

BEAUFORT-HYDE FSA NEWS

Issue 5

155 B Airport Rd

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Washington NC 27889

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COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS – On December 6, ballots for the County FSA Committee (COC) elections were counted. For Hyde County, Guire Cahoon of Swan Quarter returns to represent LAA 4. Lemmie Blount of Engelhard was elected as First Alternate. LAA 3 voters chose Shawn Harding of Chocowinity as their representative and Don Hill of Chocowinity as First Alternate. The COC will hold their 2007 organizational meeting and their first regular session of 2007 on January 17 at 9 am here in the Washington USDA Service Center. This and all regular COC meetings are open to the public.

HURRICANE DISASTER PROGRAM (HDP) –

This program for Beaufort and Hyde Counties is still so new we only have sketchy information at this time. Here is what we do know: 1) The signup runs through February 12, 2007. 2) Losses must be attributed to Hurricane Ophelia of September 2005 and must have occurred during the disaster period of 9/11/05 to 11/10/05. 3) Although there are eight new HDP programs nationwide, only two (2) are applicable in our area: 2005 Hurricanes Nursery Program & 2005 Hurricanes Fruit & Vegetable Program. 4) \$95 million is authorized to pay eligible producers in certain counties of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee & Texas. If benefits requested exceed the authorized funding amount, all payments will be factored. 5) If you have been paid for Ophelia-related losses under a previous USDA program such as NAP or the Hurricane Indemnity Program (HIP), you are not eligible for HDP. You can find fact sheets and read more about HDP by visiting <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and clicking on “Disaster Assistance Programs. We will share info as we receive it. Stay tuned!!! ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

REMINDERS:

- 1) Your FSA office will be **CLOSED** for:
Christmas - Monday, December 25th
New Year's Day – Monday, January 1st
MLK Birthday – Monday, January 15th
- 2) **File your requests for reconstitutions now. There is no longer any advantage in having several leased farms under one farm number.**
- 3) **Report failed or prevented planting acreages immediately to FSA; ask to file form CCC-576 to ensure proper planted history credit.**
- 4) **Report changes in farm operation, ownership, address or direct deposit banking information.**
- 5) **Contact NRCS for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) signup by January 19, 2007.**

IMPORTANT INFO ABOUT PAYMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY FLAGS

The Improper Payments Information Act (IPIA) of 2002 requires Federal agencies to evaluate programs to determine if internal controls are sufficient to prevent improper payments. Reviews of various FSA program payments were conducted nationwide during 2004 and 2005. While the number of truly incorrect payments was low, the number of improper payments (problems with eligibility forms or signature authority) was quite high. **As a result of this, all flags for every producer in the FSA computer system nationwide have been reset to ‘N’, meaning “No” eligibility forms on file. Further, this action makes the producer ineligible for payment.** FSA Administrator Teresa Lasseter and NC FSA State Executive Director Keith Weatherly have directed us to perform a thorough comprehensive overhaul of payment eligibility. We are beginning an alphabetical review of the eligibility forms for all producers who receive payments that require “person”, “actively engaged in farming”, HELC/WC compliance, and Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provision determinations. **Before any 2007 payments can be issued, new updated forms must be prepared and signed by producers so eligibility flags can be reset.** We will be contacting you to update your forms as we review the eligibility documents currently on file. No 2007 payments can be issued until your payment eligibility forms are filed correctly. **Your help in completing these forms in a timely manner will be greatly appreciated.** Reviewing all producer files and re-loading all eligibility flags will be a massive undertaking for all FSA Offices. We thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation.

NAP PRODUCERS – Please **note the following deadlines to purchase 2007 NAP coverage:**

*January 2, 2007 – potatoes, greens, lettuce, cabbage, turnips, spinach, onions, kale

*February 28, 2007 – cucumbers, squash, cantaloupes, pumpkins, okra, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, watermelons, peppers, peas, popcorn

PAYMENT LIMITATION – By law, each FSA program limits yearly payments per person as follows: CRP - \$50,000; LDP - \$75,000 per crop year; Non-insured Disaster Assistance (NAP) - \$100,000; and DCP - \$40,000 for direct payments & \$65,000 for counter-cyclical payments. Producers must ensure they have filed the appropriate payment limitation forms for their particular farm operation.

