



MITCHELL COUNTY FSA NEWS

OCTOBER 2004

Mitchell County FSA
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Hours
Monday-Friday
8:00 AM-4:30 PM

COC Members

Robert Cox, *Chairman*
Lynn Bradbury, *V. Chairman*
Russell Erwin, *Member*
Frank Garcia, *Minority Advisor*

Office Staff

Keith Hiser, *CED*
Wilda Vincent, *PT*
Joe Davila, *PT*
Karen Nachlinger, *PT*

FLP Staff – (Sweetwater office)

Roger Kalina – *FLM*
Joey James Giustino – *FLO*
Linda Bennett – *PT*
Carla Becker – *PT*

DCP SIGN UP STARTS OCT. 1

The DCP sign-up period for fiscal year 2005 is from Oct. 1, 2004, to June 1, 2005. The CCC-509 form, "Direct and Counter-cyclical Program Contract," includes base acres, payment acres, payment yields, producer payment shares, advance direct and counter-cyclical payment selections and signatures of the producer and county office representative.



The CCC-509 must be submitted by June 1, 2005. All owners and operators who will share in the DCP payments on the farm must sign the CCC-509. Forms with signatures that are obtained after June 1, 2005, but before Sept. 30, 2005, will be accepted, but the farm will be assessed a late-file fee of \$100.

Farm producers must apply for DCP on an annual basis and can opt out of the program for any year if they so choose.

The following documents are required and applicable determinations must be made before the county committee can approve a producer's share on the CCC-509 for payment: a farm-operating plan (CCC-502 and related forms); an average adjusted gross income certification (CCC-526); a certification of compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (AD-1026).

A certification of the acreage of all cropland on the farm (FSA-578) is needed before final payments can be issued.

CRP CONTINUOUS SIGN-UP

Farmers who work land along streams, but don't want to place the whole field into CRP may enroll the most environmentally sensitive land in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. Under continuous sign-up, relatively small amounts of land serving much larger areas, such as filter strips, riparian buffers and grass waterways, may be enrolled at any time. Certain practices provide incentive payments in addition to the annual rental and maintenance payment. Cost-sharing is also provided.

FSA has added a new Continuous CRP practice that Mitchell County producers may take advantage. The **Northern Bobwhite Quail Initiative** aims to create early successional grass buffers along agricultural field borders. The initiative is limited to 250,000 acres, so enrollment is targeted to specific geographic areas in 35 states that have the greatest potential to restore bobwhite quail habitat. Texas has been allocated 20,000 acres.



To be eligible, cropland must be suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of bobwhite quail. Other criteria also apply, so ask the county office staff for details.

FSA estimates the program will provide \$125 million in payments to participants through 2007. Payments include signing incentives of up to \$100 per acre, Practice Incentive Payments of up to 40 percent of the eligible establishment cost, cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of eligible reimbursable costs, and annual rental payments and maintenance costs.

COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION

Nominations for the county committee election were due in the county office by the close of business Sept. 3. For the 2004 Committee Election we had nominations for two individuals who will be placed on the ballot; Frank Garcia and Geory Martin.



The next step in the election process is the mailing out of the ballots, which will begin on Nov. 8. Voters have until Dec. 6 to return their ballots to the county office. Elected committee members and alternates take office on Jan. 1, 2005.

Prospective Voter Requirements If you're on the mailing list for this newsletter, the chances are you are an eligible voter. Anyone who meets the requirements in 1 or 2, plus 3, below, in LAA 3 (*North of I-20 and East of the Colorado River*) is eligible to vote.

1. Be of legal voting age and have an interest in a farm or ranch as either of the following:

- an owner, operator, tenant, or sharecropper, or
- a partner in a general partnership or member of a joint venture that has an interest in a farm as an owner, operator, tenant, or sharecropper; or

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

3. Eligible to participate in any FSA program that is provided for by law, regardless of the status of funding.

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.

Contact the county office if you have questions about voter eligibility.

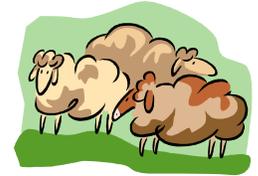
ELECTION GUIDELINES PROPOSED

The secretary of agriculture has proposed new uniform guidelines to govern the county committee election process. The proposed guidelines can be viewed on the Farm Service Agency Web site at <http://www.fsa.usda>.

Comments on the proposed guidelines must be submitted by Sept. 16, 2004. Comments should be submitted to County Committee Election Reform Comments, Department of Agriculture, Room 3092-S, Mail Stop 0539, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-0539 or by email to countyelectionguidelines@usda.gov.

SHEEP PROGRAM

USDA's proposed Ewe Lamb Replacement and Retention Program is still going through the clearance process and as a result the sign-up period has been postponed. The program is designed to enhance the competitiveness of the domestic lamb and sheep industry by paying producers \$18 per head for ewe lambs purchased or retained between Aug. 1, 2003, and July 31, 2004.



