

December 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

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Niobrara County FSA Updates

Niobrara County FSA Office
905 South Main Street
PO Box 720
Lusk, WY 82225

Phone: (307) 334-2953, Ext. 2
Fax: (855) 415-3433

County Executive Director:
Laura Kessler

Program Technician:
Kimberly Nusbaum

Farm Loan Manager:
Dixie Mount
(307) 322-4050

County Committee:
Jason ZumBrunnen
Joe Kruse
Kurt Gaukel

Carol Geisinger, COC Advisor

Niobrara County Notes

Greetings Niobrara County Farmers and Ranchers!

Hope this message finds everyone well. We want to wish all of our producers a safe and happy holiday season. We would also like to congratulate Jason ZumBrunnen for being elected as the LAA #3 representative. We appreciate his willingness to represent our LAA #3 area.

It appears to be shaping up to be a long, and potentially eventful, winter. With that in mind, we want to remind producers of the various programs available for adverse weather. If you lose any livestock or have to feed additional feed above normal due to the adverse weather or lose grazing days, these are events that we can potentially help with through several of our programs. Please just call the office within 30 days of any event that happened due to adverse weather. The event can be livestock related or crop related. Examples would be, but absolutely not limited to, livestock that died in a blizzard as they were buried alive, lightning strike hits your hay stockpile and burns to the ground, hail mows your pasture off, flooding carries your hay stockpile downstream, having to start feeding sooner than normal or longer than normal due to harsh winter conditions, transporting water in a drought year, transportation costs associated with severe storms requiring additional equipment or trucking requirements to name a few. Basically, just remember that any time an adverse weather related incident affects your land or livestock, you need to contact the office within 30 days to see if there is a program that we can help you with.

Next County Committee Meeting: January 16, 2020

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Informational Workshop

The Niobrara County FSA office will be holding informational workshops **January 15th at 10:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.**, particularly pertaining to the CRP signup that began December 9th, 2019. We will discuss the current CRP offer process, ranging from new offers to re-enrolled contracts. We will provide information so that you know what all you will need for your appointment when you submit an offer. We will also discuss CRP-Grasslands which is a grasslands program that will have a sign up later in the year that includes payments for native pastures. This will be a relaxed environment question and answer session. Please see the below article for more details about the CRP program.

Special Accommodations

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this event should contact Laura Kessler at 1-307-334-2953, Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 or laura.kessler@usda.gov seven days prior to scheduled event.

Please note the following important dates and deadlines:

December 20, 2019 – Deadline to apply for Market Facilitation Program benefits

December 25, 2019 – OFFICE CLOSED – Christmas Day

January 1, 2020 – OFFICE CLOSED – New Year's Day

January 15, 2020 – Informational CRP Signup Meeting - 10 AM and 5:30 PM

Within 15 days of noticing crop loss – File NAP Notice of Loss

Within 30 days of noticing livestock loss – File LIP Notice of Loss

USDA Announces Opening Signup for Conservation Reserve Program on December 9, 2019

USDA is opening signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on December 9, 2019. The deadline for agricultural producers to sign up for general CRP is February 28, 2020, while signup for continuous CRP is ongoing.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.

CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres. This means farmers and ranchers have a chance to enroll in CRP for the first time or continue their participation for another term.

By enrolling in CRP, producers are improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and restoring habitat for wildlife. This in turn spurs hunting, fishing, recreation, tourism, and other economic development across rural America.

CRP Enrollment Options

General Signup

CRP general signup will be held annually. The competitive general signup will now include increased opportunities for enrollment of wildlife habitat through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative.

Continuous Signup

While some practices under SAFE will remain available through continuous signup, CRP continuous signup will focus primarily on water quality with the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative. The 2018 Farm Bill prioritizes water quality practices such as contour grass strips, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetlands and a new prairie strip.

USDA will also be working with Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partners to relaunch CREP continuous options in each state under new statutory provisions. CREP will continue to target high-priority local, state or regional conservation concerns.

Grasslands Signups

CRP Grasslands signup helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. A separate CRP Grasslands signup will be offered each year following general signup.

Pilot Programs

Later in 2020, (FSA will roll out pilot programs within CRP: CLEAR 30, which allows contracts expiring with CLEAR practices to be reenrolled in 30-year contracts and in the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) in the prairie pothole region. More information on these programs will be announced in the new year.

Land Transition

The CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP) is an option for producers interested in transitioning land to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production. CRP contract holders no longer need to be a retired or retiring owner or operator to transition their land. TIP participants may have a lease less than five years with an option to purchase, and they have two years before the end of the CRP contract to make conservation and land improvements.

Previously Expired Land

Land enrolled in CRP under a 15-year contract that expired in September 2017, 2018 or 2019, may be eligible for enrollment if there was no opportunity for re-enrollment and the practice under the expired contract has been maintained.

CRP Rates and Payments

FSA recently posted updated soil rental rates for CRP. County average rates are posted on the [CRP Statistics webpage](#). Soil rental rates are statutorily prorated at 90 percent for continuous signup and 85 percent for general signup. The rental rates will be assessed annually. Under continuous signup, producers also receive incentives, including a signup incentive payment and a practice incentive payment.

To enroll in CRP, contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Niobrara County Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

Niobrara County U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over and the ballots have been counted.

Jason ZumBrunnen of Kirtley was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) #3.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently elected county committee members will take office in January 2020 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, and they are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

Nearly 7,800 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 impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the Niobrara County FSA office at 307-334-2953.

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team in Goshen County, who administers the farm loan programs to Niobrara County producers, is already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. The staff at the Goshen County FSA office can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.

Please call the Goshen County office if you have questions about any of the loans available through FSA.

***Please remember if you will be coming into the office for the release of checks, etc to CALL ahead of time to ensure an FLP staff member is there and will be able to help you**

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact [Laura Kessler](mailto:Laura.Kessler@usda.gov) at [307-334-2953](tel:307-334-2953) extension 2 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

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).