USDA-Farm Service Agency
Beaufort-Hyde FSA Office
155 B Airport Road
Washington NC 27889-9684

CROPLAND CORRECTIONS – For Hyde County farms, we are in the process of updating cropland acres in our computer system to reflect the acreage on the “new” maps that were mailed out in November. While some field acreages will stay the same, others will increase or decrease. When this process is completed, we will be verifying that the land will still “hold the bases.” If total DCP bases exceed total cropland plus double-crop history acres on a tract, either a base redistribution to other tracts within the farm or a base reduction will be required. If the tract has base acreage for more than one crop, the excess base acreage having the lowest DCP direct payment per acre will be redistributed or reduced first. Owners will be contacted and given 30 days from the date of notification to take the appropriate action. It is probable that some CRP contract acreage may change as well. This will require revised CRP contracts and the affected owners will be notified.

DCP UPDATE –The biggest news: **Advance direct payments have been reduced to 22% instead of 50%.** Remember, farms that will be involved in reconstitutions cannot be enrolled until recons are completed. Be certain you are indeed renting any farm you enroll. If you plant vegetables or “swap” land, you should postpone enrollment until you are sure of the producer shares on these farms. Advance payments may still be requested any month through June 2007. However, all signature requirements must be met and all new payment eligibility forms must be correctly filed before any payments can be issued. Prior to any Hyde County farms being enrolled in DCP for 2007, the actions noted in the “cropland corrections” section above must be completed. Because of these changes, DCP enrollment could be delayed for some people. Be assured: we will work hard to get your farms enrolled and advance payments processed in a timely manner.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA TARGET CENTER at 202-720-2600 (Voice or TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 800-795-3272(Voice) or 202-720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

CONSERVATION COST SHARE SIGNUP – The Beaufort Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is conducting a signup for cost share assistance through the NC Agriculture Cost Share Program. **The deadline to apply is January 17, 2007.** Conservation practices available include long term conservation tillage (5-yr commitment), nutrient management, water control structures, animal waste management, incinerators for dead animal disposal and lagoon closures. Please contact the SWCD Office at 252-946-4989 ext 3.

FARM LOANS – FSA is authorized to assist beginning farmers and/or members of socially disadvantaged groups with agricultural enterprises by providing financing through direct or guaranteed loans. A beginning farmer: Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years; Will materially and substantially participate in the farm operation; Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA; & Does not own a farm in excess of 30% of the county's average size. Loan approval is not guaranteed. Socially disadvantaged groups are Hispanics, American Indians, African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders and women. Call Paula Nicholls for more about this program.

FARM TAX EXEMPTION NUMBERS – To receive special sales tax rates on items such as farm machinery, seed, fertilizer and feed, farmers should apply for a tax exemption number. To find out more call the NC Department of Revenue at 1-877-252-3052 and request form E-595EA.

BEAUFORT-HYDE COUNTY FSA COMMITTEE

Steve Griffin, Chairperson	Glenn Spencer, Vice-Chairperson
Jimmy Brinn, Sr., Member	Carl Cahoon, Jr., Member
Shawn Harding, Member	Lemmie Blount, Advisor
Charles Slade, Advisor	

FSA STAFF

Jeanie Setser, CED	Ida Faye Cutler, CPT
Paula Nicholls, FLM	Sue Smithwick, FLM
Mike Boyd	Theresa Bright
Bonnie Conner	Annette Jefferson
Maggie Marcenelle	Marie Mason
Clint Rideout, FLOT	James Davenport, District Director

Office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Upon request, **special accommodations** will be made for individuals with disabilities or vision or hearing impairment. If special accommodations are required, please contact Jeanie Setser, CED at 252-946-1076.