Crook County Service Center Updates

Crook County FSA

You may have noticed a new, updated look to this bulletin. As part of the USDA’s move towards improved customer service, FSA and NRCS will be collaborating in all future monthly electronic bulletins. We will continue to provide information on current program offerings and key deadlines through this service. As always, staff is available to answer your questions by phone and e-mail.

We need your help. If you feel that the drought monitor does not match the conditions you are seeing, this year or in the future. Please think about volunteering for CoCoRaHS https://www.cocorahs.org/. CoCoRaHS gauges are in the 40-50 dollar range, which does have to be purchased for this volunteer program. This also comes with a commitment to empty and report the precipitation at 6 am, 7am or 8am every day. This would help us dramatically with our precipitation data for our programs. Right now we have a lack of data coming in around Crook County and this would be beneficial for drought programs. We are working on this end trying to get more accurate reports, but please help us help you by reporting to the drought monitor and maybe volunteering for this also.

CoCoRaHS (pronounced KO-ko-rozz) is a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation (rain, hail and snow) in their local communities. By using low-cost measurement tools, stressing training and education, and utilizing an interactive Web-site, our aim is to provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications. The only requirements to join are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can affect and impact our lives. (Quoted from the https://www.cocorahs.org website)

The drought monitor has been having some technical difficulties and as soon as it is fixed I would recommend reporting on this site. Here is the link for when they have the link fixed for the report, https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu. Once you get to this page, click on the area of the map that covers Wyoming (High Plains). Then click on Wyoming. Once there, scroll all the way to the bottom. You will see a orange area that says Drought Impact Reporter, click on the “Submit Report” button.

Crook County NRCS and CCNRD

Please join the Crook County Natural Resource District in welcoming our new employee Jake Blackstone. We are excited to have him onboard with us here at the office!

Hello Crook County!

My name is Jake Blackstone and I am the new Field Technician for the Crook County Natural Resource District. I will soon be graduating from Black Hills State University with a degree in Environmental Science. Having grown up in South Dakota and spending several years in Montana, as well as Wyoming, I have come to truly appreciate and care for the northern plains and mountain region that we call home. My passion for the outdoors and environmental health will only grow with this new opportunity as I begin my life’s work. I look
forward to meeting and working with you all, not only here in Crook County, but throughout the great state of Wyoming

Conservation Compliance on Highly Erodible Land and Wetlands

Highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland conservation (WC) provisions aim to reduce soil loss on erosion-prone lands and to protect wetlands for the multiple benefits they provide. HEL and WC provisions apply to all land that is considered highly erodible or a wetland, and that is owned or farmed by persons voluntarily participating in USDA programs.

To comply with HEL and WC provisions, agricultural producers and affiliated persons must fill out and sign form AD-1026 certifying they will not:

- Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land without following an NRCS-approved conservation plan or system;

- Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland; or

- Convert a wetland that makes the production of an agricultural commodity possible. In addition, producers planning to conduct activities that may affect their HEL or WC compliance; for example land clearing, conducting drainage activities, land leveling, filling, dredging, or excavation, including the clearing of woody vegetation; must notify FSA by filing form AD-1026. FSA will notify NRCS, and they will then provide highly erodible land or wetland technical evaluations and issue determinations if needed. It is extremely important that producers comply with the HEL and WC provisions to continue receiving USDA Program benefits. Please contact your local USDA Service Center for more information.

Emergency Loans

Campbell, Sheridan, Johnson, Crook and Weston Counties were declared a disaster due to drought and heat using the streamlined Secretarial Disaster Designation process. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

The streamlined disaster designation process issues a drought disaster declaration when a county has experienced a drought intensity value of at least a D2 (severe drought) level for eight consecutive weeks based on the U.S. Drought Monitor during the crop year.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of $500,000.

Deadline to apply for Emergency Loans is 11-5-2021.

For more information about emergency loans, contact Rob Weppner, Farm Loan Manager at 307-682-8843 Ext 2 or visit www.fsa.usda.gov or www.farmers.gov/fund.
Nominations Open for the 2021 Crook County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in the Crook County Committee election nomination process. FSA’s county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process. A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year. County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

The area up for election this year is LAA #3, currently held by Ivan Cranston LAA #3 is generally the lower portion of Crook County. For more specific information, or to determine your LAA, please contact the office.

All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by August 1, 2021. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.
County Committee:
Ivan Cranston
Jeanne Habeck
Alan Ista

CCNRD:
Sarah Anderson
Bridget Helms

Next Scheduled COC Meeting
TBD