

Lower Columbia Area Farm Service Agency

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Brush Prairie, WA 98606

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Staffing of the Lower Columbia Area FSA Office

It is with mixed feelings that I am informing all producers in our 4-County area of my acceptance of a position as County Executive Director in the Mount Vernon, Washington office. February 22 will be the last day I am in the office in Brush Prairie, and I will start at my new location on March 3. This is a move to a great location for the things we enjoy (sailing), and it will be an enjoyable place to live for my husband, Craig Parkin, and for me. The office in Mt. Vernon covers Skagit, Island and San Juan Counties and will present new and interesting challenges. I've been here in the Brush Prairie office since November of 1990. Prior to 1990, I worked in the Flathead-Lincoln County FSA office in Montana. I'm excited about this change, but it's very hard to say goodbye to the farmers, my friends and associates, after so many years. I've enjoyed working with each and every farmer and Committee member in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum Counties. I invite you to stop by the Mt. Vernon FSA office any time you are in that area and say "hello."

Lower Columbia Area Committee:

Fred Aegerter, Chairperson
George Thoeny, Vice-Chairperson
Ken Bajema, Member
Gary Boldt, Member
Joe Shulke, Member

Committee Meeting Date:

Last Thursday of the Month

Office Staff:

Sandra Starbuck,
County Executive Director
Amy Paulson, Program Technician

Mark Turner, Farm Loan Manager,
FSA Lynden, WA (360) 354-5658
Jeff Peterson, Farm Loan Officer, FSA
Chehalis, WA (360) 748-0084

There are other changes in our office as well: Amy Paulson, PT has accepted a position as a Program Specialist in the Washington State FSA Office. The Lower Columbia Area Committee and I are very proud of her for her achievements and wish her the best in this wonderful new opportunity. Amy looks forward to the challenge, but I know producers who are used to working with Amy in our office will miss her, too.

It wasn't planned or anticipated that all of the staff would exit the FSA office for other opportunities at approximately the same time – it just happened that way! This obviously leaves the question

of how FSA will provide service to the producers of this 4-County area. As I mentioned above, my last day in the office will be February 22, and staffing after that time will be extremely limited. In the interim, until a solution is found, the office will be staffed part-time by Program Technicians from the Klickitat County FSA office in Goldendale. Please do not hesitate to leave phone messages, as the Klickitat staff will be checking our voice-mail several times a day from the office in Goldendale. They will return your calls and set up appointments to meet with you on the days they will be here. To better serve you, the Goldendale staff will be able to access some of your farm records from their office in Goldendale, as well. The staff members who will be coming to assist are Betty Fahlenkamp and Norene Bartkowski, and you will also be assisted by their CED in Goldendale, Virginia Klein. The Goldendale staff is extremely knowledgeable, capable, and helpful, so we know you will be in good hands. We ask for your patience during this time of transition and again, please call the office to see when someone will be here to help you, prior to coming in. If you need to speak to someone right away and can't wait for a return phone call, you may call the FSA office in Goldendale at (509) 773-5822. Again, I will miss working with all of you and I wish you all the best!

Fair winds,

Sandra J Starbuck

Emergency Conservation Program for Flood Damaged Farmland – Wahkiakum County

We are currently taking applications for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) however the formal signup period has been established as March 17 through April 11, 2008. ECP covers up to 75% of the cost of debris removal; repairing or replacing fencing; grading, leveling, shaping, and reseeding of pastures. ECP does not cover damage to physical structures such as buildings. Please call the office for details, and to request an application packet. Damage to physical structures may be eligible for assistance under the Emergency Loan Program.

