TOOLE COUNTY

September 2010

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Inside this issue:

September 30 Deadline for SURE Application

The deadline to submit USDA Farm Service Agency 2008 Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) program payment applications is close of business on Sept. 30, 2010. Applications not filed by Sept. 30, 2010, will not receive a payment.

SURE provides crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms that have incurred crop production or crop quality losses. The program takes into consideration crop losses on all crops grown by a producer nationwide. SURE provides assistance in an amount equal to 60 percent of the difference between the SURE farm guarantee and total farm revenue. The farm guarantee is based on the amount of crop insurance and Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on the farm. Total farm revenue takes into account the actual value of production on the farm as well as insurance indemnities and certain farm program payments.

To be eligible for SURE, producers must have suffered at least a 10 percent production loss on a crop of economic significance. In addition, producers must meet the risk management purchase requirement by either obtaining a policy or plan of insurance, under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or NAP coverage, for all economically significant crops. For 2008 crops, producers had the opportunity to obtain a waiver of the risk management purchase requirement through a buy-in provision. Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer or rancher, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage. For more info, contact your local FSA office. ♣

CRP Managed Hay and Grazing

2010 Managed Grazing Period ends Sept. 13; 2010 Managed Haying ends Sept. 30

The 2010 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Managed Grazing Period is limited to 60 days - July 16th through September 13th. All livestock must be removed by Sept. 13, 2010. The Managed Haying Period began on July 16th and ends on Sept. 30th. All bales must be removed by Nov. 12, 2010. For more information, please contact your local county FSA office. ♥

Sharpshooter Ed McGivern (1874 -1957) was said to be the "the world's fastest gun, having set several shooting records. Among feats attributed to McGivern was the ability, at 15 feet, to fire five shots in less than a half second into a target smaller than a half dollar.

Water Quality in Stock Tanks

By: Amy Kaiser, NRCS

Many livestock producers have discovered that a cow would rather die of dehydration, than drink water that isn't good for them. But, in this open rangeland of Toole County, reliable drinking sources can be far and few between.

When searching for available water, you should check for dependability and quality of the water source. A good source of ground or surface water that is suitable for livestock should be clear of plant and animal debris, be free of waste and chemical runoff, and be tested for potability. The normal range for pH in surface water systems is 6.5 to 8.5 and for groundwater systems 6 to 8.5. Be aware of chemical runoff from nearby farm fields that can seep into your stock ponds. Even your neighbor could be contributing to the toxic levels in the available water.

Often livestock will not drink potent water because it takes nutrients away from their bodies. If this happens, they can try to regain those supplements through mineral licks. But most will just refuse to drink the water. With clean fresh water, livestock are healthier. They have lower mortality rates among the herd, they can breed healthier offspring, there is an increased rate of weight in claves, and clean water can save you visits to the veterinarian.

For a conventional grazing method, the drinking water requirements for a cow with a small calf are twenty gallons per summer day. On a gentle relief, a cow will walk a maximum of one mile for water. If you have a 100 head of cattle, you should have enough water stocked to hydrate at 2000 gallons per day. NRCS knows that livestock and wildlife rely on supplied stock water as a source of survival, that's why we offer practices that help producers develop springs, drill wells, and install pipelines, tanks, cisterns, and pumps.

One other common water quality issue that may arise, but can be easily avoided, is small mammals and birds that can drown in the tank. If dead animals become trapped in the tank they will begin to decompose. Most livestock will not drink from a tank that has a decomposing carcass. To help minimize the mortality of unsuspecting animals, there is a new effective method.

Recently, the 614 Watering Facility Practice has been updated to require installation of a wildlife escape structure in these facilities. This replaces the old method of using a bird board. There are many wildlife species that can become trapped in the water tank, such as bats, small and large birds, kittens, rabbits, gophers, and mice.

