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Montana FSA: December 2016 eNewsletter

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Farm Service Agency Extends Voting Deadline for County Committee Elections

Montana Producers Now Have Until Dec. 13 to Submit Ballots

The deadline to submit ballots for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) 2016 County Committee Elections has been extended to ensure farmers and ranchers have sufficient time to vote. Eligible voters now have until **Dec. 13, 2016** to return ballots to their local FSA offices. Producers who have not received their ballot should pick one up at their local FSA office.

FSA has modified the ballot, making it easily identifiable and less likely to be overlooked. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 13, 2016. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2017.

Nearly 7,700 FSA County Committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of County Committee seats are up for election each year. County Committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support, conservation, indemnity, disaster and emergency programs.

[Online Directory of FSA Offices in Montana](#)

[PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

[FSA Factsheets Website](#)

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the County Committee election. Approximately 1.5 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

For more information, visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. You may also contact your local USDA service center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

Reasonable Accommodations:

People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs and/or events should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

Livestock producers in 14 Montana counties have until Jan. 30, 2017 to enroll in the 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)

Eligible 2016 LFP counties include Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Fallon, Flathead, Granite, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Park, Powder River, Powell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass and Teton

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers in qualifying counties for drought on dryland pasture. Eligible livestock producers must own or lease dryland pasture physically located in a qualifying county and eligible livestock must use this ground during the normal grazing period for the county. The following 14 counties have met the qualifying drought criteria for 2016 in Montana: Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Fallon, Flathead, Granite, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Park, Powder River, Powell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass and Teton.

Livestock eligible for LFP include alpacas, beef cattle over 500 lbs, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, poultry, reindeer, sheep or swine that have been or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland during the county's grazing period.

Eligible land includes dryland native pasture, improved pasture, and small grains, annual ryegrass and forage sorghum planted specifically for grazing. Irrigated acres used for grazing or aftermath grazing are not eligible under this program.

If all eligibility requirements are met, livestock producers in Carter County will receive four monthly payments; livestock producers in the following 13 counties will receive one monthly payment: Big Horn, Carbon, Fallon, Flathead, Granite, Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Park, Powder River, Powell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass and Teton.

Livestock producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office with any questions regarding eligibility.

Producers must complete an application and provide supporting documentation for 2016 losses by **Jan. 30, 2017**. Please contact the local FSA office ASAP to schedule an appointment to begin the application process and for questions on FSA programs. For more information, visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt and www.usda.gov/disaster.

[LFP Factsheet](#) (pdf)

USDA Partners with Farmers and Ranchers to Protect More Than 500,000 Acres of Working Grasslands

USDA will accept more than 504,000 acres that were offered by producers during the recent ranking period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands enrollment. Through the voluntary CRP Grasslands program, grasslands threatened by development or conversion to row crops are maintained as livestock grazing areas, while providing important conservation benefits.

USDA will accept more than 2,100 offers totaling more than 504,000 acres across 34 states. Over 70 percent of the acres are from beginning farmers, veterans and underserved producers. About two-thirds of the acres are in counties with the highest threat for conversion. Additionally, nearly 60 percent of the acres are in wildlife priority areas and nearly three-fourths of the acres will have a wildlife-focused conservation plan as part of the operation.

USDA is also reminding producers that it is still accepting additional offers for CRP Grasslands. The current ranking period that closes on **Dec. 16**, also includes a new CRP Grasslands practice specifically tailored for small-scale livestock grazing operations to encourage broader participation. Small livestock operations with 100 or fewer head of grazing dairy cows (or the equivalent) can submit applications to enroll up to 200 acres of grasslands per farm. USDA's goal is to enroll up to additional 200,000 acres. The new practice for small-scale livestock grazing operations encourages greater diversity geographically and in all types of livestock operation. Small livestock operations are encouraged to contact their local Farm Service Agency office to learn more about this program before Dec. 16, to be considered as part of the current ranking period.

Small livestock operations or other farming and ranching operations interested in participating in CRP Grasslands should contact their local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA's conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

Ongoing FSA Notice of Loss Requirements

Montana farmers and ranchers are reminded to timely report all crop and livestock losses to your local FSA office. For any questions, please contact your local FSA county office.

NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: Submit Notice of Loss within 15 calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date.

ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: Submit Notice of Loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1st after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred.

LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program: Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

TAP - Tree Assistance Program: Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation is the later of 90 calendar days of the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent

Visit FSA's national disaster assistance [website](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index) at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index> and [FSA's program factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/factsheets/index) page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/factsheets/index>.

