



NEWSLETTER



October 2012

ALASKA FSA Offices

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State Committee

**Arthur Keyes, Chair
Mike Schultz, Member**

FSA State Director's Column

It's Time to Vote

No, I'm not talking about the election on November 6 for the State Legislature, Congress and the President of the United States. Over the next few weeks, FSA ballots will arrive in your mailbox. Please take a minute to read the short biographies of the candidates running for County Committee in your area and return the ballot with your selection.

The Farm Service Agency is one of the most democratic agencies in the U.S. Government because it is built on a grass roots foundation of our farmers and ranchers. Local producers elect the members of county committees. County committees make important decisions about the programs that support our agricultural communities.

But it takes you to make democracy work. You have to stand up and be counted.

Last year, we had very few ballots returned. Only about 10% of the farmers voted. County committee members were chosen by just those few Alaskan farmers and ranchers who bothered to vote. I know we can do better than that this year.

Our voter lists are outdated. I can tell when the ballots in the white envelopes come back with wrong addresses. We're doing our best to delete old addresses, but we need your help.

Please help us keep this system alive by keeping your contact information up to date, **sending us your email address**, and encouraging others in Alaska to get on our voting lists. Anyone involved in growing food in Alaska can vote if they are 18 or over, and they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. I'm sure there are many beginning farmers, greenhouse operators, small CSA's, community gardeners, and

others who should be on our voter lists. You can help us spread the word.

I love to vote. I always take my son with me to the voting booth. He asks me about candidates and issues. I'm hoping that when he turns 18, he will actively participate in all elections: National, State, Local, and County committees, if he's involved in agriculture. Our democracy only works if we all take the time to participate and encourage our friends and neighbors to get involved. Thanks to all of you who are helping to make a bigger and better FSA team!

Sincerely,

RTCP Deadline Coming

The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Program (RTCP) signup ended on September 10, 2012. This program covered transportation expenses incurred from October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012. If you applied for the RTCP program, and have not turned all your receipts in to the FSA office, now is the time to do so. The final deadline to turn in receipts is November 5, 2012. If you have any questions, contact your local FSA office.

E-Mail Addresses

Several operators and land owners have provided our office with their e-mail address so we can send their newsletter via the internet. If anyone would like to start receiving your newsletter via e-mail please contact your County Office.

County Committee Elections

Watch your mailbox for your official county office committee election ballot starting early next month. Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters on Nov. 5, 2012. If for some reason you don't receive a ballot, feel free to notify the county FSA office.

Completed and signed ballots must be returned to the county office by close of business on Dec.3, 2012.

The following are this year's candidates who have been nominated in their LAA's to serve as a committee member. All candidates have agreed to serve if elected.

Northern County LAA-3

LAA-3 Includes the area beginning at the SE corner of the Matsu Borough proceeding north to NW corner of SE Fairbanks Census area, east to line following Clearwater road intersecting AK Hwy, proceeding SE to AKGREAA line, south then SE following line to Canadian border, south following Canadian border to Chugach Mtn. Range, turning west following Chugach Mtn. west to SW corner of Matsu Borough. (Includes Delta Junction, Glennallen, and Kenny Lake).

Paul Knopp resides on Tanana Loop Extension, Delta Junction. Paul previously operated a dairy. During the past 3 years he has produced Brome hay and Forage hay crops as well as managed a small cow-calf livestock herd. Paul is a member of the Deltana Community Corporation and Delta Farm Bureau.

Charleen Veach resides in the Tonsina North Ag Project, Kenny Lake area. Charleen's family raises vegetables, and meat birds for sale, and are developing a u-pick produce operation on the farm. Charleen currently is not a member of any farm organization but works as a biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service in her spare time.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Northern County FSA Office at 10:00 a.m. on December 7, 2012.

Southern County LAA -1

LAA-1 Includes all of the following boroughs and census areas: Wade Hampton,

Bethel, Dillingham, Bristol Bay, Lake & Peninsula, Aleutians East and West, Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula Borough south of the Kasilof river (includes Homer and surrounding area).

Christine Ford moved to Kodiak 20 years ago when her husband was stationed there with the Coast Guard. She has been poultry farming for 4 years, and owns and operates Bells Flats Poultry. Christine operates a chick hatchery and orders poultry that she does not have on hand. Christine also sells eggs, chicks, and adult birds in the Kodiak area.

Weatherly Bates moved to Homer in 2007. Weatherly and her husband Greg operate a shellfish farm and grow vegetables to sell locally. They also operate an oyster nursery capable of producing up to 6 million oysters annually. Weatherly grew up on a small farm in R.I. where they relied on farming and fishing for their income. Weatherly is on the board of Alaska Shellfish Growers Assoc and the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Assoc.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Southern County FSA Office at 3:30 p.m. on December 6, 2012.

Eligible voters in the above local administrative area who have not received a ballot should contact the FSA county office staff.

Voter Requirements - Persons meeting requirements in **1 or 2, plus 3**, below, are eligible to vote:

1. Legal voting age and have an interest in a farm or ranch as any of the following: an individual, an authorized representative of an entity, spouses when property is owned jointly or in community property states.

2. Not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations on an entire farm.

3. Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law.

Discrimination Prohibited No person shall be denied the right to vote because of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or family status.

USDA Announces Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period Now

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants, around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so they have the opportunity to participate.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in your communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: **1-888-508-4429**

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The new maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are now required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. New loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the U.S. Treasury Department.

Payments are available in the form of a partial disbursement and the remaining final disbursement. The partial disbursement will be available after a portion of the construction has been completed. The final fund disbursement will be made when all construction is completed. The maximum amount of the partial disbursement will be 50 percent of the projected and approved total loan amount.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

The following commodities are eligible for farm storage facility loans:

- Corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain
- Corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats or barley harvested as other-than-whole grain
- Pulse crops - lentils, small chickpeas and dry peas
- Hay
- Renewable biomass
- Fruits (including nuts) and vegetables - cold storage facilities.

For more information about FSFL visit the FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Marketing Assistance Loans

A Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) is available for producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or CCC takes title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if the producer regains beneficial interest.

Commodity loan eligibility also requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity meets Commodity Credit Corporation minimum grade and quality standards. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Producers do not have to participate in the Direct and Counter-Cyclical and/or ACRE Programs to be eligible for commodity loans.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may result in liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans.

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 groups.

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.

Free GovDelivery – Enroll Now

The USDA Farm Service Agency offices are moving into paperless operation to save tax payer dollars. Producers can now enroll in the new GovDelivery system which provides instant electronic deadline reminders, bulletins and newsletters direct to your email address. Now you don't have to wait for a printed newsletter only occasionally sent through the mail. County Committee ballots will continue to be mailed to all eligible producers. Producers can subscribe to receive free e-mail updates by visiting www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe. Give it a try right now.

Selected Interest Rates for October 2012		
Farm Operating - Direct		1.125%
Farm Ownership - Direct		3.000%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher		1.500%
Farm Storage Facility Loan	7 year	1.125%
	10 year	1.750%
	12 year	2.000%
Commodity Loans	1996-Present	1.125%

Dates to Remember	
Nov. 5	All RTCP receipts due to County Offices
Nov. 5	COC Ballots mailed
Dec. 3	COC Ballots due back in County Office
Dec. 6	Election Ballots Will be Counted in Public at the Southern County FSA Office at 3:30 p.m.
Dec. 7	Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Northern County FSA Office at 10:00 a.m.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.