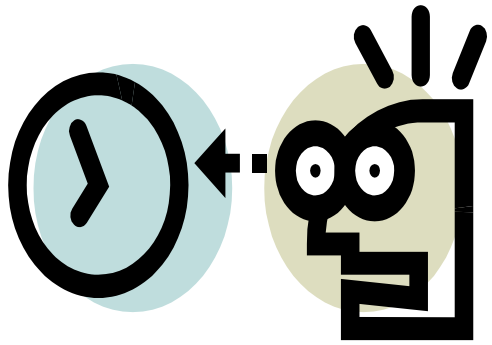
According to the Water for Wildlife handbook, effective devices should follow these guidelines:

- Extend down into the water and meet the inside wall of the trough so animals swimming along the perimeter will find the structure, rather than becoming trapped behind or beneath it or missing it entirely.
- Reach to the bottom of the trough, so it will be effective even if water levels drop sharply.
- Be firmly secured to the trough rim so it will not be knocked loose by livestock.
- Be built of graspable, long-lasting materials, such as painted or coated metal grating.
- Have a slope no steeper than 45 degrees so animals can climb out without slipping back into the water.
- Be located to cause minimal interference with livestock.

One of the most economical and easily constructed structures is assembled with expanded metal. If you are interested in ordering a prefabricated structure please contact the Pondera (278-7611) and Choteau (466-5722) County Conservation Districts.

Water quality issues can effect livestock and wildlife, so please consider one or more of the NRCS practices to help your livestock operation thrive. ♠

The Fort Fizzle Historical Site near Lolo was named for a barricade built in 1877 to stop the Nez Perce tribe from entering the Bitterroot Valley. But the Indians simply went around the defensive structure, and local residents ridiculed the useless barricade as "Fort Fizzle."



Successors in Interest Changes Must be Reported by September 30th

If you have made any changes that affect your interest in base acres since you signed your last Direct and Counter-cyclical Program contract, you must report these ***successions-in-interest*** to the county committee by **Sept. 30,** so that a final determination can be made on who is eligible for the program on the farm.

Changes that qualify as a succession-in-interest include:

- A sale of land
- A change of operator or producer, including a an increase or decrease in the number of partners
- A foreclosure, bankruptcy or involuntary loss of the farm.
- A change in producer shares to reflect changes in the producer's share of the crop(s) that were originally approved on the contract.

If a succession-in-interest has taken place, you, as the "predecessor," are required to refund any advance DCP payments you received for the affected base acres before a payment can be made to the "successor."

Not reporting a succession-in-interest can result in contract termination and a loss of program benefits for all producers involved. ♦

Wetland Compliance

Producers renting or purchasing land that may have a converted wetland status need to check with the county office to learn if there are restrictions.

Farm Bill regulations provide that, unless exempt, persons are ineligible for benefits under certain programs administered by USDA if they:

- plant an agricultural commodity on wetland that was converted after December 23, 1985
- convert a wetland after November 28, 1990
- FSA may not approve any loan or loan guarantee to drain, dredge, fill, level or otherwise manipulate a wetland, or to engage in any activity that results in impairing or reducing the flow, circulation or reach of water except in the case of activity related to the maintenance of previously converted wetlands.
- The following provides permitted uses and restrictions within Wetland compliance provisions:
- wetlands can be farmed under natural conditions, but not converted
- wetlands converted before November 28, 1990, cannot be planted to an agricultural commodity and retain eligibility for benefits
- wetlands converted after Nov. 28, 1990, must either be restored to wetland status or mitigated to regain eligibility for program benefits.
- wetlands that can be farmed under natural conditions cannot be manipulated in any way, unless the Natural Resources Conservation Service determines the work would have a minimal effect on the wetland values
- wetlands converted before December 23, 1985, can be farmed and maintained ♣

The Battle of the Little Bighorn also known as Custer's Last Stand took place on June 25, 1876. Lieutenant Colonel Custer's forces, including more than 200 of his men, were wiped out in less than 20 minutes.

NAP Coverage Deadline for 2011 Crop Year

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) was designed to provide financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields or prevented planting occurs as the result of natural disasters. Statutes limit NAP coverage to each commercial crop or agricultural commodity, except livestock, for which the catastrophic (CAT) level of insurance is not available.

Application deadlines for 2011 NAP coverage for a variety of crops are coming up in the next few months. In Montana, the NAP sales closing deadlines are: **Sept. 1, 2010**, for value loss crops; **Dec. 1, 2010**, for Honey; **March 15, 2011**, for all other NAP crops.

Producers who choose to obtain NAP coverage for 2011 must file a CCC-471 application for coverage and pay the applicable service fee by the sales closing deadline. Eligible producers must pay a service fee of $250 per crop per administrative county or $750 per producer per county, not to exceed $1875 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Service fees may be waived for limited-resource producers.

