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A Message from Acting County Executive Director

October is here and has already given us a couple of tastes of winter. I trust you faired well with the recent storms and are pleased about the moisture they brought.

We’ve been busy issuing payments due through the Conservation Reserve Program and the 2020 crop safety net benefits delivered through the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. We also have been working through applications submitted for our disaster relief programs and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). We appreciate your patience through our work disruptions and want to assure you we are continuing to work hard for you to get you the assistance you need during these trying times.

Please report and certify any fall-planted crops as well as any fall-planted cover crops by November 15, 2021. Certification of acres helps maintain your eligibility for 2022 programs, so please call our office to schedule an appointment if you have not already done so.

The deadline to sign up for 2022 Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program is December 1, 2021. Please remember to report any 2021 hay production not claimed as a loss to our office by July 15, 2022. If you have not signed an application for payment on your hay losses or are not sure if you have, please contact our office. We will have 2021 grazing losses determined shortly, so keep an eye on communications from this office regarding eligibility and signup period.

The National Office has provided additional information regarding the feed transportation cost assistance program; however, the application and policy are still being developed. In the meantime, the information needed to participate in this program is:

- Number of truckloads used to haul feed in 2021
- Mileage of each truckload used to haul feed in 2021
- If you shared feed on a truckload, your percentage of the feed
- Number of truckloads used to haul feed in a typical year
- Mileage of each truckload used to haul feed in a typical year
If you hauled feed on a truckload in a typical year, your percentage of the feed.

If you do not normally haul feed in a typical year, you are still eligible to participate in this program. Your typical year values would be zero.

We recognize that last year was not a typical year for some of our producers. We recommend that you look at your past ten years of history and determine what mileage was typically required to transport feed to your operation.

Please remember to keep your records for a minimum of three years after signup to support your typical year numbers in case you are asked to provide the information to our office.

You may go to [fsa.usda.gov/elap](http://fsa.usda.gov/elap) to download a spreadsheet to record and print your information or you may pick up a hard copy of this spreadsheet at our office to provide us with your information. You may turn in this information at any time and we will create applications based on this information for your signature when the application software becomes available. See the below article for more information.

And for our producers who have base acres on their farm(s), 2022 ARC/PLC enrollment is open now. You may enroll in the program or change your program elections.

That's all for now. Take care and talk to you soon.

Sherie Hilgenkamp

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**Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks**

*Deadline to signup for 2022 coverage is December 1, 2021*

The Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps you manage risk through coverage for both crop losses and crop planting that was prevented due to natural disasters. The eligible or “noninsured” crops include agricultural commodities not covered by federal crop insurance.

You must be enrolled in the program and have purchased coverage for the eligible crop in the crop year in which the loss incurred to receive program benefits following a qualifying natural disaster.

**NAP Buy-Up Coverage Option**

NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested.

Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

**NAP Service Fees**

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

**NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans**

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.
Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, “Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification.”

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, contact your [NAME] County USDA Service Center at 307-746-2701 extension 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

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**Elections for the 2021 County Committee**

_Voting is now open for the USDA’s Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Weston 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 Name County will be conducted for the representative for Local Administrative Area (LAA) #2, the northwest quarter of the county.

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 Name 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 November 1, 2021. The last day to return completed ballots to the Weston County USDA Service Center is December 6, 2021.

**Meet Your Candidate**

**William "Randy" Oleson**

Randy Oleson has been involved in agriculture for 50 years, spending a majority of those years in the cattle business raising calves, yearlings, and bred heifers for market. He is a member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and R-Calf USA and a past member of National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. He is currently a member of the Inyan Kara Grazing Association in which he has served as both President and Vice-President. Randy has lived in LAA#2 for 37 years and currently is serving on the FSA County Committee for this area. Randy Oleson is willing to continue to serve the producers of this county if elected.

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**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](https://www.drought.gov/);
- 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](https://www.farmers.gov/disaster-assistance/), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](https://www.farmers.gov/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance-at-a-glance), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](https://www.farmers.gov/loans/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](https://fsa.usda.gov/elap) or by contacting a local USDA Service Center.

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**No-till Leads to Healthier Soil, Cleaner Water**

In the minds of many, a freshly tilled field is picturesque – cleaned and ordered for the next planting. But we’ve learned from studying soil that heavy tillage isn’t good. When soil is heavily tilled, the stalks and leaves remaining from the previous crop are chopped, disturbing the top several inches of soil. This “fluffing” action allows for better seed placement according to some, but soil scientists say not tilling leads to healthier, more drought-resistant soil.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and other groups recommend producers to not till and leave the stalks and leaves, called residue, in place. By not tilling, soil organic matter is enhanced, increasing water infiltration and reducing erosion. No-till is a conservation practice that leaves the crop residue undisturbed from harvest.

Any tillage causes a flush of organic matter decomposition, resulting in loss of soil carbon. Tillage also breaks up soil aggregates, which are important for water infiltration, providing oxygen to plant roots, and reducing erosion.

