



NEWSLETTER



FEBRUARY 2011

Stillwater County Farm Service Agency

334 N 9th St
Columbus, MT 59019
406-322-5348 phone
406-322-4816 fax

County Executive Director:
Dane Schneidt

County Committee:
Lance Eisenman
Ervin Hossfeld
Robert Yates

Staff:
Michelle Eder, ext. 100
Susan Pederson, ext. 105
Marsha Schultz, ext. 106

Sweet Grass County Farm Service Agency

US Hwy 10 E.
PO Box 610
Big Timber, MT 59011
406-932-5159 Phone
406-932-5285 Fax

County Executive Director:
Dane Schneidt

County Committee:
Sheri Tronrud
Wm. "Toby" Cheatham, Jr.
Kevin Halverson

Staff:
Marla Moen, ext. 2

Agricultural Lending Opportunities

Questions regarding obtaining credit to start or enlarge a farming or ranching operation; financing agricultural operating expenses; or livestock, machinery purchases call:
Mike Turley, Yellowstone Farm Loan Program
406-657-6135 ext. 116

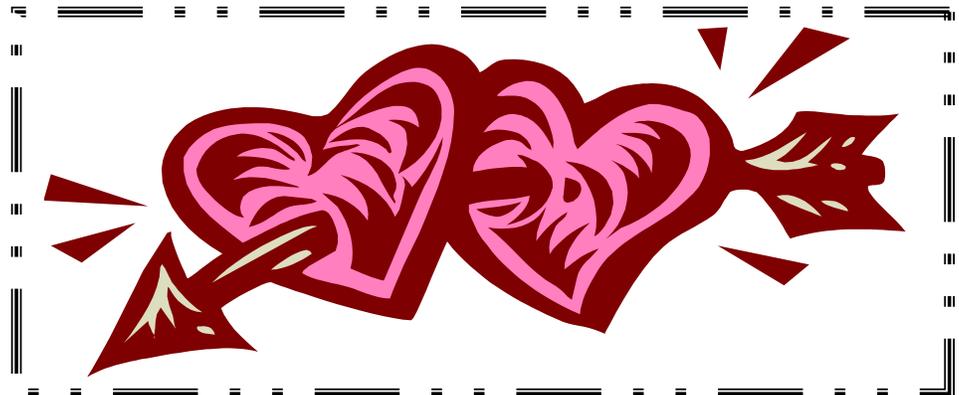
COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to Ervin Hossfeld (Stillwater) and Kevin Halverson (Sweet Grass) as they were elected to represent farmers from Area 3 on each county committee. Kevin Halverson was elected to his 2nd consecutive term. This will be Ervin Hossfeld's 1st term. There were no write-ins agreeing to serve as alternates.

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. The committee members will hold their organizational meeting in January to determine who will serve as the county committee chairman and vice-chairman.

FARMING OPERATION CHANGES

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have added or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.



HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND AND WETLAND CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to sod busting, new breaking, conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all Federal payments.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

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.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office. If you are interested, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.

BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES

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

APPEAL PROCESS

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree. Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

COOPERATION WITH RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 requires the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to work together to improve program compliance and integrity of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. As a result of the passage of the 2000 Act, RMA and FSA are required to coordinate a plan to identify, address and reconcile discrepancies of all relevant producer-derived information, and to coordinate a monitoring program to include fact finding relative to allegations of program fraud, waste, and abuse. FSA will assist RMA and insurance providers in monitoring conditions throughout the growing season and conduct growing season inspections. All suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse concerning the Federal Crop Insurance Program will be referred to RMA. FSA will also assist RMA with auditing claims. Producers may also report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to their local FSA County Office, the RMA Office or Office of Inspector General.

FSA SPOUSAL SIGNATURE POLICY

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse. There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents. For more clarification on spousal signature authority, feel free to contact your local FSA office.



2009 SUPPLEMENTAL REVENUE ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS PROGRAM (SURE)

The 2008 Farm Bill created several new disaster programs. One of the programs, the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program (SURE), provides financial assistance for crop production and/or quality losses due to a natural disaster. SURE is a total farm revenue disaster program as opposed to the crop disaster programs of previous years, which were primarily production oriented programs. Therefore, ALL crops of economic significance that a producer has an interest in are not only evaluated as to the production loss and quality, but revenue as well.

TRIGGER: A 2009 Secretarial Disaster designation in Stillwater County triggered the program for both Stillwater and Sweet Grass counties for 2009. Therefore, in 2009, producers with at least one crop of economic significance with a 10 percent crop production loss could qualify for benefits.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: To be eligible for SURE assistance in 2009, producers had to have a plan of crop insurance of at least catastrophic (CAT) level for all insurable crops and cropping scenarios; and/or Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for non-insurable crops. (Forage crops for grazing and crops not expected to contribute 5% of the total expected value of all crops grown by the producer, did not have to be insured.)

PAYMENTS: SURE will issue payments to an eligible producer in the amount equal to 60% of the difference between the program guarantee and the total farm revenue. SURE will pay up to 90% of the crop's normal production on the farm.

- Program Guarantee: Acres x Yield x Price x Coverage Level x Price Election x Statute % x Share = Program Guarantee
The program guarantee for the farm cannot be greater than 90% of the total of the normal production of the farm.
- Total Farm Revenue: Acres x Actual Yield = Actual Production x National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) Price
is the 12 month marketing year for each commodity. For actual production, data will be used from the Risk Management Agency (RMA) and NAP. [If the program guarantee is more than the total farm revenue, then the producer will be paid at 60% of the difference.]

If you meet the guidelines of the program in 2009, i.e. a 10% production loss (associated with adverse weather) on one crop of economic significance AND crop insurance (CAT/NAP) purchased on all 2009 crops (other than the exceptions previously explained), then contact your FSA Office. Sign-up will run through July 29, 2011.

**Look within, for within is the wellspring
of virtue, which will not cease flowing, if
you cease not from digging.
Marcus Aurelius**



STILLWATER FSA OFFICE
334 North 9th Street
Columbus, MT 59019



**PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Bozeman, MT 59715
PERMIT #54**

IN YOUR MAILBOX ...

Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) contracts are currently being mailed out. All signatures must be returned before any payments can be issued. The DCP program allows for a 22% advance of the payment to be made in the month the producer selects, so a timely return of all paperwork will result in a faster advance payment.

If there have been any changes to your operation such as new or dropped leases, or changes in shares, please let the FSA office know right away.

For producers who receive payments from FSA, there will also be forms for payment eligibility included. The form CCC-926 refers to the adjusted gross income. All questions must be answered and it should be returned to the FSA office. Also included will be a form CCC-927 or CCC-928 which must be mailed directly to the IRS address included. Please feel free to call with any questions.

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