

Lower Columbia Area Farm Service Agency

11104 NE 149th St C-500

Brush Prairie, WA 98606

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Phone: (360) 883-1987

FAX: (360) 885-2284

State FSA Website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

Committee Election Results

Ballots were counted on December 6, 2007, for the Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee. Beginning January 1, 2008, Ken Bajema of Skamania County began a 3-year term on the Committee. Ken owns and operates a holly orchard and raises Belted Galloway cattle. He is active in the Western Belted Galloway Association, the Weed Board, and the Skamania County Planning Commission. We welcome Ken to the Committee, and look forward to working with him in the future. We also appreciate voters of Skamania County for taking the time to vote and return their ballots in this election.

Lower Columbia Area Committee:

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

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

!!! Report Storm Damage !!!

Farmers who suffered damages due to the recent high winds and flooding are urged to notify the FSA office. We are currently in the process of deciding what disaster assistance programs to implement, and without reports of damage we may be limited in the kinds and amounts of assistance that could be offered for these emergencies. Please call the office at (360) 883-1987 Ext. 2 as soon as possible and report your damage.

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.

Agricultural Disaster Assistance Programs Extended to Cover December Storm Losses

Farmers and ranchers who lost livestock or feed, or who suffered crop damages during last month's windstorm and floods may now receive financial relief. Congress extended the timeframe for federal agricultural disaster programs under an omnibus spending bill passed December 26, 2007. This change allows producers who had recent losses in the devastating December storms to benefit from the disaster assistance programs.

Since last fall, we have been accepting applications for losses caused by natural disasters that occurred between January 1, 2005 and February 28, 2007. The action by Congress extends the time frame to include disasters that occurred by December 30, 2007. An end date for the sign-up has not been established.

The **Livestock Compensation Program** helps livestock producers with feed losses which occurred as a result of the storms and the **Livestock Indemnity Program** helps compensate producers for the physical loss of livestock.

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. If you suffered crop losses and did not have either Crop Insurance or NAP coverage, please carefully consider the importance of adding these risk management options to your business plan for 2008 and future years.

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.

Conservation Reserve Program Rental Rate Changes

Last fall, revisions were made to the annual rental payment rates for many counties in the State of Washington. Adjustments were made to bring the rental rates for new contracts more in line with actual agricultural land rental rates, and to make adjustments for consistency across county lines. The National Office formulated "beta" rental rates and then asked us to review them and make recommendations, i.e. that we either accept the beta rates or make any needed adjustments. The results of this action are as follows: Rental rates in Clark county increased 30%, Cowlitz increased 38%, Skamania increased 19%, and Wahkiakum decreased 8%. The reason for the decrease in Wahkiakum was because the rental rates were determined to have been high to begin with, as compared to actual ag rental values, and compared to neighboring counties. Please note that this in general applies to both the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), however rental rates for CRP are based on a simplified system and determined by whether or not the land is along a seasonal or permanent stream. For more information on CREP and CRP, be sure to contact our office.

Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) – Fed Cattle, Feeder Cattle, Swine, and Lamb

In April 2007, USDA's Risk Management Agency approved expansion and the availability of the **Livestock Risk Protection (LRP)** program for Fed Cattle, Feeder Cattle and Swine from nineteen states to a total of thirty-seven for the 2008 crop year (beginning July 1, 2007 and continuing through June 30, 2008). Approval in the Pacific Northwest included all counties in Idaho, Oregon and Washington. LRP insurance provides coverage to protect the policyholder against downward price risk during the insurance period.

In September 2006, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors approved the Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) Lamb plan of insurance. In July 2007, confirmation of the program's approval and availability was announced and included all counties in Idaho and Oregon. Sales for the 2008 crop year began September 17, 2007. LRP Lamb covers a change in price peril for lambs expected to market for slaughter at the end of the insurance period.

Through RMA's commitment to provide farmers and ranchers with quality risk management products and information, the Spokane Regional Office is excited to be included in all four, Fed Cattle, Feeder Cattle, Swine and Lamb LRP programs. Please contact your local insurance agent with questions and to obtain the coverage. A list of insurance agents is available at www.rma.usda.gov by clicking on the "Agent Locator" link on the upper right-hand side of the page.

Interested in a Career with Farm Service Agency?

USDA-FSA in Washington State regularly posts in-state vacancy announcements that are open to the public on their home page at www.fsa.usda.gov/wa and also all openings are posted on the USAJOBS.GOV website. Currently there are vacancies posted for temporary Program Technicians in Spokane County and in Whitman County, and other vacancies may arise at any time. Some positions may require a combination of education and/or experience, and all new FSA hires are subject to a background security investigation. If you have an agricultural background in particular, you may have valuable skills and knowledge we need and are especially encouraged to check these websites frequently. Farm Service Agency is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

Important Dates to Remember

January 21 – Offices closed for Martin Luther King Day

January 31 – Final availability date for loans and LDP's on 2007 Wool, Mohair, and Unshorn Pelts

February 18 – Offices closed for President's Day

March 15 – Application Deadline for Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on spring planted crops, small grain forages (including wheat, barley, and oats including annual pea forage), mustard and summer planted buckwheat.