



NEWSLETTER



November, 2012

Whitman County Farm Service Agency

805 S. Vista Point Drive, Ste. 1
Colfax, WA 99111-9885
Phone - (509) 397-4301 Ext. 2
Fax - (509) 397-6763

Office Hours

Mon. – Fri. 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

County Committee

David Swannack, Chairperson
Greg Stout, Vice-Chairperson
Greg Hall, Member
Gracie Miller, Advisor

Office Staff

Tory Bye, CED
Fred Hendrickson, PT
Bonnie Riebold, PT
Doreen Riedner, PT
Nancy Doege, PT
Jonelle Olson, PT
Tiffany Hergert, PT

Next COC Meeting

9:00 AM December 10, 2012

Dates to Remember

- **Nov. 12** – Office closed in observance of Veterans Day
- **Nov. 22** - Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving
- **Dec. 3** – Final day to return COC ballots to County Office
- **Dec. 15** – Final day to certify fall planted crop acreage
- **Dec. 25** – Office closed for Christmas Day.
- **Jan. 1.** – Office closed for New Year's Day

Upcoming County Committee Elections

The nomination period for County Committee elections has closed, and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is pleased to announce the following producers have been nominated to serve as representative of Local Administrative Area (LAA) 1 on the Whitman County Committee for the upcoming three year term.

David Swannack- David is currently serving on the County Committee for LAA 1. Located south of Lamont near Revere, David raises multiple varieties of winter and spring wheat including winter club and Dark Northern Spring. He has also raised canola and barley, maintains several stands of CRP, and had a small cattle operation a few years ago. David is a member of his local grange, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, and the Whitman County Crop Improvement Association.

Clark Miller- Clark's family partnership farms in several areas with ground near Rock Lake, Lamont, St. John, Endicott, and just south of the Colfax fairgrounds. The operation raises winter and spring wheat and barley. At one point Clark also ran a family cattle operation. The family has CRP ground which Clark maintains. Clark is currently on the Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation Board, is a Fire Commissioner, Assistant chief, and volunteer firefighter for the District 11 Diamond Fire Department.

LAA #1 is roughly the western third of Whitman County. It runs north from Central Ferry and includes the towns of LaCrosse, Endicott, and St. John, among others. Producers listed on the FSA database as owners and/or operators with interests lying within the LAA are eligible to vote in the upcoming election. Producers 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 counted on Monday, December 10, 2012, during the regular County Committee meeting session, beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center. Regular session meetings including election processes are open to the public.

2012 Program Payments Issued

Most payments for the 2012 program year have been issued. These include DCP and ACRE direct payments as well as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) rental payments. If you have not received written notification that your payments have been issued, please check your bank account prior to contacting the FSA Office. While payments will be directly deposited within a couple days of being issued, the letter with your payment information can take more than a week to arrive. If no funds have arrived in your account feel free to contact the office to see if there is anything you need to do to for that payment to be issued.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Signup Announced

Signup for the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) program began October 22, 2012, and will 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. Whitman County has been designated as a contiguous disaster county. 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 benefits, please contact the Whitman County FSA Office. Due to workload we are not setting up immediate appointments to apply. However, if you are interested in applying, we ask that you call the office to be placed on a register. Those producers on the register will be contacted as soon as the County Office is ready to begin taking appointments. Additionally, please include any of your landlords that you would want an application completed for when you talk to the office.

The 2008 Farm Bill Has Expired

Life does go on without a farm bill, although many programs offered through the 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, no 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.
- 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, Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program and the Tree Assistance Program ended September 30, 2011.
- Farm Service Agency Loan Programs - FSA is still accepting and processing direct operating, farm ownership, youth and emergency loans. 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

The Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency have established joint acreage reporting dates; the changes will be effective for the 2013 reporting year beginning October 1, 2012. 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
Perennial fruits and grapes	01/15/2013	Spring planted crops	07/15/2013
CRP	07/15/2013	Perennial forages	07/15/2013 *

If a crop you grow has not been listed please contact the FSA Office to learn the reporting date.

* Perennial forage crops covered under a Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) policy are required to be reported no 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 filed 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 a 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, no 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 with 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. 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.

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.

What about planting food plots? Many CRP contracts call for an annually planted food plot of 1 to 5 acres; if your contract has this provision, it is because you asked to include it, in order to enhance your EBI score, and therefore your chance of enrollment. So, the trick now is “remembering” to plant it. Food plots may be planted to fall seeded small grains as soon as moisture conditions allow in the fall, or may be spring planted, not later than the final planting date for spring grains in your county. Half the food plot acreage is called for to be planted each year, with the remaining half left standing to benefit wildlife. Failure to plant a required food plot is considered a contract violation, and may be subject to assessment of penalties, including standard payment reductions, or potentially contract termination. Provisions exist for establishing permanent food plots. For more information on food plots and to find out if this provision was included in your CRP contract(s), please contact our office.

FSA Adopts New Check Processing Method

Producers who have recently made payments by check to the Farm Service have seen a change in how those checks are processed. FSA has adopted 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 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 at <http://fms.treas.gov/otcnet/legal.html>

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.

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.