



NEWSLETTER



And The Nominees Are

Columbia and Walla Walla County Farm Service Agency

October 2012

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Office Hours
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Office Staff
Columbia
Christy Bell, PT
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Nicole Armijo, PT
Norma Colunga, PT
Lee Walters, PT

Next County Committee Meeting:
Dec 11th (Tentative) – Dayton
Service Center

*Special Accommodations: Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting, event or function should contact the county office. FSA is committed to making programs accessible to all customers.

The nomination period for County Committee elections has closed, and Farm Service Agency (FSA) is pleased to announce the following persons have been nominated to serve as representative of their respective Local Administrative Area (LAA) on the County Committees for the upcoming three year term.

Columbia County Committee nominees:

Jay Penner - Jay produces wheat with his wife and his brother.

Walla Walla County Committee nominees:

Valerie Cochran – Valerie produces wheat with her husband and is currently serving on the County Committee

Travis Chabre – Travis produces wheat with his brother and father

Columbia County LAA 3 – Represents the Northwest third of the county

Walla Walla County LAA 2 – Represents the Northwest third of the county

Persons listed on FSA database as owners and/or operators with interests lying within the LAA are eligible to vote in the upcoming election. Person(s) with interests in more than one LAA have been designated to vote in the district in which the majority of their farming interests lie. Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters in early November; the final date for return of ballots is Monday, December 3, 2012. Ballots will be tabulated during the regular County Committee meeting session, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Regular session meetings including election processes are open to the public.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Signup Announced

Signup for the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) program will open October 22, 2012, and continue through June 7, 2013. SURE covers weather related crop losses suffered during the 2011 crop year, through September 30, 2011.

Eligible producers must either have suffered a minimum 10% production loss to one or more crops of economic significance, and be located within a county declared as a primary disaster county, or contiguous disaster county, as designated by the Secretary of Agriculture; or be an individual producer with losses of 50% or greater, regardless of county designation. SURE requires applicants to have carried Federal crop insurance and/or Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on all crops of economic significance as a condition of eligibility. Socially disadvantaged, beginning farmers and ranchers, and limited resource farmers may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance, or NAP coverage. In order to apply for SURE, please contact our office to request an appointment.

Life Without a Farm Bill . . .

Does go on, although many programs offered through FSA cease to exist in their current form with the expiration of the 2008 farm bill. Here is the status on a few notable programs.

- Direct Counter-Cyclical Program and ACRE Program - authorization ends with the 2012 year. ACRE participants are still required to provide 2012 production as a term of your ACRE contract, not later than 7/15/2013.
- Conservation Reserve Program - No continuous CRP enrollment including CREP/SAFE may be accepted until the program is reauthorized; current contracts, and activities associated with current contracts, such as cost-share requests, annual rental payments, and signup/practice incentive payments are still authorized to be issued as earned.
- Noninsured Assistance Program - NAP was authorized outside the 2008 farm bill legislation, and continues on. Applications for coverage may still be obtained through applicable sales closing dates, and indemnities on eligible claims may be paid. Adjusted Gross Income provisions are not applicable to 2013 NAP policies at present. REMINDER: the final date to purchase 2013 NAP policies for grapes and those perennial fruit crops not eligible for federal crop insurance is November 20, 2012.
- Market Assistance Loans for 2012 - Remain authorized through the end of the applicable loan availability period (1/31/2013 for wool and unshorn pelts; 3/31/13 for small grains, canola, and honey; and 5/31/13 for corn, dry peas and lentils).
- LIP/LFP/ELAP /TAP - Authorization for the Livestock Indemnity Program, Livestock Feed Program, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program and the Tree Assistance Program ended Sept. 30, 2011.
- Farm Service Agency Loan Programs - FSA is still accepting and processing direct operating, farm ownership, youth and emergency loans, and the loan guarantee programs between FSA and approved local lenders remain in effect. FSA is also accepting Farm Storage Facility Loan applications.

2013 Acreage Reporting Changes

Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency have established joint acreage reporting dates; the changes will be effective beginning for the 2013 reporting year. Unfortunately, what that means is that FSA dates will now match the "earliest" acreage reporting date for insurable crops, rather than having one date for all crops in the county, which had previously been the case. The dates for Washington State for 2013 are as follows.

All fall planted wheat/small grains	12/15/2012	Fall planted canola	12/15/2012
Mint	12/15/2012	Fall planted onions	12/15/2012
Alfalfa seed	12/15/2012	Perennial fruits and grapes	1/15/2013
Spring planted crops	7/15/2013	CRP	7/15/2013
Perennial forages*	7/15/2013	Buckwheat	8/15/2013

* Perennial forage crops covered under a Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) policy are required to be reported not later than 15 days after the beginning of harvest of the crop; for range policies within 15 days of the beginning of the NAP grazing season; for hayed crops, within 15 days of first cutting, as established by the County Committee.

Acreage reports accepted after the date(s) specified will be considered late filed, and subject to late filing provisions including a late filing fee. Due to the timing of announcing these changes, USDA has instituted a process to waive late filing fees in those instances where producers requested to file acreage timely but County office staff could not complete the request by the established deadline. In order to be considered for waiver of the late filing fee, applicants must have contacted their local FSA office requesting to file an acreage report by the applicable deadline, and have been placed on a register to accept the filing when FSA staff is available.

All producers with winter wheat or other crops with a 12/15 reporting deadline are encouraged to contact our office to request an appointment, not later than December 15, 2012. We will prioritize those with winter endorsement policies (required by 12/15 to your agent as well), and will create a schedule for remaining producers contacting us by the deadline, to be considered timely filed.

