

January 2014



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Gratiot County FSA Updates

Gratiot County FSA Office

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Ben Belkholm
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Farm Loan Officer:
Gerald Wagler

Program Technician:
Teri Hedrick

Gratiot County Committee:
Scott Apple
Doreen Slavik
Andrea Ackels

**Next County Committee
Meeting:** April 9, 2014; 8:00
a.m.

County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Andrea Ackels. Andrea was elected to represent farmers from Wheeler, Emerson, Lafayette, North Star, Hamilton, and Elba Townships on the county committee. The election results for Local Administrative Area 3 are:

Andrea Ackels — Elected to the county committee (COC)
Nathan Thomas — 1st alternate to COC

Andrea replaces Olan Humm who had reached his COC term limit. FSA thanks Olan for his nine years of service to the producers of Gratiot County as a COC member.

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

Farm Record Changes

Has your farm operation had any of the following happen this winter?

- Purchased new ground
- Dropped/picked up a new farm
- Ownership changes/transfers (including transfer to a trust)
- Changes in cropland acres
- Changes in the structure of your farm operation (converting to an LLC or adding/removing members of a corporation)
- Future plans to clear wooded areas or remove stumps

Now is the time to report these changes to the Gratiot FSA office. These changes must be reported timely in order to prepare for any new program sign-ups as a result of Farm Bill proceedings. Don't delay or jeopardize a potential program enrollment because your records need to be fixed!

Gratiot Designated as Primary Disaster County

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated Gratiot County as primary natural disaster area due to damages and losses caused by excessive rain with cooler than normal temperatures that began April 1, 2013.

Gratiot was designated a natural disaster area on January 22, 2014, making all qualified farm operators eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from FSA, provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses.

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

For more information about emergency loans, please contact Gerald Wagler, Farm Loan Officer, or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within **90 days** of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these requirements.

For AFIDA purposes, agricultural land is defined as any land used for farming, ranching or timber production, if the tracts total 10 acres or more. The AFIDA reports must be filed with the FSA county office that maintains reports for the county where the land is located.

For more information regarding AFIDA and FSA programs, contact the FSA office nearest to you, or visit the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov>.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).