



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Oklahoma Newsletter - November 2022

Oklahoma

Natural Resources Conservation Service



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A Message from the State Conservationist

Greetings Oklahoma! I am Amanda Mathis and it is my honor to serve as your Acting State Conservationist. I sincerely appreciate the efforts of retired State Conservationist, Gary O'Neill. I am grateful to have the opportunity to serve Oklahoma during this transitional period as we await the naming of the new State Conservationist.

If you are interested in making conservation improvements to your operation or have interest in conservation easements, now is the perfect time to reach out to your local USDA Service Center. We have recently announced several application submission deadlines for programs like the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP), more details about each can be found in this newsletter. Our dedicated staff stand ready to work with you to identify how voluntary conservation measures can help you meet your operational goals.



Also, during November, USDA is proud to recognize Native American Heritage Month. This month provides an opportunity for us to reflect on how the cultures and traditions held dear by tribal nations continue to advance resilient economies and vibrant lands nationwide. I am proud to work with many great leaders of Native American and Alaskan Native heritage who make up our diverse workforce. We also honor and pay tribute to the accomplished and visionary Tribal Nations and Native American farmers, ranchers, and foresters who provide the food and fiber to help feed the world.

Amanda Mathis, Acting State Conservationist

NRCS Programs Update

Oklahoma NRCS has announced the agency's cutoff for the following programs for the current fiscal year. All applications must be received in your local field office by the dates below.

Wetland Reserve Easement funding is provided directly to landowners for the purchase of an easement and for restoration. This funding allows landowners to successfully restore, enhance, and protect habitat for wildlife on their land. 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. **Applications must be received by December 2, 2022.**

Environmental Quality Incentive Program funding activities are carried out according to a site-specific conservation plan developed in conjunction with the producer. All conservation practices are installed according to NRCS technical standards. Oklahoma's producers may elect to use an approved technical service provider for technical assistance. **Applications must be received by December 9, 2022**

Conservation Practice of the Month

Conservation Crop Rotation (328)



As part of Climate-Smart Agriculture comes to mind, [Conservation Crop Rotation \(328\)](#) is growing crops in a planned sequence on the same field, often changing crops year to year. This may include alternating high residue producing crops with low residue producing crop, or include using forage grasses and legumes in the rotation with these annual crops. These among other conservation practices are part of solutions for farmers and ranchers to help mitigate climate change.

The Oklahoma Standards and Specifications information: [click here.](#)

Management and Strategy | Job Postings

Upcoming Vacancy Announcements:

- Soil Conservationist, GS-5/7/9 - Marietta/Eufaula

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 and posted on USAJobs.

Photo of the Month



Photo by Lacie Ledford, from Mounds, OK. To enter a photo in this month's contest, email the full resolution photo to NRCSinfo-OK@usda.gov

Dates to Remember

NRCS and FSA will have representatives at the following events/meetings if you have questions or want to visit.

December

- [Tulsa Farm Show, Dec. 8-10, Expo Square, Tulsa, OK](#)

January

- [KNID Agrifest, Jan. 13-14, Chisholm Trail Expo Center, Enid, OK](#)

February

- Oklahoma Association Conservation District statewide meeting, Feb. 27-28

March

- Oklahoma Ag Summit, Mar 1-3, Tulsa, OK,

USDA Releases Nationwide Farmer, Rancher and Forest Manager Prospective Customer Survey



Are you a farmer, rancher or forest manager? Please share your vital feedback with USDA by taking a nationwide survey at farmers.gov/survey. The survey is completely anonymous, will take about 10 minutes to complete, is available in multiple languages, and will be open until March 31, 2023. The survey focuses on gathering feedback about the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency.

All farmers, ranchers and forest managers are encouraged to take the survey. USDA would especially like to hear from prospective customers: those who don't know about USDA or have yet to work with USDA, and those who were unable to participate in the past. The survey will help USDA enhance support, improve programs and services, increase access, and advance equity for new and existing customers.

USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA

employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

2022 County Committee Elections

The graphic is a horizontal timeline for the 2022 County Committee Elections. At the top left is the USDA Farm Service Agency logo. The title 'County Committee Elections 2022' is in large white text on a green background. Below the title are six circular icons, each containing a date and a description of an election milestone. The icons are arranged in a row, with the first four in blue and the last two in green. Each icon is accompanied by a photograph of a diverse group of farmers. The timeline ends with the date Jan. 1, 2023, indicating when the newly elected members take office. At the bottom, a small text line states: 'USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.'

Date	Event
Jun. 15 2022	Beginning of nomination period. Forms available at fsa.usda.gov/elections .
Aug. 1 2022	Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA county office.
Nov. 7 2022	Ballots mailed to eligible voters.
Dec. 5 2022	Last day to return voted ballots to the local FSA county office.
Jan. 1 2023	Newly elected county committee members take office.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began 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. Producers and landowners must return ballots to their local FSA county office or have their ballots be postmarked by Dec. 5, 2022, in order for those ballots to be counted.

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. Additionally, producers who are not of legal voting age but supervise and conduct farming operations for an entire farm are eligible to vote in these elections.

Each committee has from three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms, and at least one seat representing an LAA is up for election each year. Ballots must be in the mail or delivered in person by close of business Dec. 5, 2022, to be counted. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2023.

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. Visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local USDA Service Center and fsa.usda.gov/elections for more information.

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).



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