A Message from the State Conservationist
As we enter November, we observe Native American Heritage month as a time to celebrate the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and the histories of Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, we respect and honor tribal sovereignty by working on a Government-to-Government basis with Tribal Nations to protect and enhance tribal natural resources. To this end, NRCS dedicates a poster every year from the artwork of an American Indian artist to celebrate American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month in November.

This year the Heritage poster artist is Traci Rabbit of Pryor, Oklahoma. Rabbit is a member of the Cherokee Nation. Traci and her dad, Bill Rabbit, have a family operated American Indian art studio. The artwork titled, “The Lesson,” captures a spirit of American Indian women that embodies the best in female strength, which is passed on to our children, along with repeated lessons of their culture.

NRCS employees plan to continue furthering existing partnerships with organizations while building new partnerships with different groups and organizations. Expanding partnerships will continue to grow our outreach and bring new growth and awareness to our many programs and all they offer.

**Gary O’Neill, State Conservationist**
Wetland Reserve Easement
Oklahoma’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, Gary O’Neill, has announced the agency is **accepting applications for its ACEP-WRE Program, and those submitted by January 7, 2022, will be considered for FY2022 funding.** The NRCS will prioritize applications that protect, restore and enhance habitat for wildlife on their lands and reduce damage from flooding and recharge groundwater.

“USDA is committed to restoring and protecting vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality,” said O’Neill.

Land eligible for easements includes cropland, rangeland, grassland and pastureland, land owned by private individuals or Native American Tribes. Wetlands Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) has two components, one for Agricultural Land Easements (ALE), and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). Applications for both ALE and WRE are accepted on a continuous basis.

- Under the ALE component, funds are provided to eligible entities that use ACEP funding to purchase permanent agricultural land easements that not only protect the
future of the nation's food supply, they also support environmental quality, wildlife habitat, and historic preservation and protection of open spaces.

- Under the WRE component, funding is provided directly to landowners for the purchase of an easement and for restoration. Wetland reserve easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance, and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands. Eligible landowners may choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.

To apply for a Wetland Reserve Easement, landowners should contact their local NRCS field office, to be considered in the current batching period ending January 7, 2022.

USDA Service Centers are open to visitors by appointment only. Contact your local Service Center to make an appointment. Service Center staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Agricultural Land Easements

Through the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program’s Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) component, NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and shrubland. Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland, or grassland protection programs.

Under the Agricultural Land Easement component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

Benefits

Agricultural Land Easements protect the long-term viability of the nation’s food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Land protected by agricultural land easements provides additional public benefits, including environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space.

Who Is Eligible?
Land eligible for agricultural easements includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land. NRCS will prioritize applications that protect agricultural uses and related conservation values of the land and those that maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use.

To enroll land through agricultural land easements, NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners. NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis, however, to be considered for funding during the Fiscal Year 2022 budget cycle, applications from eligible partners must be received by January 7, 2022.

Management and Strategy | Job Postings

- Direct Hire - GS-0810-12 Civil Engineer – State Office Engineering
- Direct Hire - GS-0810-12 Civil Engineer (Resource Engineer) – McAlester TSO
- GS-0457-12 Resource Specialist
  - Perry TSO
  - Woodward TSO
- GS-0457-9/11 Resource Conservationist
  - Poteau Field Office
  - Tahlequah Field Office
- GS-0454-9/11 Rangeland Management Specialist
  - Team 1 (Guymon or Boise City)

The best way to stay updated on job postings is to check USA Jobs often and sign up for notifications for job announcements.

All jobs with NRCS are listed on USAJobs.

Photo of the Month
Applying for Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is $5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:
• Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
• Be 10 years to 20 years of age
• Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
• Be unable to get a loan from other sources
• Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
• Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

2021 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections Underway: Ballots to Be Mailed to Eligible Voters Beginning This Week

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin mailing ballots this week for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county and urban county committee elections to all eligible agricultural producers and private landowners across the country. Elections are occurring in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these committee members who make important decisions.
about how federal farm programs are administered locally. To be counted, producers and landowners must return ballots to their local FSA county office or be postmarked by Dec. 6, 2021.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation but may not have applied or received FSA program benefits. Also, for County Committee elections, producers who are not of legal voting age, but supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, are eligible to vote.

Producers can find out if their LAA is up for election and if they are eligible to vote by contacting their local FSA county office. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail can request one from their local FSA county office. To find your local USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Visit fsa.usda.gov/elections for more information.

Each committee has from three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office, and at least one seat representing an LAA is up for election each year. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2022.

