



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE  
**FARM SERVICE AGENCY NEWSLETTER**

GRAYS HARBOR, LEWIS, and PACIFIC COUNTIES

December 20, 2007

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Wa. State FSA web site: [www.fsa.usda.gov/wa/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa/)

National FSA web site: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

Office Hours:

Monday- Friday: 8:00 a.m – 4:30 p.m

Except Holidays (New Years Day, Martin Luther King B-day

President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day,

Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, & Christmas)

Staff:

Lyle Heimbigner, County Executive Director

Mark Turner, Farm Loan Manager (360) 354-5658

Jeff Peterson, Farm Loan Officer

Lynne White & Ruth Wynn, Program Technicians

Twin Harbors – Lewis FSA Committee: Byron Bentson, Vic Boekelman, Robert Quinby, Sam Zion, and Leo Zylstra. Advisors: Liz Anderson and Anne Aho. The committee meets monthly on Thursday of the 2<sup>ND</sup> full week of the month. Meeting dates are subject to change. Please contact the office to verify meeting dates.

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a special newsletter intended to cover the programs available to producers in Lewis, Grays Harbor and Pacific counties who suffered losses from the recent floods and wind storms. The Farm Service Agency currently has only two programs to assist producers. The programs are the Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Loans. Should other programs become available, the information will be included in future newsletters. At the end of the newsletter, a section will be included for contacts for other non-FSA assistance.

## EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM (ECP)

**Purpose:** The purpose of ECP is to rehabilitate farmlands and conservation facilities damaged by natural disasters. The program provides cost-share assistance up to 75% for removing debris, grading/shaping/leveling land adversely impacted by erosion and siltation; restoring permanent vegetative cover, repairing damaged conservation facilities, and reconstructing fences destroyed by natural disasters. The maximum payment limitation is \$200,000 per person. ECP funds are to only be used to repair damage that is so severe, Federal assistance is required. For this reason, producers with damage less than \$1000 are generally ineligible to receive benefits. Cost-share assistance is limited to 50% of the agricultural market value of the land. The average Ag. Market value of land is approximately \$2400-\$3000.

**Funding:** While funding has been requested, it is anticipated that it will be several weeks before funds are actually available for approval. Producers need to be aware that until approved in writing, any work done prior to approval will be at their own risk. While we have a good track record of obtaining funding, there is no guarantee of funds until an application is approved.

**Producer Eligibility:** By law, ECP eligibility is limited to commercial agricultural producers. One must qualify as an owner, operator, or sharecropper on a farm that produces crops or livestock that are used for food or fiber. Farm operations that raise only recreational animals are not eligible for ECP. To earn benefits, one must pay for part of the rehabilitation costs. Operators and owners can both earn benefits on the same farm provided both share in the cost of the restoration work.

**Land Eligibility:** Eligible land includes any land that was normally used for growing crops or used for pasture and hay. This includes land devoted to Christmas trees and container-grown nursery stock also. Timberland is not eligible for ECP.

**Starting Work:** **To be eligible for benefits, an application needs to be completed prior to starting work.** For ECP purposes, starting work includes purchasing materials and signing contracts. A waiver can be obtained if the nature of the disaster required immediate action AND an application is signed during the signup period. (see below) A producer who requests benefits in June for work that was done in May is going to be very disappointed.

**Signup Period:** The signup period has been set for January 7 through February 15. **(Note: this is a change from what was announced at some of the public meetings).** Signups will be taken prior to the signup period for people who want to start work before January 7<sup>th</sup>. In all cases, due to limited staffing, signups will only be taken by appointment. This will allow us to schedule additional help for the office and will minimize unproductive time spent waiting in line. Your cooperation on this matter will be appreciated. For producers in outlying areas (especially Pacific County due to the closure of Hwy 6) we will try to complete applications by phone and obtain signatures by mail. Generally, it is recommended that the applications be completed in the office due to the availability of computerized maps.

**Items Eligible & Ineligible for Cost-Sharing:** Most direct costs are eligible for reimbursement. This includes the "rental value" for one's own equipment. Ineligible cost items include permit fees, one's own transportation costs, cost of pumps and pumping accessories, and donated materials. If woody debris is salvaged as firewood or used for commercial purposes, the costs of cutting firewood and "harvesting" are

not eligible. Costs for repairing damaged fences where most of the pieces are still available and it is feasible to salvage the material are not eligible for reimbursement.

**Documentation:** The name of the game is documentation. Invoices are critical to obtain reimbursement. A record of one’s own labor and equipment use (ie how many hours each day doing what kind of work) is important to obtain proper reimbursement. Photographs can be invaluable.

**Practice Completion:** Generally, all practices must be completed within 6 months of approval. Extensions of up to 6 additional months can be obtained under meritorious conditions.

**EMERGENCY LOAN PROGRAM**

Emergency Loans are available to commercial agricultural producers who cannot obtain credit at normal terms and rates from the private sector. The current loan rate is 3.75%. It is a fixed rate. Emergency loan funds can be used to restore/replace essential property, pay production costs associated with the disaster year, pay essential family living expenses, reorganize the farming operation, or refinance certain existing debt. Loan amounts are limited to the smaller of \$500,000 or the actual value of the physical losses. Emergency loans are considered a temporary source of credit and borrowers are reviewed periodically to determine whether they can return to commercial credit in the private sector. Emergency Loans must be requested within 8 months of the disaster declaration which was made earlier this month. For more information, please contact Jeff Peterson or Ruth Wynn.

**ORGANIC FARM CONCERNS**

With all the flood damage and contamination, we have received questions concerning whether farms can still qualify as being organic. According to Bob Gore, Deputy Director for the Wa. State Dept. of Ag., organic farmers can maintain their certification if testing next spring of plants shows no toxins. He indicated there are provisions in the organic regulations for disasters. Questions concerning this matter should be directed to the State Dept. of Ag. @ (360) 902-1805 - <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>

**NON-FSA CONTACTS**

**Agencies**

FEMA	1-800-621-3362
Small Business Admin.	1-800-659-2955
Rural Development	360-704-7760

**Local Contacts for Emergency Feed**

Chehalis Livestock Market	748-3191
Baw Faw Grange	245-3207
Lewis Co. Animal Shelter	740-1290

**THANK YOU LEWIS COUNTY AND BEYOND**

The generous outpouring of donations of food, feed, equipment, labor, and everything else has been unbelievable. Without the enormous generosity of the thousands of volunteers and the outstanding service provided by our state and local governments, this would have been a much more horrendous disaster. For all who have helped, a GREAT BIG THANK YOU is extended. The work is not done yet and everyone’s support is still needed as the recovery phase moves on.