For the 2011 crop year it is imperative that producers purchase either NAP or a catastrophic (CAT) level of crop insurance for all insurable and non-insurable crops. This is not only for production coverage, but also for eligibility for the new permanent disaster programs created in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In order for producers to be eligible for assistance under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), producers must obtain a plan of insurance for each insurable and non-insurable commodity on the farm, **excluding grazing**. To be eligible for assistance under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), producers must obtain either coverage under the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Rainfall Index pilot Program offered through crop insurance, or NAP coverage, or both on their grazing. For more information please contact your local Farm Service Agency office. ♥

In 1963, Bruce Quande, a high jumper from Kalispell, was photographed at a state competition using an unusual style of sailing headfirst over the bar on his back. Years later, the style was credited to athlete Dick Fosbury and called the "Fosbury flop."

Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium set for Oct. 5-6 in Helena

The annual Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium will be held October 5 and 6, 2010 at the Montana Club in Helena, Mont. The event is hosted by USDA, in conjunction with the Montana Agri-Women, Montana Farm Bureau Women, Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE) and the Montana Cattlewomen.

The purpose of the symposium is to provide an avenue for Women involved in the promotion of Montana's agriculture to learn of issues affecting Montana's rural agricultural communities, promote leadership development and further support women's leadership roles within those communities.

Registration Information:

Pre-registration cost is $60.00. Make checks payable to WSFFA. Provide name, address, and phone number by **Sep. 22, 2010** to: Andrea Ceartin at USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service 3710 Fallon St., Suite B; Bozeman, MT 59718 or reach her at 406-522-4025 or andrea.ceartin@mt.usda.gov. More information, including a detailed agenda is available on the Montana NRCS website at: http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/womenag.html. ♠

Transition Incentives

The Transition Incentives Program (TIP) encourages retired or retiring owners or operators to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. TIP sign-up opened May 17, 2010. If all program requirements are met, TIP provides annual rental payments to the retiring farmer for up to two additional years after the expiration of the CRP contract, provided the transition is not to a family member. For eligibility requirements producers should visit the FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov. ♦

The Montana Yogo Sapphire is the only North American gem to be included in the Crown Jewels of England.

Merit Heifer Program Offered at NILE

The Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE) is providing youth the opportunity to become involved in the beef industry by awarding heifer calves to project participants. Any youth aged 13-17 who is a member of 4-H or FFA is eligible to enter.

Each program participant will own their calf jointly with NILE until the completion of the program, at which time NILE officials will sign off and the participant will take full ownership of the heifer and her off-spring. During the program duration, participants are responsible for raising the heifer, arranging for breeding, completing the record keeping procedure and bringing the animal to the 2011 NILE stock show as a bred replacement heifer. The program is completed after the heifer is determined bred, all record keeping has been completed and the heifer has been shown at the NILE stock show. Applicants will be chosen on their commitment to agriculture, future goals, financial need and the ability to raise the animal in a proper setting. Applications may be obtained at http://www.thenile.org or by calling 406/656-3615 or 671-5100. Applications must be postmarked by **Sept. 15, 2010**. The 2010 NILE dates are Oct. 9-16, 2010. ♣

Order Trees In The Fall

There is no better time to think about ordering trees for your windbreaks, shelterbelts or for replacement stock than right now. Placing a fall order with your local Extension office or Conservation District will provide a larger selection of stock and a variety of sizes…from conservation grade to mature plants up to 6 feet tall! Early ordering will also give you time to prepare your planting area so when the trees arrive in mid- to late April, you'll be ready!

For more information on varieties available, contact your local Extension office (Shelby, 424-8350) or the Toole County Conservation District (434-5234, ext. 113). ♥

2009 FSA Farm Program Payments by County

(Does not include Farm loans)