Healthy soils cycle water and nutrients more efficiently. And they function better, enabling them to buffer against extreme drought and flooding. Plus, they reduce soil loss into waterways, which can cause problems for water quality.

Good management of field residue can increase efficiency of irrigation and control erosion. No-till can be used for many crops in almost any soil and can save producers labor costs and fuel. It’s a sound investment for the environment and the farm.

For more information, contact your Weston County USDA Service Center at 307-746-3264 or visit [nrcs.usda.gov](https://nrcs.usda.gov).
Disaster Set-Aside Program for Farm Loan Borrowers

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and relieves immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

New Technology Helps Ranchers Maximize Grass Production

One out of every three acres in the U.S. is rangeland. Two-thirds of these are privately owned, mainly by ranchers who graze their livestock in the open country of the American West. Our rangelands produce premium beef, wool, and dairy. But it’s the plants that feed these livestock that are the foundation for profitable agriculture in the West. But ranchers haven’t had a good way to measure how their grass is faring — until now.

The Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP), developed in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the University of Montana, allows producers to track changes in the amount and types of plants growing on their property.

RAP is a free online resource that provides data on vegetation trends across the West from the mid-1980s to the present; and it calculates how productive those plants are. A combination of long-term datasets shows landowners how their lands have changed over time, which translates directly into their operation’s profitability.

Farmers in the central and eastern U.S. have been using technology to track changes in crop production for decades. As soon as they see that their plant productivity is declining — and revenues following suit — they can take steps to address the limitations and boost productivity again.

RAP provides the same power to ranchers. RAP can show ranchers the gap between their potential production and the actual production they realize in terms of pounds-per-acre of grass. It helps landowners understand how much they can potentially gain by changing management practices to boost available forage and close the gap.

Landowners can see how their plant production has changed in a single month or over the span of several years. The technology can be used to visualize plant productivity in an area as small as a baseball diamond or as large as several states. New technology like RAP helps us “help the land” in order to sustain wildlife, provide food and fiber, and support agricultural families long into the future.

UPCOMING DEADLINES & IMPORTANT DATES
• **October 18, 2021:** FSA opened enrollment for 2022 ARC/PLC. Producers can enroll or change elections.
• **November 1, 2021:** FSA ballots mailed to eligible voters for the County Committee election for Local Administrative Area 2
• **November 11, 2021:** Office closed
• **November 15, 2021:** FSA acreage reporting deadline to report fall planted crops and apiculture (bees)
• **November 22, 2021:** NRCS deadline for EQIP applications
• **November 25, 2021:** Office closed
• **December 1, 2021:** FSA NAP application closing deadline for coverage in the 2022 production season

Also remember the following:

- **NAP Notice of Loss** must be filed the earlier of 15 days of the disaster occurrence or when losses become apparent, or 15 days of the final harvest date.
- **LIP Notice of Loss** must be filed 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent.
- **Leases and/or Land Ownership changes including operational changes** must be reported within 30 calendar days of change to avoid late fees, repayment of funds issued and/or ineligibility for program participation. The deadline to submit changes for 2022 program year is August 1, 2022.

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**Save Time - Make an Appointment with NRCS and FSA Offices**

The Weston County USDA Service Center is now open to limited visitors by appointment only. Producers are encouraged to call ahead to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of your time and to ensure staff is available to tend to your important business needs. To contact your agency, use the information below.

Also, remember, visitors must wear masks in all USDA buildings regardless of vaccination status.

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**USDA Weston County Service Center**

**FSA Office**  
1225 Washington Blvd., Ste. 2  
Newcastle, WY 82701  
Phone: 307-746-2701 ext 2  
Fax: 855-415-3437  
Farm Loan Manager:  
Rob Weppner  
rob.weppner@usda.gov  
Acting County Executive Director:  
Sherie Hilgenkamp  
sherie.hilgenkamp@usda.gov

**NRCS Office**  
1225 Washington Blvd., Ste. 3  
Newcastle, WY 82701  
Phone: 307-746-3264  
Fax:866-574-1366  
District Conservationist:  
Paul Eitel  
paul.eitel@usda.gov  
Rangeland Management Specialist:  
Tanner Jenks  
tanner.jenks@usda.gov
NWTF Co-Operative Forester:
Austin Sommerville
austin.sommerville@usda.gov

WCNRD Manager:
Caleb Carter
ccarter.wcnrd@gmail.com

County Committee:
Chuck Grieves, Chairman
Randy Oleson, Vice Chairman
Harry Tavegia, Member
Robin Riesland, Minority Advisor

WCNRD Board:
David Tysdal, Chairman, Rural Supervisor
Tucker Hamilton, Vice Chairman, Rural Supervisor
Emily Hartinger, Secretary/Treasurer, Rural Supervisor
Gene Norman, Urban Supervisor
Tom Streeter, At-Large Supervisor

Next County Committee Meeting:
TBD

WCNRD Board Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 3pm. The meetings will be held at the Pinnacle Bank in Newcastle until further notice.