Crook County Bulletin - December, 2021

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Staci’s Corner

Hello Crook County Producers! My name is Staci L. Green-Steiner, and I am the new County Executive Director (CED) for FSA here in Crook County. I grew up in the Sheridan and Johnson county area where my father managed a large ranch and then eventually my parents owned their own ranch. I am excited to be here in Sundance and look forward to working with you as I get to know the area inside Crook county and each of its unique areas.

We are busy in the office getting through what has been another trying year in the ranching and farming industry. It was dry in 2020, even drier in 2021. This triggered several programs and had Pam and Tiffany running their tails off all summer long! I am very thankful for the staff I have been placed with! We continue to collect your information and make sure you all are keeping updated with the changes made to programs and made aware of new programs if they come available.

We are working very hard to get payments for those covered by NAP 2021 forage production losses, LFP livestock/acres drought, ELAP Water hauling, and now ELAP Hay/Feed Trucking and will begin the NAP drought grazing losses for those with coverage.

The ECP 2021 program has been anything but easy to administer this year. With new regulations that have required a SHPO (State Historical Program Office) archeological survey of almost EVERY project, we are working to find reasonable solutions. Hold tight, we are working with the great folks in NRCS, and are looking for answers.

If you have questions about our programs, please don’t hesitate to call, email or stop by the office. I look forward to meeting each of you and learning about your operation!

Sincerely,

Staci

USDA Expands Assistance to Cover Feed Transportation Costs for Drought-Impacted Ranchers

In response to the severe drought conditions in the West and Great Plains, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today its plans to help cover the cost of transporting feed for livestock that rely on grazing. USDA is updating the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) to immediately cover feed transportation costs for drought impacted ranchers. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide more details and tools to help ranchers get ready to apply at their local USDA Service Center later this month at fsa.usda.gov/elap.
ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

ELAP already covers the cost of hauling water during drought, and this change will expand the program beginning in 2021 to cover feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

- Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor;
- Drought intensity is D3 or greater; or
- USDA has determined a shortage of local or regional feed availability.

Cost share assistance will also be made available to cover eligible cost of treating hay or feed to prevent the spread of invasive pests like fire ants.

Under the revised policy for feed transportation cost assistance, eligible ranchers will be reimbursed 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost. above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

A national cost formula, as established by USDA, will be used to determine reimbursement costs which will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of $6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied), but may be adjusted on a state or regional basis.

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee. The deadline to file an application for payment for the 2021 program year is Jan. 31, 2022.

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet, and Farm Loan Discovery Tool can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance.

More information on this expansion to ELAP is forthcoming. In the meantime, more information is available at fsa.usda.gov/elap or by contacting a local USDA Service Center.

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**Elections for the 2021 County Committee**

Voting is now open for the USDA’s Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Crook County Committee.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. The 2021 election in Crook County will be conducted for the representative for Local Administrative Area (LAA): 3

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture in Crook County. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency.

Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.
County committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 1, 2021. The last day to return completed ballots to the Crook County USDA Service Center is Dec. 6, 2021.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

**Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture operation. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

**Signature Policy**

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- A married woman must sign her given name: Mrs. Mary Doe, not Mrs. John Doe
- For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent

Note, by signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, etc.

When signing on one’s behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other’s individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator
“by” or “for” the individual’s name, individual’s name and capacity, or individual’s name, capacity, and name of entity.

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

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Crook County
USDA Service Center

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