Beaverhead	$ 840,409	Pondera	$11,569,994
Big Horn	$ 4,539,958	Powder River	$ 1,091,442
Blaine	$ 10,705,796	Powell	$ 101,716
Broadwater	$ 2,731,346	Prairie	$ 2,249,818
Carbon	$ 1,195,801	Ravalli	$ 303,804
Carter	$ 1,664,659	Richland	$ 7,994,684
Cascade	$ 9,285,278	Roosevelt	$10,375,686
Chouteau	$ 29,509,444	Rosebud	$ 3,033,621
Custer	$ 1,694,222	Sanders	$ 96,143
Daniels	$ 9,118,993	Sheridan	$10,889,303
Dawson	$ 6,563,275	Silver Bow	$ 4,427
Deer Lodge	$ 72,342	Stillwater	$ 2,974,603
Fallon	$ 2,656,263	Sweet Grass	$ 126,088
Fergus	$ 7,598,709	Teton	$ 12,398,409
Flathead	$ 921,683	Toole	$ 13,052,535
Gallatin	$ 2,493,246	Treasure	$ 352,570
Garfield	$ 4,887,801	Valley	$ 11,406,385
Glacier	$ 8,289,510	Wheatland	$ 2,393,227
Golden Valley	$ 2,222,374	Wibaux	$ 2,430,244
Granite	$ 30,251	Yellowstone	$ 4,743,669
Hill	$ 22,994,406		
Jefferson	$ 181,416		
Judith Basin	$ 3,575,897		
Lake	$ 1,022,344		
Lewis / Clark	$ 762,363		
Liberty	$12,717,582		
Lincoln	$ 435		
Madison	$ 712,816		
McCone	$ 7,861,720		
Meagher	$ 667,898		
Mineral	$ 22,546		
Missoula	$ 114,280		
Musselshell	$ 1,846,607		
Park	$ 806,803		
Petroleum	$ 905,596		
Phillips	$ 8,780,473		

STATISICAL TIDBIT

The surrounding counties (Glacier, Liberty, Pondera, Toole) disbursed 17% of the total dollars disbursed within the state.

The district (Cascade, Chouteau, Glacier, Liberty, Pondera, Teton, Toole) disbursed 36%.

A Garden Runs Through It: Using Hoop Houses to Extend the Growing Season: Part II

BY: Stacy Thornbrugh, Soil Conservationist

High tunnels, also known as hoop houses, are temporary structures designed to extend the growing season. Typically they are bow or arch shaped structures covered in one or more layers of plastic and are usually erected on site. An arched or gothic style structure has a peaked roof and is taller than a Quonset or hooped shaped structure. The frame or bows of a hoop house are routinely made from galvanized steel which can be anchored to the ground in a variety of ways. The plastic covering is typically greenhouse grade UV treated polyethylene film and is generally ventilated by rolling up the sides; however, they can also be vented from the ends. Hoop houses are warmed naturally by the sun and cooled using natural ventilation. Netting may also be used in summer to provide shade cover and keep crops from overheating. Hoop houses come in an assortment of styles and sizes depending on your needs.

High tunnels are used in both warm and cold climates offering an assortment of benefits depending on where you live. A good high tunnel that is well maintained can last 20 years. For areas that get significant snow, an arched or gothic design is more desirable if leaving the cover on for the winter. The arch allows snow to slide off the sides more easily, reducing the possibility of accumulation. Although most high tunnels can support a small amount of snow load, reducing the accumulation will reduce the risk of damage. Removing the plastic covering for winter may be the best option for areas with considerable snow accumulation. Choosing a site that is well drained is essential. Poor drainage from micro irrigation or runoff from rain or snow can cause cooler soil temperatures and have the potential to cause salinity issues. In locations with frequent wind, locating the high tunnel near a windbreak/shelterbelt is recommended. It is important to position the high tunnel near the windbreak; however, care should be taken to locate the tunnel in a manner that does not block the sun. Since high tunnels are designed to use the suns natural warmth, orientation for the greatest solar gain is important. For those living south of 40° latitude, a north to south orientation is best, and for those living north of 40° latitude (i.e. Montana), an east to west orientation is best. Before deciding to construct a high tunnel, consider how it will fit into your operation and if you have a suitable location. You will want to select a design that best fits the purpose and budget.

Soil moisture can be the most challenging aspect of sustaining uniform plant growth in a high tunnel. Evapotranspiration in a high tunnel can be anywhere from .05 inches to over .30 inches per day; therefore, assessing the soil moisture within the root zone should be done daily to achieve high quality yields. When setting up irrigation for a high tunnel, it is best to learn about the soil profile in order to understand the soil's available water holding capacity, drainage limitations, and any potential for root restrictions. The type of crop, size of the plants, and daily solar radiation will dictate the frequency of irrigation needed to meet each crops needs. Water quality is just as important as water quantity. Be sure you have a quality water source available for the tunnel location.

