

F S A F a r m N e w s

Skagit-Island-San Juan County Farm Service Agency

2021 E. College Way Ste 212

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

State FSA Website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

Phone: (360) 428-7758

FAX: (360) 848-1077

Committee Elections December 1, 2008

Nominations have been received and ballots will be mailed in November, 2008, for the Skagit-Island-San Juan Area Committee elections. This year, nominations were accepted for committee members to represent producers in Local Administrative Areas (LAA's) 2 and 5. LAA 2 includes all of the area south of Hwy 20 and west of I-5 in Skagit County. LAA5 encompasses all of Island County. The nominee from LAA 2 is Todd Gordon, and the nominee from LAA5 is Leonard Engle. The deadline for returning ballots to the Skagit-Island-San Juan FSA Office is December 1, 2008, and the ballots will be counted on December 4. To be eligible to vote you must be of legal voting age and have an interest in a farm or ranch. Producers who are not yet of legal voting age but supervise and conduct farming operations on an entire farm are also eligible to vote, as is any person who otherwise participates in any FSA program. If you have any questions when you receive your ballot, or if you don't receive one and believe you should have, be sure to call our office.

Skagit-Island-San Juan Area Committee:

Kris Hansen, Chairperson
Wilbur Bishop, Vice-Chairperson
M. R. Buffum, Member
Todd Gordon, Member
Mark Wesen, Member

Committee Meeting Date:

Tuesday of the 3rd full week of the month

Office Staff:

Sandra Starbuck,
County Executive Director
~June Freet, Program Technician
~Susan Shackelford, Program Technician
~Mark Turner, Farm Loan Manager,
FSA Lynden, WA (360) 354-5658

NAP Eligibility Approved for Producers with Grower Contracts

The USDA Office of General Council (OGC) has determined that seed contract language regarding title to the crop does not make a grower ineligible for our programs. In July of this year, letters were sent from the Washington State FSA Office to all known vegetable seed contract companies statewide. The letters outlined the issues with wording in the contracts. Contractual language appeared to prevent a producer from acquiring an ownership share in the crop, which would make the producer ineligible for program benefits. The State Office submitted copies of the contracts to the Office of General Council (OGC) with a request for an opinion of whether the contract language prevents the producer from meeting 2008 and future year NAP eligibility requirements.

After reviewing statutes and regulations, OGC's opinion was that "it should be enough for contract growers to show they have required production and marketing risk insofar as the quantity and quality of the crop produced otherwise makes them eligible under NAP's catastrophic provisions." Growers of seed crops under contract with seed companies will therefore be eligible for 2008 and subsequent year NAP benefits if they suffer an eligible loss and meet all other eligibility criteria.

2009 NAP Application Deadline Extended to December 1, 2008 for Fall Crops

The deadline has been extended for purchasing 2009 NAP coverage on all crops which have application closing dates that fall before December 1, 2008. Keep in mind, however, that coverage will not attach until the later of the following dates: 30 calendar days after the date your application is filed, or the date the crop is planted, up till the final planting date. For 2009, the NAP fee is \$250 per crop, up to a maximum of \$750 per county and \$1875 per producer for all counties. For 2009, all crops, including forage crops, must be covered under either NAP or Crop Insurance, in order to take advantage of the disaster programs which were created by the 2008 Farm Bill. If you have missed any deadlines, now is your opportunity to come in and get these crops covered.

Non-insurable crops in our area with Fall deadlines which have been extended until December 1, 2008 include, but are not limited to: apples, pears, cabbage seed, raspberries and other caneberries, cauliflower, Christmas trees, flowers, forage crops, grass seed, rutabaga, and strawberries. Most other non-insurable crops have an application closing date of March 15, 2009. Again, we urge you not to

delay because of the 30-day time period before coverage attaches, and you would not be covered for any weather events that may take place within that 30-day window.

Office Closed October 20 through 23 for Training

The 2008 Farm Bill created many changes. The Mount Vernon FSA Staff will be attending training on these many new provisions and changes, and therefore the FSA office will be closed from October 20 through October 23, 2008 for Farm Bill training. Please leave us a message on our Voice Mail, and we will call you as soon as we return.

FSA Office Staff Changes

The FSA office welcomes Susan Shackelford, who has joined our staff effective September 29. Susan was formerly employed in the Snohomish County FSA office several years ago and since then has been working in the Washington State Attorney General's office. Susan has a good agricultural background and is working to become familiar with the current FSA programs and our local producers. Be sure to stop by and welcome her!

Wool LDP's and Loans

Wool and mohair producers may apply for either a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) or a nine-month nonrecourse marketing assistance loan for their 2008 shorn wool. In addition, producers who sell unshorn lambs may be eligible for an LDP on the unshorn pelt. You must apply before losing beneficial interest in the wool or pelts, and can ensure eligibility for this year's crop by completing form CCC-666EZ before the wool, mohair, or unshorn pelts are sold.

October Payments

The 2008 annual Conservation Reserve Program (CRP and CREP) payments and DCP payments will be issued in October. Payments can only be issued to farms that have provided the county office with all needed paperwork. Required paperwork includes your annual report of planted acreage, or acreage certification. The deadline for providing FSA with your annual acreage reports was August 15, 2008. If you did not provide the required acreage reports, you will be required to pay a late-filed fee and provide the needed information to our office before any pending payments can be issued.

Farm Divisions and Reconstitutions

Any land divisions or additions can impact your acreage bases and DCP program participation. For program purposes, FSA adheres to a landowner designation of dividing bases in the manner agreed to by the parent farm owner and purchaser or transferee. This method of dividing the bases may be used when any part of a farm or tract is sold or ownership is transferred, and entire tract or farm is sold to two or more persons, or farm or tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. The land sold or transferred must have been owned for at least three years unless the County Committee approves a waiver of this requirement.

FSA Loans

Farm Loan Limits Increased: The new Farm Bill increased loan limits for Operating and Real Estate purchase loans to \$300,000. This is the first increase in over 20 years. FSA offers several types of loans, including both direct and guaranteed loans. FSA also has loan funds which are specifically allocated for beginning farmers, minorities, and women. For more information, please contact FSA's loan department, located at the FSA office in Lynden, at (360) 354-5658.

Farm Facility Loan Program: The Farm Bill has changed the Farm Facility Loan Program to include hay storage facilities. The amount that can be loaned has been changed from \$100,000 to \$500,000 over a 12-year term with annual payments. This loan can be made to you, even if you can get commercial credit. Procedure for these changes is not yet available, however if you are interested you should call the FSA office to let us know. We will then contact you as soon as we have more information.

Filing Notices of Loss for NAP

If you have 2008 NAP coverage and you harvested reduced yields, you should inform our office by filing a notice of loss. A notice of loss should be filed within 15 days from when you completed harvest or 72 hours after a specific weather event that causes damage. In addition, you should be aware that if you are unable to carry your crop to harvest due to weather conditions, or you believe you have 100% loss in any field, you must contact our office as soon as the loss becomes evident. The office will send a loss adjuster to do an appraisal. If you do not have a loss adjuster in this instance, your loss may not be covered and you would not be eligible for any NAP benefits.

Important Dates to Remember

October 20-23 – FSA office closed for Farm Bill Training
December 1 – Deadline to purchase 2009 NAP coverage for fall crops.
December 1 – Deadline for returning completed Committee Election ballots.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Ave. SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.