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- [FSA County Offices Taking Appointments for CRP Signup](#)
- [County Committee Election Ballots Due](#)
- [Report Weather Damage](#)
- [Tips for a Successful Meeting with Your Lender](#)
- [Acreage Reporting for Fall-Seeded Crops](#)
- [Inventory Report for Honeybee Producers](#)
- [Farmers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services](#)
- [FSA Makes Payments for New Safety Net Programs](#)
- [Producers Have the Option to Change Administrative County for ARC Program](#)
- [Important Dates and Deadlines](#)

Washington FSA Newsletter

Washington State Farm Service Agency

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FSA County Offices Taking Appointments for CRP Signup

The Farm Service Agency will accept bids for the Conservation Reserve Program general signup until **February 26, 2016** in all FSA county offices. This will be the first general CRP signup since passage of the 2014 Farm Bill. The program's acreage cap is gradually being lowered to 24 million acres nationwide for fiscal years 2017 and 2018. This could result in a competitive signup. Appointments at your [county FSA office](#) are encouraged.

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, applicants enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. The most common

Mike Mykines, Loans

Please contact your [local FSA office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

ground covers chosen by participants are native or introduced mixes of grasses and forbs.

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, you must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to the CRP signup period. Exceptions to this rule include:

- Land acquired by a new owner due to the previous owner's death;
- Change in ownership due to foreclosure; or
- Land that was purchased by a new owner without the sole intention of placing it in CRP.

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be cropland (including field margins) that was planted to an annual crop, been in summer fallow or been in CRP at least 4 crop years during 2008 to 2013. Land also must have a weighted average erosion index (EI) of eight or higher, be located in a state CRP conservation priority area ([map](#)), or be CRP set to expire September 30, 2016.

Land under a CRP contract that expired September 30, 2014 or 2015 and was not eligible for the one-year extensions offered in those years may be offered for re-enrollment in this signup provided all eligibility requirements are met.

FSA will rank offers for CRP contracts according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Each eligible offer will be ranked nationally in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion, and;
- Cost.

In addition to an annual rental payment, FSA will pay 50 percent of the cost to establish CRP practices. FSA offers an [online description](#) of CRP practices.

FSA bases CRP annual rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the

average dry-land cash rent using data provided by the National Agricultural Statistics Service or cash-rent equivalent as guidelines. You may offer land at the maximum soil rental rate established by FSA or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that your offer will be accepted.

Successful applicants will be required to complete a conservation plan with the Natural Resources Conservation Service no later than September 9, 2016. Cost-share payments will only be paid for those eligible costs that are approved under the conservation plan. Starting a practice before approval of a CRP contract is at your own risk.

In addition to the General CRP Signup, FSA will accept offers for specific conservation practices under the Continuous CRP or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). If you would like to make an appointment or learn more about CRP, contact your [county FSA office](#).

2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and in recognition of this milestone, FSA has launched a [commemorative website](#).

County Committee Election Ballots Due

December 7, 2015 is the final date to return your FSA county committee election ballot. You may submit ballots in person to local USDA service centers or mail your ballots to your local USDA service center. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than **December 7, 2015**.

FSA county committees are your opportunity to have an impact on federal farm programs locally. County committees ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA programs. They are responsible for the hiring of the County Executive Directors and are the place that producers can appeal most agency determinations.

To be eligible to vote, you must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program or have your farm on record with FSA and be of legal voting age.

Each county committee draws its members from local administrative areas. Members serve on staggered three-year terms so that one-third of the seats are up for re-election each year. Check the online map of [local administrative areas](#) (LAAs)

open for election.

Newly elected committee members begin their term January 1, 2016. If you did not receive a ballot or would like additional information about your local County Committee election, contact your [county FSA office](#).

Report Weather Damage

As winter blows into the Northwest, it's important to remember to report to FSA any weather damage that occurs to your farming operation. Many of the disaster relief programs FSA has to offer have deadlines for reporting losses or damage. Also, FSA uses damage reports to determine a need for disaster declarations. Disaster declarations trigger availability of emergency loans and in some instances, additional disaster assistance programs.

Damage reports are not limited to crops. They also include farmsteads (structures, fences, homes, shops, etc.), farmland (through erosion) and livestock.

Helpful documentation includes the specific location of the farm damage, date and time of disaster event, type of damage (i.e. hail, wind, etc.), what was affected by the disaster and its estimated percent of loss. You are encouraged to take pictures of significant damage as both insurance agents and the FSA offices use these in support of future program applications and/or their cumulative damage reports. Contact the county office for information about disaster assistance programs.

As a reminder, the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) requires a Notice of Loss be filed within 15 calendar days from the earlier of:

- The natural disaster occurrence;
- The final planting date, if planting is prevented by a natural disaster;
- The date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or
- The normal harvest date.

If you have questions about FSA disaster relief programs or would like to report losses, contact your [county FSA office](#).

Tips for a Successful Meeting with Your Lender

If you are seeking agricultural financing, you want to prepare yourself for success. When preparing for your meeting with your loan official, you should find out what is needed for a complete application. This may include completing the application and applicable forms. Additionally, it may involve providing bank statements, creditor statements, three to five years of production records, verification of non-farm income (W-2's and/or wage statements) and three to five years of tax returns.