Soil fertility and nutrient management are additional critical elements in high tunnel crop production. Testing the soil should be the first step in order to maximize yield potentials. Soil nutrient deficiencies as well as excesses can have negative impacts on yields and the quality of crops. Compost, cover cropping, fertigation, foliar feeding, mulch, green manures, and crop rotation are ways to optimize the growing potential within a high tunnel. Understanding your soil and the needs of the crops to be grown will help in choosing the best methods to apply. Hoop houses tend to have low incidents of disease and maintaining good ventilation will help ensure healthy crops. Pest management can be done through various methods such as pesticides, biorational control, horticultural soaps,

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or by screening the sides to keep pests out and beneficial insects in. Many farmers have put bee hives inside their tunnels or have introduced beneficial insects such as ladybugs.

If you are interested in extending your growing season, enhancing crop variety, and increasing your profitability, a high tunnel system may be for you. NRCS has implemented a 3 year pilot program to determine the effectiveness of seasonal high tunnels in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers. If you would like more information about high tunnels, contact your local NRCS office. ♠

Pest Management Tour October 5-8 in North-Central Montana

Certified Private Pesticide Applicators in north-central Montana will need to renew their application licenses before the end of 2010. To help applicator's receive enough education credits to recertify before it is too late, the MSU Pesticide Education Program and county Extension offices are offering multiple three and six credit program opportunities for private applicators in eight locations in north-central Montana.

Commercial / Government applicators are also urged to attend these programs to earn credits toward their licenses. The Pest Management Tour is offering 5 government / commercial recertification credits in the categories of Dealer, Demonstration & Research, Aerial, Agricultural Plant Pest Control, Agricultural Animal Pest Control, and Aquatic Pest Control.

The 2010 Pest Management Tour will cover many subject areas of local interest including wireworms, grasshoppers, western salsify, cheatgrass, beneficial insects, insect identification, pesticide safety, and pesticides in the environment. The program agenda varies by location, and can be obtained online at www.pesticides.montana.edu by selecting '2010 Pest Management Tour' to see topics of local interest or by contacting the Extension office. MSU and Montana Department of Agriculture representatives speaking at this tour include Dr. Jane Mangold (MSU Invasive Weed Specialist), Dr. Fabian Menalled (MSU Cropland Weed Specialist), Dr. Kevin Wanner (MSU Crop Insect Specialist), Ruth O'Neill (MSU Insect Diagnostician), Linda Johns (MDA Agricultural Officer) and Cecil Tharp (MSU Pesticide Education Specialist).

Locations for the Pest Management Tour:

October 5th

Great Falls, MT: Family Living Center, Montana Expo Park, Fairgrounds. Contact Wade Crouch at (406)454-6980 for more information.

Choteau, MT: Choteau Country Club. Contact Mark Major for more information at (406)466-2491

October 6th

Conrad, MT: Pondera Shooting Sports Building, Pre-register by contacting Dan Picard at (406)271-4054 for $6.00 lunch.

Cut Bank, MT: Cut Bank Voting Center. Pre-register by contacting Damon Bunting at (406)873-2239 for free catered lunch.

October 7th

Havre, MT: Student Union Building Ballroom, MSU Northern. Pre-register by contacting Joe Broesder at (406)265-5481x233 for free catered lunch.

Chinook, MT: Walner Hall, 337 Ohio. Contact Michael Schuldt at (406)357-3200 for catered lunch.

October 8th

Chester, MT: Our Savior Lutheran Fellowship Hall. Contact Jesse Fulbright at (406)759-5625 for more information.

Fort Benton, MT: Agricultural Center. Contact Tom Allen at (406)622-3751 for more information.

For further information, contact the Toole County Extension office at 424-8350. ♦

The notorious outlaw, Henry Plummer, built the first jail constructed in the state of Montana at Bannack.

HELPFUL HINT FOR FILLING OUT FORMS

DON'T

Use white out!

Use pencil!

DO

Take your time!

Fill out the form completely-All blocks completed?

Make sure it is signed properly.

Initial and date any mistakes.