Emergency Loan Program

Emergency Loans are available to commercial agricultural producers who cannot obtain credit at normal terms and rates from the private sector. The current loan rate is 3.75%. It is a fixed rate. Emergency loan funds can be used to restore/replace essential property, pay production costs associated with the disaster, pay essential family living expenses, reorganize the farming operation, or refinance certain existing debt. Loan amounts are limited to the smaller of \$500,000 or the actual value of the physical losses. Emergency loans are considered a temporary source of credit and borrowers are reviewed periodically to determine whether they can return to commercial credit in the private sector. Emergency Loans must be requested within 8 months of the disaster declaration. For more information, please contact Jeff Peterson or Ruth Wynn at the Lewis County FSA Office, (360) 748-0084 Ext. 2.

Three Disaster Assistance Programs Available for 2005, 2006 and 2007

The **Livestock Compensation Program** helps livestock producers with feed losses which occurred due to an eligible disaster and the **Livestock Indemnity Program** helps compensate producers for the physical loss of livestock. In order to qualify, you must have lost your feed or your livestock due to an eligible disaster that occurred up to December 30, 2007. Please call the office for details.

The **Crop Disaster Program** provides payments to producers who suffered damage to their crops. Damage includes decreased yields or prevented plantings. It also includes lower prices received due to impaired crop quality. The program covers losses that occurred in 2005, 2006 or 2007 if the crop was planted, or prevented from being planted, before December 30, 2007. Producers may claim losses for multiple crops in multiple years with payments paid for the most beneficial year. One caveat with the Crop Disaster Program is that producers must have obtained crop insurance or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year in which the loss occurred. Yield loss must exceed 35 percent due to eligible conditions, in order to qualify for the Crop Disaster Program.

The Crop Disaster Program also covers damage which results in crops being sold for lower prices than they would be sold had the natural disaster not taken place. Rules for the "quality loss" portion of the Crop Disaster Program have not been finalized and the agency will be announcing a program sign-up date in the future.

For all three disaster programs, producers who suffered losses due to disasters in 2005 or 2006, as well as 2007 will receive payments for the year they had the greatest loss. Producers may receive payments from each program, however. For example, a producer who lost livestock and hay in the floods may be able to receive both a Livestock Indemnity Program payment and also a Livestock Compensation Program payment. Contact our office for more information, and to sign up for these programs.

Minority/Female Advisor

The Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee is currently seeking a Minority/Female Advisor. The position of Minority advisor is not one we have had to fill for quite a few years because up until this year, we had always had a woman as an elected member of the Committee. It is required that any significant under-represented groups be represented on the Committee, thus we are seeking an interested woman who is actively involved in agriculture to be the Advisor. The position of Advisor is a paid position. The advisor is paid for mileage and travel time to and from meetings, and for the time spent at the monthly Committee meetings. The Advisor is not a "voting member" of the Committee in decisions, although their input is sought and welcomed. If you or someone you know is interested in being the Minority/Female Advisor to the Committee, please call the office and let us know.

Payment Limitations for FSA Programs

The following programs administered by FSA have a maximum annual payment limitation per "person" per program year.

- ◆ \$75,000 for Loan Deficiency Payments and market gains. (LDP)
- ◆ \$100,000 for the Noninsured (Crop Disaster) Assistance Program (NAP)
- ◆ \$50,000 for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- ◆ \$80,000 for the Crop Disaster Program (CDP)
- ◆ \$80,000 for Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)
- ◆ \$80,000 for Livestock Compensation Program (LCP)

Program benefits subject to a payment limitation can not be provided to any producer until the necessary payment eligibility determinations are made by the Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee. In order for the Committee to make this review, the producer must file a Farm Operating Plan. The plan is filed on a form CCC-502. The plan specifies information needed by the Committee to determine if the applicant is "actively engaged in farming" such as, who provides the land, capital, equipment, labor and management for the farming operation. For farms owned and operated by corporations, partnerships, joint ventures (including husband and wife joint ventures), trusts or estates, the Committee reviews the Farm Operating Plan to determine how many "persons" payment limitations) will be allowed. Corporations, trusts and partnerships must also provide the names, addresses and ID numbers of the members. For these purposes, the payment limitation status date is April 1, 2008.