May 2013

Ottawa County FSA Updates

Effective May 17th, 2013 I will no longer be working for the USDA, Farm Service Agency in Grand Haven, MI. As we continue to implement new farm bill provisions and technical changes within the agency, I have appreciated your patience and willingness to work with the staff to implement those changes as well as correct records that have affected operations within the county. An Acting CED will be temporarily assigned to assist the staff during this transition. */s/ Amy MacNeil*

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Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive benefits from USDA, you must be compliant with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting any land clearing, leveling or drainage projects to ensure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026, Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) certifications to Determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

Please feel free to contact your local Farm Service Agency with any questions

Farm Record Changes

All changes to farm records must be reported to FSA in order to ensure accurate records, production, history and payments. Any changes to cropland (additional acreage or eliminating acreage) on farms, changes in your business operation or members of the operation, please contact FSA to update your information at your earliest convenience.

Deadline to make required changes have been established as June 3rd, for farms enrolled into the ACRE Program and August 2nd for all other farms.

CRP Sign-Up Begins May 20th, 2013

USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20th, 2013 and ending June 14th, 2013. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

DCP/ACRE Sign-up Continues

The sign-up period for DCP and ACRE continues with the 2013 crop year. Producers are encouraged to sign up for the program before the June 3rd deadline for ACRE and August 2nd, 2013 deadline for DCP. The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions remain unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE. Participants that were previously enrolled into ACRE may choose to either re-enroll or opt out of the program for 2013.

2013 FSA County Committee Election

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee's is an important role locally and a direct link between the agricultural community and the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and represent all constituents.

County Committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support programs
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility

FSA County Committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws and members apply their judgment and knowledge to make the local decisions.

Election Period

June 17, 2013 – The nomination period begins.
August 1, 2013 – Final day to file nomination petitions (FSA-669A) at the local USDA Service Center
November 4, 2013 – Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters
December 2, 2013 – Last day to return completed ballots to the USDA Service Center
January 1, 2014 – Newly elected county committee members take office

Who Can Hold Office

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria such as:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate

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).