



August 2010

## Orleans County News

### Farm Service Agency

59 Waterfront Plaza, Ste 11  
Newport, VT 05855-4877

334-6090-Phone  
1-866-241-2190 Toll Free Phone  
334-1365-Fax

### Hours

Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

### County Committee

Scott Birch, Chair  
Doug Lawson, Vice Chair  
Donna Hammond, Voting Member  
Donna Hammond, Minority Advisor

COC meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month.

### NRCS District

Dayna Cole, Dist Mgr X18  
Sarah Damsell, ARS X20  
Dee Nault  
Paul Daniels, Chair  
Bill Lawson, Vice Chair  
Richard Delfavero, Treasurer  
William Ryan  
Darryl Mongeon

### NRCS Staff

David Blodgett, DC X25  
[David.blodgett@vt.usda.gov](mailto:David.blodgett@vt.usda.gov)  
David Gauvin, CET X23  
Brenda MacDonald-Kuper, SC X21  
Marybeth Whitten, SC X22  
Linere Silloway, PA X24

### Loan Staff

Brian Kuper, FLM X14  
[Brian.kuper@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Brian.kuper@vt.usda.gov)  
Dorcas McAllister, FLO X15  
Meghan DuBois, FLO X17  
Cheryl Smith, PT X13  
Angela Goodridge, PT X12

### Program Staff

William Putnam, CED X28  
[William.putnam@vt.usda.gov](mailto:William.putnam@vt.usda.gov)  
Laurie Locke, PT X16  
Brock Columbia, PT X26



### ACRE Yield Data Deadline Extended

The deadline for 2009 production certification to comply with ACRE was extended until September 1, 2010. The extension is for completing both the farm benchmark yield (2004 through 2008) and the actual farm yield (2009). Participants in the 2009 ACRE program must certify their yields by September 1, 2010 to remain eligible for ACRE benefits.

### CRP General Signup

A general sign-up will open for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on August 2, 2010, and continue through August 27, 2010. During the sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up.

CRP provides conservation practices that preserve the soil, clean water, and restore wildlife habitat. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for annual rental payments, cost-share, and technical assistance. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production by entering into long-term contracts for 10 to 15 years.

USDA is authorized to maintain CRP enrollment up to 32 million acres. All interested farmers and ranchers should contact the local FSA office to learn more about this program.

### Electronic Services Available

If a producer has Internet access, program participants can access many services from home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and receive approval and payment by direct deposit within 48 hours.

To participate in these services, you must meet all program eligibility requirements. Online services have stringent security measures to protect your private information. To utilize electronic services a producer needs an active USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account, which requires an e-mail address and filling out an online registration form at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/> followed by a visit to the county office for identity verification.

If you have more questions, or would like assistance establishing your account, just contact your local USDA Service Center and talk with our trained FSA personnel.

### CREP & Continuous CRP Available

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) allows farmers and ranchers to voluntarily enroll environmentally sensitive land into a program that decreases erosion, restores wildlife habitat and safeguards ground and surface water. CREP is a partnership with federal and state government and is limited to specific geographic areas.

Environmentally sensitive acreage qualifying for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) or Continuous CRP will be eligible for annual rental payments and cost-share of up to 50 percent on approved practices. These programs will remain funded, and continue to provide heightened environmental benefits on select areas.

### Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. If you are having trouble getting the credit you need for your farm, or regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available. Ask your lender about an FSA loan guarantee if you've had a setback and your lender is reluctant to extend or renew your loan. Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans can reach a maximum indebtedness of \$1,112,000. Producers are encouraged to apply early so that a loan can be processed and funded in a timely manner.

### Wetland Compliance

Producers renting or purchasing land that may have a converted wetland status need to check with the county office to learn if there are restrictions.

Farm Bill regulations provide that, unless exempt, persons are ineligible for benefits under certain programs administered by USDA if they:

- plant an agricultural commodity on wetland that was converted after December 23, 1985
- convert a wetland after November 28, 1990

FSA may not approve any loan or loan guarantee to drain, dredge, fill, level or otherwise manipulate a wetland, or to engage in any activity that results in impairing or reducing the flow, circulation or reach of water except in the case of activity related to the maintenance of previously converted wetlands.