Before your meeting with your loan official, you should also check your credit and know where you stand. A free and simple way to do this is by going to annualcreditreport.com and pulling a credit report. This website provides you one free credit report from each of the three credit bureaus annually. This means that you could check your credit three times a year for free. However, it will not give you the credit score for free. The information would allow you to know what debts you have and assure you they are in a current status with no delinquencies or collections. If something is reported that may hinder your ability to obtain your credit needs, you can try to repair the credit and

provide the necessary documentation to your lender.

As an applicant, you should also try to understand the lender's perspective and acknowledge that you need to fit their program, meet eligibility requirements, profitability and collateral requirements, and provide any additional documentation they may need to make decisions about financing your operation. This is a business transaction, so shop around and know what interest rates, terms and conditions may be in comparison to other lenders in your area.

Acreage Reporting for Fall-Seeded Crops

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers of fall-seeded crops are reminded to file an accurate crop certification report as soon as possible after planting, but no later than **December 15, 2015** at your local FSA office.

If you acquire additional acreage after December 15, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring a lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Fruit growers should also prepare to deliver your acreage data to your county office before January 15, 2016.

Acreage reports are necessary for participation in many federal farm programs. Late-filed fees may be assessed for missed deadlines. For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your [county FSA office](#).

Inventory Report for Honeybee Producers

Honey producers who obtained 2016 crop year Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage must provide an Inventory Report at your local county FSA office by **January 4, 2016**. The Inventory Report provides FSA with the total number of honeybee colonies at the beginning of the 2016 NAP coverage period.

The 2016 NAP coverage period for honey production begins on January 1, 2016 and ends on December 31, 2016. Eligible honey for NAP coverage includes honey produced commercially for human consumption.

FSA understands that a honey producer's colonies may be located in various counties and states, at different times during the crop year. So as the crop year progresses, you must notify your recording county FSA office within 30 calendar days of changes to your number of colonies and report the locations to where the bees were moved. Honeybee colony changes and locations reported to the county office will be documented on form FSA-578.

If the total number of colonies increase during the crop year, after the initial Inventory Report is filed in January, the highest number of colonies reported at any time in the crop year will be used to calculate a NAP payment for an approved honey loss. For more information about the program or to report your honey inventory, please contact your [county FSA office](#).

Farmers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. The documentation is called receipt for

service.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form – serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter.

To learn more about FSA, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your [county FSA office](#).

FSA Makes Payments for New Safety Net Programs

FSA is making payments for the 2014 crop year under the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Statewide, 7,500 farms participated in ARC-County (ARC-CO) and 2,250 farms participated in PLC. More details on the price and yield information used to calculate the financing assistance from the safety-net programs is available on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc and www.fsa.usda.gov/wa.

[2014 Washington ARC-CO Wheat Revenue Map Without ARC-CO Safety Net](#)

[2014 Washington ARC-CO Wheat Revenue Map With ARC-CO Safety Net](#)

[2014 Washington ARC-CO Corn Revenue Map Without ARC-CO Safety Net](#)

[2014 Washington ARC-CO Corn Revenue Map With ARC-CO Safety Net](#)

If your farm was enrolled in ARC-County and you were expecting a payment but have not received it, check with your [county FSA office](#) to see if all eligibility paperwork was completed.

Producers Have the Option to Change Administrative County for ARC Program

FSA bases a farm's payments for the Agriculture Risk Coverage County (ARC-CO) program on county data for the county where the farm is administered. This means that a farm physically located in County A will receive an ARC-CO payment if payments are triggered in County B if the farm is administered by the FSA office in County B. The reverse is also true; a farm physically located in County A but administered in County B will not receive a payment if there are none made in County B, even if payments occur in County A.

Because payments in this program are county specific, a small number of farms participating in the program experienced a mismatch between administrative county and physical location. For this reason, FSA is allowing owners of a farm to return the administration of the farm to the county where it is physically located. Additionally, FSA will recalculate the ARC-CO payments for the farm for the 2014 and 2015 crop years. The decision may be made independently for each year.

If you are in this situation, you have until **February 1, 2016** to request a farm transfer. In some cases, the recalculation for a farm may result in a higher payment for one crop and a lower payment

for another crop. The recalculated payment will be the net of the two payments and in some cases may necessitate one shareholder returning a portion of a payment if the shares are split by crops among producers. All producers on a farm with a share in the payments must unanimously agree to recalculate the payment based on the physical location of the tracts. Contact your administrative [county FSA office](#) if you have questions or wish to make a change.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **Dec. 1, 2015** - General Conservation Reserve Program signup starts.
 - **Dec. 7, 2015** - Deadline to vote in County Committee elections.
 - **Dec. 15, 2015** - Acreage reporting deadline for fall-seeded crops. These include fall-seeded alfalfa (for seed), canola, lentils, mint, onions, peas, and small grains.
 - **Jan. 4, 2016** - Deadline to provide honeybee Inventory Report.
 - **Jan. 15, 2016** - Acreage reporting deadline for perennial tree fruit, blueberries, cranberries and grapes.
 - **Feb. 1, 2016** - Deadline to submit completed application and documentation for the Livestock Indemnity Program for losses in 2015.
 - **Feb. 1, 2016** - Deadline to submit completed application and documentation for the Livestock Forage Program.
 - **Feb. 1, 2016** - Deadline to request administrative county change for ARC-CO.
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