.

The way it works is that you draw an area of interest on the map and everything then reports against that shape, so you get the soils under your own boundary rather than a county average. Behind it is the full soil survey report rather than a summary, kept current, and it is meant for land use and management decisions, which is the question you are asking when you wonder whether a septic system or a foundation will work where you want it. You can take the spatial and tabular data away for use in mapping software. NRCS publishes a short four step guide, a guide to the maps, reports and tables it can produce, and a separate note on drawing your area of interest on a phone, which is the one to have with you when you are standing on the ground.

Call (530) 792-5600

Visit websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov (<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>)

Listed on their own website or an official directory. We have not called it.

What we do

Architectural & Design

Custom log/timber home design, conceptual 3D site placement, California WUI (Chapter 7A) code alignment, and scaled architectural study plans.

Manufacturing (Chico Mill)

Cedar specialists—milling 100% Cedar log wall systems, alongside Douglas Fir and Pine timber components, structural trusses, and tongue-and-groove decking/paneling.

Lumber Yard Distribution

Direct-to-parcel freight delivery, WUI-compliant exterior building shells, dimensional framing lumber, and engineered wood products.

Heavy Wood Hardware

Structural steel timber connectors, large-diameter timber fasteners, commercial exterior stains, refurbishing epoxies, and specialty timber tools.