Upcoming FSA Dates and Deadlines

The following are upcoming FSA program dates and deadlines. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

- **NOW!!:** File form CCC-633 EZ page 1 with FSA before losing beneficial interest to maintain Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) eligibility. (To request payments, producers need to submit page 2 of the CCC-633EZ.)
- **Dec. 13:** Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to local FSA offices
- **Dec. 16:** Final date to enroll in the 2017 Margin Protection Program Dairy (MPP-Dairy). The MPP Dairy Program 2017 Registration was extended to Dec. 16.
- **Dec. 26:** USDA Service Centers Closed in observance of the Christmas Day Federal Holiday
- **Jan. 1:** Newly elected County Committee Members take office
- **Jan. 2:** USDA Service Centers Closed in observance of the New Year Federal Holiday
- **Jan. 3:** 2017 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Honey covered under NAP (or 30 days after placement of colonies)
- **Jan. 15:** 2017 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed and Cherries
- **Jan. 16:** USDA Service Centers closed on observance of the Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., a Federal Holiday
- **Jan. 30:** Deadline for 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation
- **Jan. 30:** Deadline for 2016 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Application for Payment
- **Jan. 30:** Deadline for Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation for Loss for 2016 (or 90 days after disaster event or loss was apparent)
- **Feb. 1:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Mohair, Unshorn Pelts (LDP only) & Wool
- **Feb. 20:** USDA Offices Closed in observance of Washington's Birthday (aka President's Day) Federal Holiday
- **March 15:** 2017 NAP Application Closing Date for Spring Crops (except spring seeded rye, speltz, triticale, wheat, and mixed forage)
- **May 29:** USDA Service Centers Closed in observance of the Memorial Day Federal Holiday
- **March 31:** Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat and Sesame Seed
- **May 31:** Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed

Requesting Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) Benefits

Producers must submit page 2 of the CCC-633EZ form to the local FSA office to request Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) benefits. To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must retain beneficial interest in the commodity from the time of planting through the date the producer filed form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 at the local FSA office. If form CCC-633EZ is filed before loss of beneficial interest, the producer may obtain the LDP rate in effect on the date beneficial interest is lost. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained.

Example: Producer must have filed form CCC-633-EZ, page 1 with the local FSA office prior to delivery to an elevator. Once the commodity has been delivered to an elevator, beneficial interest would be considered lost. The producer would be eligible for the LDP rate in effect on the date the commodity was delivered to the elevator.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA Office if they have questions regarding loss of beneficial interest.

Before LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

A producer who is eligible to obtain a Marketing Assistance loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

Daily status of LDP payment rates in Montana can be found by clicking the following link:
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Montana/ldp-rates/index>

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office or view the LDP Fact Sheet at
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index>.

Visit [FSA's Price Support Website](#), Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt and your local FSA office for more information.

Farm Loan Program Availability

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agricultural production. As a farmer or rancher, whether you are just starting out or have many years of experience, loans are available for farm operating purposes and/or to purchase or improve a farm or ranch. As the "Lender of First Opportunity" FSA targets some of the direct and guaranteed loan funds for beginning and/or underserved farmers or ranchers. For purposes of this program, a beginning farmer/rancher is defined as someone who started in farming or ranching less than 10 years ago; underserved individuals are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere. For more information, contact your local FSA office who can schedule an appointment with the Farm Loan Program (FLP) staff serving your area and/or visit the [National FLP Web site](#).

[FSA Factsheet: Farm Loan Program Overview](#) (pdf)

Emergency Loans – Disaster Designations in Montana

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana by County. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

[Current Disaster Designations in Montana](#) - (by county)

[Emergency Loan Factsheet](#) (pdf)

Registration Open for Winter Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council Symposium - Dec. 20-21 in Billings

Registration is open for the Winter Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Symposium scheduled to be held on Dec. 20-21 at the Big Horn Resort in Billings. The symposium is free and open to the public (registration required).

The symposium is hosted by IAC, Montana State University Extension, University of Wyoming Extension, NACDC Financial Services and USDA.

Topics include developing a USDA-NRCS conservation plan for your farm and ranch, developing a USDA-NRCS grazing management plan, beef cow mineral nutrition, beef cow nutrition-reproduction interactions, introduction to USDA-FSA, FSA programs and farm loan options, introduction to production and financial recordkeeping, analysis and understanding credit decisions, Highly Fractionated Indian Land Loan Program, NACDC's Business of Indian Ag and Credit Management and IAC's technical assistance program.

- Meeting flyer is available [HERE](#).
- Registration form available [HERE](#). Please pre-register by Dec. 9th.
- Draft agenda available [HERE](#).

IAC has limited travel scholarships available. See registration form for details.

Lodging: A hotel block is available at the Big Horn Resort (1801 Majestic Ln, Billings) at 406.839.9300 at \$91/night plus tax. Refer to the **Winter Rocky Mountain IAC Meeting**. Attendees are responsible for making their hotel reservations.

Contact Info: For more information, contact Ryhal Rowland at ryhal.rowland@montana.edu, by phone at 406.477.6498 or fax at 406.477.6488 or Kole Fitzpatrick at 406.450.8704, or Jennifer Cole at 406.654.1333, ext. 117.

Reasonable Accommodations: Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact Jennifer Cole, of USDA-FSA, at 406.654.1333, ext. 117, jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by Dec. 13, 2016.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).