

F S A F a r m N e w s

Lower Columbia Area Farm Service Agency

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Brush Prairie, WA 98606

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. State FSA Website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

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2006 Committee Election Results

We would like to express our appreciation to those who took the time and effort to vote in this year's Committee election. We are especially grateful to the candidates who showed interest and confidence in the FSA Committee system by agreeing to run for the Committee positions in both LAA2 (Eastern Clark County) and LAA5 (Cowlitz County, excluding the Woodland Bottoms.)

Lower Columbia Area Committee:

Dee Bajema – Skamania Co.
George Thoeny – W. Clark/Cowlitz Co.
Fred Aegerter – Wahkiakum Co.
Gary Boldt – E. Clark Co.
Joe Shulke – Cowlitz Co.

Office Staff:

Sandra Starbuck,
County Executive Director
Amy Paulson, Program Technician

Ballots were counted on December 7th, and the following were elected to the Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee:

Gary Boldt, LAA2
Joe Shulke, LAA5

We would also like to express our appreciation to Larry Kytola, outgoing LAA2 Committee member, for his many years of dedicated service on the Committee. Larry served on the Committee for the past 8 years and made the decision not to run for re-election this time. His knowledge, experience and judgment will be missed.

Emergency Conservation Program Pending

We have had many inquiries as to the availability of assistance for flood damage. At this time, we are in the process of requesting implementation of the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP.) ECP is a cost-share program, which can help with the cost of restoring damaged farmland, such as debris removal, land reshaping due to silt deposits, reseeding of pastures, and repairing fences that were lost in floods. If this program is approved, more information will be made available. In the mean time we are taking names and numbers of individuals who call, so that we may contact them as soon as assistance is available. For assistance with damage to your residence, contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at 1-800-621-3362.

Disaster Declaration Triggers Emergency Farm Loans

A Presidential disaster designation for Westside counties has made low-interest emergency loans possible for agricultural producers in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum. The designation was due to damage and losses caused by severe storms, flooding and landslides, which occurred during November 2 - 11, 2006.

Family farmers who suffered losses of 30 percent or more in the designated areas may qualify for FSA emergency loans with 3.75% interest and payment terms up to 40 years with real estate security. Loans based on losses to foundation livestock or chattels can have up to 20-year terms. FSA is accepting loan applications through August 13, 2007.

Since it is not the intent of the federal government to compete with private business, applicants must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere to finance their needs at reasonable rates and terms, in order to be eligible for the emergency loan program.

Applicants must be United States citizens or aliens legally admitted for permanent residence, must be established farmers and must have suffered an agricultural loss in a designated or a contiguous county. An applicant's farm must be family-sized. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

Interested farmers may contact the loan division for this area, at the Lewis County FSA office (360) 748-0083 Ext. 2 for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for Emergency Loans.

Additional assistance may be sought from the State of Washington and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), who are opening Disaster Recovery Centers in Pierce and Snohomish counties. To apply for assistance through FEMA, call toll-free 1-800-621-3362 or TTY 1-800-463-7585 for persons who are speech or hearing impaired.

Direct & Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP)

Signup for the 2007 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program began October 3 and continues through June 1, 2007. Congress created DCP as part of the 2002 Farm Bill to provide producers with an income safety net in the form of annual direct payments. The counter-cyclical payments add an additional safety net during depressed market conditions. Eligible crops include: wheat, barley, oats, corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, rice, canola, crambe, flax, mustard, rapeseed, safflower, sesame, and sunflowers. Eligible farms are those with established crop acreage bases, in accordance with the 2002 procedures.

DCP Contracts are signed on an annual basis and late filed fees are assessed after June 1. Erosion and weeds are required to be controlled on DCP acreage. Wild rice and fruits and vegetables, with certain exceptions, are restricted from DCP acreage. For additional details about payments and other requirements, contact our office.

Records Review – Improper Payments Act

FSA is conducting a nationwide review of producer eligibility for program participation, resulting from the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002. FSA offices have been mandated to review certain payment limitation and conservation forms, determinations, and signature authority documentation for all 2006 and future payments. The goal of this review is to reduce improper payments. The review occasionally reveals certain problems, which may include incomplete or missing items on applications, outdated information, invalid signature, or lack of proof of authority to sign on behalf of an entity. Please note that if you are signing on behalf of a joint operation or entity, your signature must contain both of the following:

- An indicator, such as “by” or “for”, illustrating that you are signing in a representative capacity,
- Your name, capacity, and name of the joint operation or entity for which you are signing.

For example, Joe Farmer could sign for JF Corporation by signing, “JF Corporation, by Joe Farmer, President” provided the required proof of signature authority is first on file.

As we go through the review process, we will be contacting you if we have a need for updated documentation from you. If notified that updated information is needed, be sure to respond as soon as possible, as you will be ineligible for future payments until the requested information is provided. As with all publicly administered funds, public trust in government is of the utmost importance. This review will help ensure that FSA is protecting the integrity of government-funded agriculture assistance.

TAA Deadline Announced

If you are a producer of a commodity which has recently experienced low prices due to increasing imports, you may be eligible for technical assistance and a financial payment under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA.) A petition must be filed to USDA’s Foreign Agriculture Service between August 15, 2006 and January 31, 2007 in order to apply for benefits under the TAA. Benefits include cash payments and various educational benefits, including occupational training. In prior years, the TAA benefits have been provided to producers of blueberries, concord grapes, potatoes, avocados, and to shrimp and salmon fishermen, to name a few. The petition for benefits must be received by the TAA office by close of business January 31, 2007. The TAA office address is: Foreign Agricultural Service, ITP/IPPD, MS-1021, Washington, DC 20250-1021. Fax is (202) 720-0876, or e-mail to trade.adjustment@fas.usda.gov. Use of fax and email is recommended. Additional information can be found at the TAA website: <http://fsa/usda.gov/itp/taa/taaindex.htm>.

DNR News - Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is a federally-funded program, established by the 2002 Farm Bill, that provides education, on-site advice, and cost-share assistance to help non-industrial private forest landowners develop Stewardship Plans and implement a variety of forest stewardship practices on their lands. The cost-share part of the program replaces the former Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and Forestry Incentive Program (FIP) which have now been eliminated by Congress. FLEP is funded and coordinated by the USDA Forest Service, and administered by the WA State Department of Natural Resources. Cost-sharing is available for different forest practices, such as afforestation and reforestation, forest stand improvement, etc. Funding is limited, but applications are still being sought. If you are interested in this program, you can get more information and application forms by contacting Tony Sachet, WA DNR c/o USDA Service Center, 2125 8th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632-4053. (360) 578-0728, or (360) 425-1880 or email tony.sachet@dnr.wa.gov.

Farm Operating and Farm Ownership Loans Available

Cash flow lacking to fund your 2007 farm operation? FSA may be able to assist you with operating loans to cover your operating expenses until your crop or livestock is sold later in the year. Perhaps you know a 4H or FFA member that would like to raise a project animal to be sold at the fair. Contact FSA regarding our Farm Operating or Rural Youth Loan programs.

Looking to purchase a farm or expand your existing operation? Contact FSA to see how a Farm Ownership Loan may help you achieve your objectives. Call the Lewis County FSA Office, at (360) 748-0084.