From Pam's Desk

Hello Platte County farmers and ranchers! It sure has been hot here, hopefully we have some moisture on the horizon. With as dry as it has been, we have had a lot of questions about livestock drought programs. We are not currently eligible but potentially could be by the middle of August. The office will let producers know if/when the county is eligible based on the U.S. Drought Monitor.

There are multiple ways to contribute your observations to the US Drought Monitor process:

1. **Talk to your state climatologist** - Find the current list at the [American Association of State Climatologists](https://www.aasc.cornell.edu) website.
2. **Email** - Emails sent to droughtmonitor@unl.edu inform the USDM authors.
3. **Become a CoCoRaHS observer** - Submit drought reports along with daily precipitation observations to the [Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network](https://www.cocorahs.org).
4. **Submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR)** - go.unl.edu/CMOR.
5. **Use the drought.gov contact form** - Contact us online at [www.drought.gov/drought/contact-us](http://www.drought.gov/drought/contact-us).

Platte county is eligible for emergency haying or grazing of CRP. CRP participants must submit a request and a haying/grazing plan must be signed prior to any haying or grazing taking place. Haying would have to be complete by August 31st. Grazing would have to be completed by September 30th. Some contracts may not be eligible depending on their existing grass cover.

CRP Grasslands signup runs through August 20. Grasslands is a working lands program which allows the land to be utilized (hayed/grazed) every year while keeping it from being developed or broken out to farmland. Acreage eligible to be enrolled in grasslands includes both cropland and pasture that are currently planted to grass. Participants can hay or graze annually or can lease the haying or grazing rights. CRP Grasslands rates increased to $15/acre and contracts are set at either 10 or 15 years in length.

We will have some new faces in the office. Please stop by and welcome them to our staff.

Thank you!

~Pam Metz, CED

### Nominations Open for the 2021 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 Platte 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.

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.

All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by Aug. 2, 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.

Understanding the U.S. Drought Monitor

Are drought conditions affecting your agricultural operation? The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is a resource producers can use to help determine how to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers. The USDM is an online, weekly map showing the location, extent, and severity of drought across the United States. It categorizes the entire country as being in one of six levels of drought. The map is released on Thursdays and depicts conditions for the week. The USDM provides producers with the latest information about drought conditions where they live, enabling producers to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers. In some cases, the USDM may help a producer make specific decisions about their operation, such as reducing the stocking rate because forage is not growing. For others, it may provide a convenient big-picture snapshot of broader environmental conditions.

The USDM incorporates varying data – rain, snow, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, and more – as well as first-hand information submitted from on-the-ground sources such as photos, descriptions, and experiences. The levels of drought are connected to the frequency of occurrence across several different drought indicators. What makes the USDM unique is that it is not a strictly numeric product. The mapmakers rely on their judgment and a nationwide network of 450-plus experts to interpret conditions for each region. They synthesize their discussion and analysis into a single depiction of drought for the entire country.

USDA uses the Drought Monitor to determine a producer’s eligibility for certain drought assistance programs, like the Livestock Forage Disaster Program and Emergency Haying or Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acres.

Additionally, the Farm Service Agency uses the Drought Monitor to trigger and “fast track” Secretarial Disaster Designations which then provides producers impacted by drought access to emergency loans that can assist with credit needs.

Learn more about the U.S. Drought Monitor.
Conservation at Work Video Series

A new video series from NRCS and farmers.gov, Conservation at Work, presents short and easy to understand videos about popular conservation practices. These videos feature producers explaining how an individual practice helps their land and why they are using it.

The videos shine the spotlight on farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners from across the U.S. who explain why they’ve implemented the conservation practices and how they work on their land. They also provide insight into how each practice is helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money.

The first 15 videos cover:

- Brush Management
- Cover Crop
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Grade Stabilization
- Grassed Waterway
- High Tunnel
- No Till
- Nutrient Management
- Prescribed Grazing
- Pumping Station
- Sprinkler System
- Trails and Walkways
- Waste Storage
- Water & Sediment Control Basin
- Wetland Restoration

The Conservation at Work video series can be found at farmers.gov/conserve/conservationatwork.

Applying for Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is $5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA’s general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

For help preparing the application forms, contact the Platte County USDA Service Center at 307-322-4050 or visit fsa.usda.gov.