

February 2014



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Natrona/Converse County FSA Updates

Casper Service Center

5880 Enterprise Dr. Ste 100
Casper, WY 82609

Phone: 307-261-5436
Fax: 307-261-5435

County Committee

Jarad Vollman, Chair
Leslie Hendry, V Chair
Neil Forgey
Philip Johnson
Ken Nicolaysen

County Executive Director

Donna Sue Willey

Program Technicians

Wanda McLean
Deena Mcdaniels

Dist. Conservationist

Kenny Wolfley

Consrv. Dist. Manager

Lisa Ogden

Douglas Service

Center Phone: 307-358-3050

Farm Loan Manager

Dave Lengel

Dist. Conservationist

Tim Schroeder

Consrv. Dist. Manager

Michelle Huntington

COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS

County committee elections are over, the ballots are counted and the results are in...

Philip B Johnson of Casper was elected to represent LAA #1 and Neil Forgey of Douglas was elected to represent LAA # 5. Lee Moore will serve as the first alternate in LAA #5

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

County committee members are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community.

For more information about county committees and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Producer Responsibilities

Publicizing Program Information or Details

FSA will assist persons by providing as much program information as it can in a variety of different ways. However, because of limits on FSA resources, publication may or may not be by direct mail or on an individual basis. FSA meets its publication responsibilities by making broad program announcements in the press, print and electronic media, Federal register documents, radio and television announcements, and through posting program information in USDA Service Centers. The reality of limited resources has increased the participant's responsibility for being aware of program provisions. FSA cannot be responsible for reaching out to every potential program participant with all program information. Participants must seek information on program details and not wait for FSA to individually write or communicate with them about program provisions. As resources permit, COC will ensure that program provisions are publicized and maintain a record of any and all publicity efforts, including postings in the Service Center

Next County Committee

Meeting: April 8

FSA ALLOWS LENDERS TO USE EVALUATIONS INSTEAD OF APPRAISALS FOR LOANS OF \$250,000 OR LESS

Lenders that originate Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteed loans may now use internal real estate “collateral evaluations” to support loan requests of \$250,000 or less, rather than appraisals.

This policy change will allow lenders more flexibility and a faster underwriting process, and is consistent with industry standards.

Lenders must follow their regulator’s “Interagency Appraisal and Evaluation Guidelines” and apply these same policies to FSA guaranteed loans as non-guaranteed loans. In addition, lenders should request an appraisal when they would do so for unguaranteed loans even if the loan is under the threshold, such as when the expected loan-to-value is above their established standards.

A description of the method of establishing the real estate value – whether appraisal or evaluation – needs to be described to FSA in their credit presentation.

NONINSURED CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NAP)

Attention Converse County NAP Producers

Adjusted Gross Income forms for 2013 are a requirement for NAP eligibility. Please contact this office at (307) 261-5436 as soon as possible.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer’s federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to ensure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Any person convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, etc..., FSA has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office for more information.

BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

APPEAL PROCESS

After an FSA official makes a decision on a request for USDA services or application, the producer will be sent a letter informing him/her of the decision and options that can be pursued.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

FSA SIGNATURE POLICY

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SEEKING APPLICATIONS FOR ITS VALUE-ADDED PRODUCER GRANTS (VAPG) PROGRAM

The deadline for applications under USDA Rural Development's VAPG program is February 24, 2014. The primary objective of the VAPG program is to help agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the end goals of this program. You may receive priority if you are a beginning farmer or rancher, a socially-disadvantaged farmer or rancher, a small or medium-sized farm or ranch structured as a family farm, a farmer or rancher cooperative, or are proposing a mid-tier value chain, as defined in the Program Regulation. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. The maximum grant is \$75,000 for planning grants and \$200,000 for working capital grants. Producers must match the grant funds requested with cash or eligible in-kind funds. Additional information can be found at: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG.html. Contact your servicing USDA Rural Development office for assistance. Texas Servicing offices can be found at: <http://www.rurd>

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).