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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

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Platte County FSA Updates

Platte County FSA Office

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Amy Miller, Vice Chairperson
Del Tinsley, Member
Charles Maike II, Member

Message from the CED

Happy Holidays Platte County Farmers and Ranchers!

I hope this finds everyone doing well. We want to wish everyone a happy holiday season! We would also like to congratulate Chuck Maike II on being elected as the LAA #3. Thank you Chuck for your willingness to serve & represent the producers of Platte County.

Farm Bill Informational Meetings

The Platte County FSA office will be holding Farm Bill Information meetings on January 15th at 10:00am and 6:00pm at the First State Bank Conference Room. We will be focusing on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup that is currently ongoing, as well as the ARC/PLC program changes for the new Farm Bill. Please plan to attend!

As the weather changes, 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 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 are 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

Next County Committee Meeting: January TBD

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact Pam Metz at 307-322-4050 extension 2 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339

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.

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

Jan 1, 2020 – County Office Closed - New Year's Day Holiday
Jan 15, 2020 – Farm Bill producer meetings 10:00am and 6:00pm-First State Bank conference room
Jan 20, 2020 – County Office Closed – Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday
Feb 28, 2020 – Deadline to make General CRP signup 54 offers
Mar 15, 2020 – Deadline to enroll in 2019 ARC/PLC programs

Wishing you all a Happy New Year!
Pam Metz, CED

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.

Committee Election Results

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

Chuck Maike II of Slater 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 Platte County FSA office at 307-322-4050.

Farm Loan Graduation Reminder

FSA Direct Loans are considered a temporary source of credit that is available to producers who do not meet normal underwriting criteria for commercial banks.

FSA periodically conducts Direct Loan graduation reviews to determine a borrower's ability to graduate to commercial credit. If the borrower's financial condition has improved to a point where they can refinance their debt with commercial credit, they will be asked to obtain other financing and partially or fully pay off their FSA debt.

By the end of a producer's operating cycle, the Agency will send a letter requesting a current balance sheet, actual financial performance and a projected farm budget. The borrower has 30 days to return the required financial documents. This information will be used to evaluate the borrower's potential for refinancing to commercial credit.

If a borrower meets local underwriting criteria, FSA will send the borrower's name, loan type, balance sheet and projected cash flow to commercial lenders. The borrower will be notified when loan information is sent to local lenders.

If any lenders are interested in refinancing the borrower's loan, FSA will send the borrower a letter with a list of lenders that are interested in refinancing the loan. The borrower must contact the lenders and complete an application for commercial credit within 30 calendar days.

If a commercial lender rejects the borrower, the borrower must obtain written evidence that specifies the reasons for rejection and submit to their local FSA farm loan office.

If a borrower fails to provide the requested financial information or to graduate, FSA will notify the borrower of noncompliance, FSA's intent to accelerate the loan, and appeal rights.

*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.

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).