Receiving the Toole County Newsletter by Email

Are you interested in receiving the Toole County Newsletter by email? The office has compiled a list of producers that are receiving a monthly newsletter by email. If you would like to be added to the list, please contact Rogene by phone or email at

rogene.halver@mt.usda.gov .

In addition to these newsletters, you will continue to receive the Toole County Connections which is mailed quarterly. If any of the individuals already on the list have any problems opening the attachment, etc., please let us know.

OR

access **Montana Farm Service Agency news and program deadlines online @ www.fsa.usda.gov/mt**

Montana Farm Service Agency's County Newsletters are available online! You can view and download your county's most recent newsletter on the Montana FSA Website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/mt - just click on Newsletters. Montana's farmers, ranchers and agriculture partners can view important Montana FSA program deadlines and news and sign up to receive email and/or RSS messages as soon as Montana news releases are issued. If you are interested in replacing the hard copy of the county newsletters with the online version, please contact your local county office for arrangements. ♣

Marketing Assistance Loans

A Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) is available for producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) takes title to the commodity. Beneficial interest means retaining the ability to make decisions about the commodity; responsibility for loss or damage to the commodity; and title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if the producer regains beneficial interest.

Commodity loan eligibility requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. For commodities to be eligible they must have been produced by an eligible producer, be in existence and in a storable condition and be merchantable for food, feed or other uses as determined by CCC. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger procedures, such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future commodity loans.

The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification. ♥

2010 Grain Loan Rates

Spring Wheat -	$3.87
Winter Wheat -	$2.70
Hard Amber Durum -	$6.22
Barley -	$1.85
Oats -	$1.32

PROGRAM PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

There have been several questions lately concerning the limitations of different programs within the office. So we thought we would include them in the newsletter.

PROGRAM PAYMENT TYPE	Dollar Limitation			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Commodity Programs				
Direct payments on covered commodities except peanuts	40,000/1			
Direct payments on peanuts	40,000/1			
Counter-cyclical and ACRE payments on covered commodities except peanuts	65,000/2			
Counter-cyclical and ACRE payments on peanuts	65,000/2			
Price support programs	No Limits			
Conservation Programs				
CRP annual rental payments	50,000			
EQIP (all contract for FY 2009-2012)	300,000			
CSTP (all contracts for FY 2009-2012)	200,000			
GRP	50,000			
WRP	50,000			
WHIP	50,000			
Disaster and Livestock Assistance Programs				
NAP	100,000			
SURE, LIP, LFP and ELAP	100,000			
TAP	100,000			
Other Programs				
TAA	10,000/3			

1. If the person or legal entity has a direct or indirect interest in payments earned on a farm that is in ACRE, this limitation will reflect a 20 percent reduction in direct payments on each farm that is participating in ACRE.

2. Under ACRE, this amount will be a combined limitation for counter-cyclical and ACRE payments. If a person or legal entity has a direct or indirect interest in payments earned on a farm participating in ACRE, this limitation will reflect an increase for the amount that the direct payments were reduced.

3. TAA payments and counter-cyclical payments received by a person or legal entity for the same program or fiscal year are limited to combined total of $65,000 if counter-cyclical payments are received for covered commodities or peanuts; or a total of $130,000 if counter-cyclical payments are received for both covered commodities and peanuts. ♠

Planting the Seeds of Partnership

By Misty Vermulm, NRCS

If you have spent time hiking mountain trails or enjoying a public campground, you may have encountered a group of young people sporting green T-shirts, hard-hats, and pulaskis. This describes a crew with the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC). MCC is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to environmental and community services through a partnership effort. These services occur primarily on public owned land, although their mission encompasses a wide variety of service objectives including: trail work, community service, conservation, habitat development, historical restoration and more. The Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) has been in existence officially since 1993, but has roots that go back further than that. Their projects are sponsored by public entities and in this way these partnership efforts have a multiplying effect toward the on- the- ground results.

Enthusiasm epitomizes a Montana Conservation Corps crew member as is seen here as they prepare to plant the seedling trees

In 2010, The Toole County Conservation District (TCCD) partnered with the Montana Conservation Corps in an effort to create and enhance wildlife habitat for the critters along a stretch of the Marias River.