CRP Contract Requirements

Significant CRP enrollment activity in the past two signup periods coupled enrollment or re-enrollment in the Continuous CRP programs means there is no one size fits all answer to the question "What do I need to do on my CRP contract?" However, here are the answers to a few frequently asked questions to guide you.

Am I required to seed this overwinter period? Most plans call for seeding after one year of fallow; so, if you were enhancing grassland accepted in Signup 41, or offered new land in Signup 43, you are likely scheduled to seed this overwinter period. If in doubt, check your plan, or call our office.

When can I start seeding? NRCS recommends fall dormant seeding only after soil temperatures drop below 42 degrees; typically early November, after an application of nonselective herbicide for cheat grass control, if adequate moisture has occurred to germinate weed seed. The final cutoff for seeding in the central basin is around February 15, with the cutoff date slightly later as you move to the higher precipitation areas. If you are scheduled to seed this fall, please contact NRCS/FSA prior to seeding for updates on beginning dates.

What about high seed costs? It is "reported" to be very high; cost-share will cover 50% of costs up to a per acre expense of \$85 per acre on native mixtures. If you cannot obtain seed, or have significant acreage to seed and the cost of seed would provide an economic hardship, provisions allow for you to request a one year extension to complete seeding, so long as you have completed the activity within 24 months of contract approval. These requests are acted on by the County Committee on a case-by-case basis, potentially requiring establishment of a temporary cover if fallow will be maintained for an additional year.

The NRCS field inspection reported my stand as "deferred"; what does that mean? In certain instances, certification of the density (plants per square foot), diversity (types of plants that could be identified), or in some cases both were deferred by the field inspection until next year. In those instances, the site will be revisited in 2013 to make a final determination on the adequacy of your stand. The field technician should have made suggestions on activities that would improve your chances of having the grass meet certification. These may include harrowing, spot or whole field weed control, or limited inter-seeding of weak areas. Please implement the suggested activities this fall/winter/next spring, as appropriate to give yourself the best chance of passing your next inspection. Stands deferred during this inspection period will be given a final assessment early next spring, and if failed, will need to develop a plan to seed in the winter of 13-14' to remain in compliance. If you have a question on what you should be doing, ASK! Deferring the assessment of your grass for one season was done in order to give time for questionable stands to be improved, but will only potentially work if you actually follow through with the recommended activities.

When can I turn in my cost-share materials? We try to pay cost share after the completion of all of the required activity for seeding; this generally means your request will contain the seedbed preparation activity, the seeding operation and cost of seed on one application, once the seeding is complete. Post plant weed control cost share, and wildlife watering facilities typically come in a separate request. Please be prepared to list the seedbed preparation activities you undertook, provide invoices for any custom work, and any herbicides applied, and bring in seed tags with pertinent data on purity, germination, and seed types involved in the mixture, along with the total pounds of seed used, and in the event you did not apply all the seed, how much is left over.

Since the area has received higher amounts of precipitation over the past couple years, we are finding several varieties of weeds have increased in density. Remember that all producers listed on CRP contracts are required to control weeds as per the CRP appendix you received when you enrolled in the program. If weeds are not controlled on ground enrolled in CRP, the contract could be determined out of compliance and the participants could be subject to a fee or the contract could be terminated and participants would be charged a termination fee. FSA and NRCS employees will be conducting random CRP spot checks throughout this fall and next spring. If you have any questions, please contact the county office.

FSA Adopts New Check Processing Method

Producers who make payments by check to the Farm Service Agency can expect to see a change soon in how those checks are processed. FSA is adopting an electronic method for processing check payments from customers; using the electronic method, if you submit a paper check payment, either in person or through the mail, the check will be converted into an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) using Over the Counter Channel (OTCnet), a web-based application.

It is important for you to have sufficient funds in your bank account because the electronic transfer of funds could occur within 24 hours. FSA will hold the paper check for up to 14 calendar days to ensure that the transaction was successfully processed and then the check will be shredded. You will not receive the paper check back from FSA. The transfer of funds will be reflected on your account statement. The transaction may be recorded in a different place on your statement than where your checks normally appear, such as under "other withdrawals" or "other transactions." You have protections under Federal law for an unauthorized electronic fund transfer from your account. You should contact your financial institution immediately if you believe that the transaction reported on your account statement was not properly authorized or is otherwise incorrect.

The agency is implementing the new system to reduce the possibility of losing or misplacing checks, speed up the check clearing process and to reduce the potential for human error. For more information regarding electronic check processing, contact the county FSA office or see the U.S. Department of Treasury Internet site <http://fms.treas.gov/otcnet/legal.html>.

USDA Announces Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period Now Open

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced a claim process open to Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA between 1981 and 2000 due to denial of application for loan or loan servicing assistance. The claim period began September 24, 2012, and will continue through March 25, 2013. The voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible claimants. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Information related to applying for consideration under the claim process may be obtained by calling 1-888-508-4429 or on the web at www.farmerclaims.gov. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. USDA will conduct an informational meeting about the USDA Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Process on Friday, October 26, 2012 at the Radio KDNA Northwest Communities Education Center located at 121 Sunnyside Avenue, Granger WA. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. Those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in your communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number. Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact the Farm Service Agency at (509) 323-3000 or Federal Relay Service at 1-866-377-8642 ten days prior to the meeting.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provided.