

F S A F a r m N e w s

Lower Columbia Area Farm Service Agency

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Candidates Announced for FSA Committee Elections

Nominations have been received for the Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee election, to be held on December 4, 2006. Nominee for Local Administrative Area 2 (LAA2), the eastern portion of Clark County, is Gary Boldt. For greater Cowlitz County (LAA5) there are two nominees: Joe Shulke and Cathy Weyand. Joe Shulke is a poultry producer who also raises beef cattle, and Cathy Weyand is a timber producer.

Lower Columbia Area Committee:

Dee Bajema, Chairperson
George Thoeny, Vice-Chairperson
Fred Aegerter
Larry Kytola
Joe Shulke

Office Staff:

Sandra Starbuck,
County Executive Director
Amy Paulson, Program Technician

Ballots will be mailed in early November and must be returned or postmarked by December 4th. To be eligible to vote, a person must be of legal voting age and have an interest in a farm or ranch as either an individual or the authorized representative of an entity. A person may vote if they are not of legal voting age, but supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm. They may also vote if they participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency (FSA) program that is provided for by law.

If you do not receive a ballot and believe you are eligible to vote, contact our office. The election of responsible

agricultural producers to FSA county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers with large or small operations. It is crucial that every eligible producer take part in the election because county committees are a direct link between the farm community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. They work to make FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

FSA Public Information Meeting in Cathlamet September 14

Jeff Peterson, FSA Farm Loan Officer, and Sandra Starbuck, FSA County Executive Director, will host an informational meeting in Cathlamet on September 14, 2006. The meeting will be held in the basement of the Wahkiakum PUD Office, 45 River Street, at 10:00 a.m. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information on the different types of loans and other program assistance available to farmers in the area. We will be available to talk to you about Guaranteed Loans, Direct Loans, Farm Ownership and Operating Loans, Youth Loans, Conservation Reserve, CREP, Disaster, Livestock, and other FSA Programs.

Discontinuance of Crop Insurance for Raspberries/Blackberries

Risk Management Agency has notified FSA that effective for 2007, the raspberry/blackberry pilot insurance program has been discontinued. As a result, crop insurance will no longer be available at the catastrophic level of coverage.

If you obtained Crop Disaster Program benefits for crop year 2004, you were required to purchase crop insurance on your raspberries and blackberries for the following two subsequent years. This is called the "Crop Insurance linkage requirement." If your two subsequent years includes 2007, you must still meet this linkage requirement. Since crop insurance is not available on these crops anymore, your choices have now changed. You have two options: 1) obtain what is called an Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR-Lite) policy through your insurance agent, to meet the linkage requirements, or 2) you must obtain coverage under the Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) through our office.

The Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) provides catastrophic coverage on crops considered to be non-insurable by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA.) **Producers who are required to purchase NAP for 2007 raspberries or blackberries due to receiving past Disaster program payments, have until November 20, 2006, to do so.** The final date for orchard crops is also November 20. September 30 is the closing date to purchase coverage for hay crops and perennial grazing. The cost for NAP is \$100 per crop, not to exceed \$300 per producer per county. If you are required to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for the crop receiving past disaster benefits, and you do not do so, you must refund the full amount of the disaster assistance received, plus interest.

Loan Deficiency Payments

All wheat, corn, barley, oats, and grain sorghum, wool, mohair, and unshorn pelts are eligible for price support benefits for 2006, if there is an LDP rate in effect. In our area, the most applicable type of price support benefits is Loan Deficiency Payments. LDP's may be available on these crops, depending on the market prices of the various commodities. Currently, there is an LDP rate on soybeans and wool. Producers can check the LDP rates daily on the internet by going to the following website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/> and scrolling to the bottom right section of the page.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is part of FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The Washington CREP provides incentives to restore and improve salmon and steelhead habitat on private land. It is a Federal-State partnership, based on an Agreement signed by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Washington Governor Gary Locke on October 19, 1998.

CREP is a voluntary program to establish forested buffers along streams where riparian habitat is a significant limiting factor for salmonids. In addition to providing habitat, the buffers improve water quality and increase stream stability.



Land enrolled in CREP is removed from production and grazing, under 10-15 year contracts. In return landowners receive annual rental, incentive, maintenance and cost share payments. CREP participation does not require any easements to be filed.

CREP recognizes site variability. Buffer widths vary based on local site conditions. The buffer boundary can be moved toward or away from the stream at different locations to meet landowner needs, as long as the buffer standard's requirements are met. Producers can enroll all or a portion of the eligible streams on their land. They can enroll one or both sides of the stream. Improvements to CREP approved in the fall of 2003 provided more flexibility in buffer designs and reduced the minimum width in some cases.

Eligible land is defined as marginal pastureland along streams, capable of functioning as a riparian buffer. There is no minimum or maximum acreage to enroll. However, the minimum buffer width is 35 feet, and the maximum width is 180 feet. Producers sign up at the FSA office and then work with their local Conservation District offices in preparing a Conservation Plan for the site. The plan outlines the specific measures that will be completed on the CREP acres, and provide cost estimates, as well as cost-share estimates. Cost-share is available through FSA and the State, up to 100% of the eligible costs in establishing the riparian buffer zone.

Annual rental payments are based on the FSA established rental rate for the soils in the offered acreage, and generally range from approximately \$110/ac. to \$220/ac. including incentives. The annual rental payments are made after October 1st of each year. Cost-share payments are made after the various practices are installed. In addition, Signing Incentive Payments are paid after the CREP contract is initially approved by the Lower Columbia Area FSA Committee.

CREP is an excellent program which continues to provide many Conservation benefits and solutions for our area. If you haven't investigated the program recently, and think you may have land that qualifies, be sure to come in and check it out.

MILCX Program Start Date Changes

Dairy farmers with MILC Contracts are reminded that changes in their MILC program start date must be requested by the **14th of the month prior** to the month for which a payment is requested. For example, if your start date is April 1, you must request a change in that date prior to March 14th. Remember: it is up to you to remember to change your start month if necessary, and you will not be notified prior to your start month. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

FSA Committee Chair Receives President's Volunteer Service Award

Abbie ("Dee") Bajema, chairperson of the Lower Columbia Area Committee has been honored with the President's Volunteer Service Award. The award was presented in connection with the USA Freedom Corps and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Along with a medal she also received a letter from President Bush. Her volunteer service was through the organization of ACDI/VOCA. ACDI/VOCA is an international development organization based in Washington, D.C. Their aim is to achieve economic growth in developing countries, via Community Development, Enterprise Development, Financial Services and Agribusiness Systems. Dee and her husband, Ken, have traveled to several third world countries in her time as FSA Committeeperson. Most recently, they traveled to Tajikistan to teach canning and food preservation techniques to local citizens. Congratulations, Dee!