Tom and Debra Lewis of Marias Ridge Ranch had developed and committed to a conservation plan and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which entailed planting 6000 trees and shrubs to complement the existing river corridor. As the time for planting the trees approached, the Lewis's began searching for labor to assist in this task. Available labor in the spring can be tough to come by - especially in an agricultural community – with calving and seeding crops taking a front row seat. The Lewis's search led them to check into the MCC and from there they approached the TCCD. The Conservation District board members were supportive of a partnership effort that would get these trees planted in a timely fashion and facilitate project success. Marlene Moon, Administrator for the TCCD, submitted a sponsorship agreement for the project. The MCC conducts projects on privately owned land as long as there are environmental and service oriented benefits. This wildlife planting was an ideal fit for their program such that two crews were scheduled.

The concentration on their faces speaks to the dedication of this crew and is what made their labor truly a worthwhile investment.

In reference to the process, Moon and the TCCD felt it happened rather smoothly. They view this as "another way (they) can partner with other agencies and organizations to help producers put conservation on the ground". They plan to promote this cooperative effort further within the county. The MCC cost to support a crew for a week of labor is $4500 and sponsors are asked to contribute $3600. In cases like this, the landowners typically donate that amount back to the sponsor. In turn, the landowner can expect a crew of 6 to show up for the week that is scheduled and do whatever needs done. A technical (usually local) advisor is needed to direct them on the diverse projects that they agree to complete.

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The MCC assisted the Lewis' with planting their 6000 trees that were devoted to wildlife habitat as well as helping to build the wildlife exclusion fencing – which will enable the plants to be protected from browsing deer in the area until they can become established. The crew endured all four seasons of Montana weather during their week of work. They diligently kept working through the wind, rain, and snow. At times they were forced to work in the Lewis' shop constructing fences but to their credit, they were highly flexible and willing to tackle any task that was at hand. The hardy folks tent camped in freezing weather , but woke up each morning - ready to go and smiling to boot.

Here they carefully space the trees per the planting plan and tamp any air pockets from around the roots.

Tom and Debbie were ever thankful and pleased with the quality of help they received from the Montana Conservation Corps. The assistance from MCC is helping them to achieve their goal of developing a diverse, productive, and wildlife dense property. The help from MCC was just the beginning. Years of ongoing labor and effort are what lay ahead of the Lewis' but they are committed to seeing this through, and it's that dedication that will ensure the ultimate success of the project. The Lewis', TCCD, MCC, and NRCS are all hoping that this ground breaking partnership effort, and this particular project as well, will indeed 'take root'. For information or to learn about project sponsorship, check out their website www.montanaconservationcorps.org . ♦

Three months after planting, the trees have leafed out and are trying to take root and out compete the weeds.

USDA Announces Loan Program for Land Preservation, Conservation

BOZEMAN, Sept. 3, 2010 – Montana USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Executive Director Bruce Nelson and State Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservationist Joyce Swartzendruber today announced the launch of a Conservation Loan (CL) program that will provide farm owners and farm-related business operators access to credit to implement conservation practices that will conserve natural resources. "This loan program will give Montana farmers and ranchers who are interested in implementing conservation measures on their lands a chance to do so by providing assistance with their up-front costs," Nelson said. "We encourage Montanans who want to apply for this program to contact their local FSA and NRCS offices."

FSA will administer the program. Eligibility for the CL program requires a conservation plan to be approved by NRCS. Funds can be used to implement conservation programs approved by USDA, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Wetlands Reserve Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program for the installation of conservation structures; establishment of forest cover; installation of water conservation measures; establishment or improvement of permanent pastures; implementation of manure management; and the adaptation of other emerging or existing conservation practices, techniques or technologies.

Direct CLs can be obtained through local FSA offices with loan limits up to $300,000. Guaranteed CLs up to $1,112,000 are available from lenders working with FSA. ♣

Calendar of Events

Sept 30	CRP Managed Haying Period Ends
Sept 30	Federal Crop Deadline to purchase forage coverage for 2011
Sept 30	SURE Deadline for 2008 Crops
Oct 5-6	Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium
Oct 5-8	Pest Management Tours

*** The FSA Toole County Committee meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of each month beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the FSA Office.**

Toole County FSA
1125 Oilfield Ave
Shelby, MT 59474

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"Special accommodations will be made for the physically handicapped, vision or hearing impaired person upon request. If accommodation is required, please contact Bob Hermance, County Executive Director at the above address; call 406-434-5234; or email: robert.hermance@mt.usda.gov