It is important for you to maintain records so you will be ready when the program is announced. Documentation includes:

- Sales receipts as proof of purchase and retention
 - date of purchase and number purchased
- Farm management records kept through normal production practices
 - Date of birth
 - Date of death, if applicable
 - Lamb identification and control information
- veterinarian certifications as proof of ewe lamb characteristics
- Scrapie program forms.

Producers must also retain qualifying ewe lambs in the flock for at least 1 complete lambing cycle.

When the ELRPP comment period ends, a signup date will be announced and producers will have the opportunity to apply for the program through their local FSA.

LINKAGE FOR DISASTER PROGRAM

Producers who received a disaster payment for the 2002 Crop Disaster Program (CDP) and who did not have a crop insurance policy are reminded of the requirement to purchase Buy-Up Crop Insurance for the 2005 year. If insurance is not available for your crop, you must purchase Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) coverage from FSA.

Failure to purchase insurance or NAP requires you to refund the disaster payment with interest.

DCP FARM PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

DCP Farm program participants are required to protect all contract acres from erosion and weeds. Failure to do so may result in loss of program benefits and/or liquidated damages.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Special accommodations will be made, upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please call Keith Hiser at (325) 728-2651 or e-mail keith.hiser@tx.usda.gov

SELLING CRP LAND?

If you are a current CRP contract holder and you are selling part or all of the CRP acreage, please notify our office. We want to advise you of the procedure for transferring the contract to the new owner/operator if that individual wants to continue with the program. Likewise, we want to inform you of the consequences for terminating a CRP contract. Remember that your CRP contract is binding. We simply want to help you make a smooth transition concerning the transfer of the contracted acreage.



REPORTING CHANGES IN YOUR FARMING OPERATION

Any time you make changes in your farming operation, you need to keep your local FSA office up to date. Many changes you may take for granted could affect your eligibility for payments. Your farm operating plan, certified by you on form CCC-502, will need to be updated any time you:

- add or drop farms
- make changes in lease arrangements
- change the way labor and/or management are contributed to the operation.

Other significant changes that need to be reported to us are:

- changes in membership of a partnership or joint operation
- changes in stockholder interest or shares in an entity
- death of a producer
- settlement of an estate
- transfer of land, capital or equipment to a limited partnership
- forming new entities for estate planning purposes.

If your farming operation changes in any way, it is better to discuss it with your local FSA office ahead of time than to wait until the change becomes apparent during an audit of your records. If you are not certain whether a change needs to be reported, call and ask and we will be glad to discuss it with you.

ACREAGE REPORTS

Producers who participate in the DCP are required to annually report all crops planted and/or those growing on participating farms. **This means all cropland must be reported whether it has been planted or is a volunteer crop.**

Please remember to report your small grain crops 15 days before grazing.

SPOUSAL SIGNATURE

A husband and wife may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the County Office from either spouse. Exceptions include: claim settlements and lien filings.

FSA TO ASSIST CROP INSURANCE

The Ag Risk Protection Act requires FSA to assist the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to improve the integrity of the crop insurance program. FSA monitors the program, reports problems to RMA and assists RMA and insurance providers when auditing certain claims. FSA refers all suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse to RMA. You are encouraged to report suspected cases of fraud or abuse to our office. We are not involved with the decision making process, but do assist RMA by gathering facts and reporting observations as they pertain to weather and crop plantings, maintenance and harvest.

LDP'S AVAILABLE

Market prices for Grain Sorghum are currently the lowest we've seen all year. If you have grain sorghum that you will be taking to harvest please come in now to complete a CCC-709. Check prices daily by calling the office or logging on the our web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/tx/mitchell.htm>

TREE REMOVAL ON EXISTING CRP

Cost-share is available to assist CRP producers in removing trees on existing CRP acreage. Please be advised that the assistance is available for mechanical removal or chemical. Cost-shares of 50% of the cost not to exceed \$50 per acre are authorized for clearing trees on CRP. **To be eligible you must have greater than 10% canopy.** If you would like a representative to evaluate your CRP to determine eligibility please notify the office. Please note:



- This cost-share is not available during the last year of the CRP contract.
- Mechanical treatment cannot be done during the primary nesting season which is March 1st through July 1st.
- Individual plant treatment is not eligible for cost-share.

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 1, 2004 – Final planting date for Fall & full season small grain grazing crops for full NAP coverage

October 1, 2004 – Sign up begins for 2005 DCP

October 11, 2004 – Office will be closed for Columbus Day

December 1, 2004 - Deadline to purchase next year NAP coverage for pasture grass grazing crops

December 6, 2004 – Committee Election ballots must be returned to office or postmarked

December 15, 2004 - Final day to report native and improved grass acreage for those with NAP coverage

December 15, 2004 – Final date to plant small grain crops for Grain and Hay

Within 15 Days – File a notice of loss on any NAP crops you purchased coverage for.

Anytime – File a notice of loss for any program commodity that you are destroying prior to harvest.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited Bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disability who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (Voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (Voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

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