**Urban and Suburban County Committees**

Ballots to elect urban committee members were sent beginning Nov. 1, 2021. These elections will serve local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. A fact sheet on the urban county committee election and a list of eligible cities can be found at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs and serve as the voice of other urban producers. Additionally, the new county committees may address areas such as food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction. Learn more at farmers.gov/urban

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**USDA Provides $1.8 Billion to Offset Market Fluctuations**
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in the process of issuing $1.8 billion in payments to agricultural producers who enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2020 crop year. These payments provide critical support to help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops. These two USDA safety-net programs help producers of certain crops build back better after facing the impacts of COVID-19 and other challenges.

In addition, USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is encouraging producers to contact their local USDA Service Centers to make or change elections and to enroll for 2022 ARC or PLC, providing future protections against market fluctuations. The election and enrollment period opened on Oct. 18, 2021 and runs through March 15, 2022.

2020 Payments and Contracts

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. This month, FSA processed payments to producers enrolled in 2020 ARC-County (ARC-CO), ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and PLC for covered commodities that triggered for the crop year.

For ARC-CO, view the 2020 ARC-CO Benchmark Yields and Revenues online database for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity.

For PLC, payments have triggered for barley, canola, chickpeas (large and small), dry peas, flaxseed, lentils, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat. More information on rice payments will be announced later this fall and in early 2022.
For ARC-IC, producers should contact their local FSA office for additional information pertaining to 2020 payment information, which relies on producer-specific yields for the crop and farm to determine benchmark yields and actual year yields when calculating revenues.

By the Numbers

More than 1.7 million contracts were signed in 2019. In 2020, producers signed nearly 1.8 million ARC or PLC contracts, and 251 million out of 273 million base acres were enrolled in the programs. In 2021, signed contracts surpassed 1.8 million.

Since the ARC and PLC were authorized by in the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized by in the 2018 Farm Bill, these safety-net programs have paid out more than $32.5 billion to producers of covered commodities.

2022 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-CO or PLC, which are both crop-by-crop, or ARC-IC, which is for the entire farm. Although election changes for 2022 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2022, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2022, the election remains the same as the 2021 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed, and wheat.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- **Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator**, a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- **ARC and PLC Decision Tool**, a tool available through Texas A&M tallows producers to estimate payments and yield updates and expected payments for 2022.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.
Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](https://www.usda.gov/arm) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/)

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**Tribal Agricultural Landowner Voting Eligibility in County Committee Elections**

Members of American Indian tribes holding agricultural land are eligible to vote in a Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee election if the tribal member meets the minimum voting age. For purposes of FSA county committee elections, every member of an American Indian tribe is considered an agricultural landowner and eligible to vote as an individual, including individual Native American landowners of tribal lands, owners of trusts, owners of estates and land held in trust by the United States for the tribe, even if the individual does not personally produce a crop.

Native American landowners interested in participating as an eligible voter must contact their local USDA Service Center to register. Contact your local FSA office with any questions.

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**Farm Financial Database**
The **farm financial database (FINBIN)** provides important financial benchmarking data for producers. This information can be used to help make better decisions regarding the farm business. Producers can use the website to look up both financial and production data. Most crops and livestock enterprises are available for other states, but currently Oklahoma is not included. One issue for states with diverse production, or those with smaller producers is a lack of representation in these data sets. Given the diverse and often smaller scale operations in Oklahoma, profit margins may be tighter than in other circumstances with large concentrated producers. One could argue that the need for farm financial information is even greater for those smaller, less concentrated producers.

In an effort to help producers evaluate their farm finances, and contribute to the farm financial database, we are looking for farmers and ranchers of any size or operation type to join our program. Through the use of FINPACK software, those associated with Oklahoma State’s agricultural economics Extension program will assist farms in completing (at a minimum) beginning and ending balance sheets. These beginning and ending balance sheets will be helpful for producers when they are speaking with lenders, and are a first step to a full financial work-up. The program is confidential, and we will work closely with producers to work through their finances and understand their financial position. The program has been approved for FSA borrower training for a fee of $150, find [more information here](#). For those who do not need borrower training, the program is free [here](#).

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### Dates to Remember

- **November 30**
  - FSA NAP Coverage Deadlines - *Asparagus, Clover– forage, Grass– forage, Honey, Lespedeza, Mixed Forage– forage, Pecans, Plums*

- **January 18**
  - FSA deadline to report wheat and other fall-planted small grains, canola, and peach acreage

- **January 31**
  - FSA Livestock Forage Program (LFP) - Final deadline to submit applications for payment for 2021 losses

- **January 31**
  - FSA Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP) - Final deadline to submit application for Payment For 2021 Loss
Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program - Oklahoma Closing Deadlines (NAP)

- **January 31:**
  - Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Lettuce, Onions, Potatoes, Strawberries, Tomatoes, Turnips