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A Message from Acting County Executive Director

We hope you all had a safe and loving Thanksgiving. We are thankful for all our farmers and ranchers. We appreciate all you do each and every day to provide the food we enjoy every day of the year, but especially as we gather with our family and friends for the holidays.

We’ve been busy processing applications submitted for the multiple programs we are administering this year. 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.

The election and enrollment period for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) commodity crop safety net programs is open for the 2022 production season. Please remember to enroll through a signed contract by March 15, 2022. If you have a multi-year contract, your elections and enrollment roll over and no action is necessary unless you want to make an election change or have a change in your farm, such as a change in farm ownership or shares. Contact us for more information and to start the process.

If you are going to need ranch financing for 2022, and you are having difficulty securing such assistance through a commercial lender, you may want to consider visiting with our farm loan team about options available through FSA. To schedule an appointment for such discussion, call 307-682-8843 ext. 2.

If you live in Local Administrative Area #2, don't forget to return your FSA County Committee election ballot to our office by December 6, 2021. The date and time of the ballot counting is December 13, 2021, at 12:00PM. While this election is conducted by secret ballot and no one will know how you voted, any interested person may witness the vote counting.

As the holidays approach and our end-of-year deadlines nearing, we are seeing business pick up at our office. As a reminder, please call our office at 307-746-2701 ext. 2 for service. Depending on your needs and the status of our office due to the ongoing pandemic response, we have several options to provide you with assistance. We can conduct a great deal of business by phone, virtual appointment, email, or using our office drop box. We may be limited on in-person appointments, so it is important that you always call first.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!
Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

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 were 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.

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage

For the 2021 and subsequent crop years, NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends.
Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

For producers in Weston County who may have filed a Notice of Loss on grazed acres, please contact the office. You will need to file a CCC-576 Application for Payment form to receive program benefits.

All NAP areas within Weston County qualify for a grazing loss. The deadline to file CCC-576 Application for Payment for 2021 grazing losses in Weston County is **February 11, 2022**.

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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](http://nrcs.usda.gov).

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### 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.

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

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**Farmers Help America Keep Soil Healthy**

Our lives are dependent on healthy soil. Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife and beautiful landscapes. It’s the reason why USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service experts are in your community and across the nation.

Soil is composed of air, water, organic matter and minerals. A community of organisms – functioning as a soil food web – lives all or parts of their lives in soil. More individual organisms are in a teaspoon of soil than there are people on earth. Increasing soil organic matter typically improves soil health, since organic matter improves several critical functions of soil.

To improve the health of their soil, more and more farmers and ranchers are keeping soil covered, reducing disturbance activities such as tilling, keeping plants growing throughout the year, and diversifying the crops they’re planting in a rotation. Taking these steps allow farmers and ranchers to help reduce erosion while increasing the soil’s ability to provide nutrients and water to the plant at critical times during the growing season.

When producers focus on improving soil health, they often have larger harvests, lower input costs, optimized nutrient use, and improved crop resilience during drought years like last year. In heavy rainfall years, healthy soil holds more water, reducing runoff that helps avert flooding downstream.

And because healthy soil allows for greater water infiltration and less erosion, nutrients and pesticides stay on the farm where they benefit crops, and are far less likely to be carried off the farm into streams and lakes where they can cause harm.

NRCS helps farmers install conservation practices such as cover crops to maintain and improve soil health – all of which can lead to productive, profitable and sustainable farming and ranching operations for generations to come.

For more information, contact your Weston County USDA Service Center at 307-746-3264 or visit nrcs.usda.gov.

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**UPCOMING DEADLINES & IMPORTANT DATES**

- **December 1, 2021**: FSA NAP application closing deadline for coverage in the 2022 production season
- **December 6, 2021**: Final day to return LAA#2 election ballots to the county office.
- **December 13, 2021**: LAA#2 election ballots will be counted in public, 12PM at the Weston County FSA Office.
- **December 13-17, 2021**: Office staff availability for in-house appointments or field visits will limited
- **December 24, 2021**: Office closed for holiday
- **December 31, 2021**: Office closed for holiday
- **January 17, 2021**: Office closed for holiday
- **January 31, 2022**: Deadline to timely submit an application for the 2021 Livestock Forage Program (LFP)
- **January 31, 2022**: Deadline to timely submit an application for the 2021 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) including feed transportation and water hauling cost assistance
- **February 11, 2022**: Deadline to timely submit a NAP application for payment for 2021 losses

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.
**County Committee:**

Chuck Grieses, Chairman  
Randy Oleson, Vice Chairman  
Harry Tavegia, Member  
Robin Riesland, Minority Advisor

**Next County Committee Meeting:**  
December 13, 2021 at 12PM

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

**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

**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.