The following provides permitted uses and restrictions of certain wetlands for compliance with Wetland compliance provisions:

- wetlands can be farmed under natural conditions, but not converted
- wetlands converted before November 28, 1990, cannot be planted to an agricultural commodity and retain eligibility for benefits
- wetlands converted after Nov. 28, 1990, must either be restored to wetland status or mitigated to regain eligibility for program benefits.
- wetlands that can be farmed under natural conditions cannot be manipulated in any way, unless the Natural Resources Conservation Service determines the work would have a minimal effect on the wetland values
- wetlands converted before December 23, 1985, can be farmed and maintained

Additional information about wetlands is available at the USDA Service Center.

### Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers

FSA assists beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size

Each member of an entity must meet the eligibility requirements. Loan approval is not guaranteed. Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



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**SURE Program --- Application Deadline for 2008 SURE program payments is September 30, 2010**

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that incurred in the crop years 2008 through September 30, 2011. To be eligible for SURE payments, a producer is required to obtain crop insurance on all crops in all counties or, if crop insurance is not available, to participate in the Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) except for grazed acreage. However, crop insurance or NAP coverage is no longer required for crops that are not of economic significance or those where the administrative fee required to buy NAP coverage exceeds 10% of the value of the coverage.

Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher are exempt from the risk management purchase requirement.

The following conditions trigger SURE payments:

- At least one crop of economic significance must suffer a 10% production loss due to an eligible disaster condition
- Crop of economic significance is a crop that has contributed or would have contributed at least 5% or more of the total expected revenue from all crops on the farm
- Producers in counties declared disaster counties by the Secretary of Agriculture, or in contiguous counties, or those who show proof of an individual loss of at least 50% are eligible to receive SURE payments for crop produced or crop quality losses. Losses are measured with consideration to the whole-farm revenue, which includes crop insurance indemnities and commodity program payments, so that producers are not paid more than once for the same loss.

A SURE calculator is available at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=diap&topic=sure>. The calculator is not official, but is intended for educational use. A fact sheet and backgrounder are also available online.

**Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged**

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of Socially Disadvantaged Applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

If producers or their spouses believe they would qualify as socially disadvantaged, they should contact their local FSA office for details. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

**Invitation to a meeting for public comment on the Ag Chapter of the Basin Planning.**

The Agency of Natural Resources is holding a public forum on August 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at the Emory Hebard state office building in Newport Vermont to discuss the draft Agricultural chapter of the Lake Memphremagog, Tomifobia and Coaticook Watershed plan. This draft chapter will be part of the water quality management plan for the basin that will focus water quality improvement efforts across all land uses in the basin for the next 5 years.

The draft chapter that will be reviewed at this meeting includes a summary of agricultural land use trends and a history of cost share projects to improve water quality in the basin. The draft chapter also includes number of goals and actions that have been identified to reduce the impacts from agricultural lands on waters in the basin.

Agricultural lands cover about 16% of the basin and along with runoff from developed land is one of the primary contributors of water quality impairments due to nutrient and sediment runoff. Lake Memphremagog is currently listed as impaired due to elevated phosphorus levels and so the process for developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and how this may influence the management of agricultural lands in the basin will also be discussed.

The Lake Memphremagog, Tomifobia and Coaticook River watersheds extend from Craftsbury and Island Pond to Norton and Newport. This watershed includes the Black, Barton, Willoughby, Clyde, and Johns Rivers and many other lakes, ponds and smaller rivers streams.

All members of the public are invited to attend. Refreshments will be provided. For more information, a copy of the draft agricultural chapter, or to provide comments on this topic please contact Ben Copans, Lake Memphremagog Watershed Coordinator with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation at 751-2610 or [ben.copans@state.vt.us](mailto:ben.copans@state.vt.us)