

February 2007

Fallon County FSA Office
P.O. Box 1516
Baker, Montana 59313
PH: (406) 778-2238
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County Committee Members

Brian Rustad, Chair
Dave Hayden, Vice-Chair
Robert Wenz, Regular Member
Maralee Burdick, Min. Advisor

FSA Office Personnel

Maria L. Braun, CED - Ext. 102
Kay Varner, PT - Ext. 104
Sonja Wiseman, PT - Ext. 100
Ray Allerdings, Field - Ext. 108
Robin Markuson – Farm Loan
Officer (406) 775-6359 Ext. 110

Dates to Remember:

February 8: Extension "Focus Mexico" Ag Series Starts

February 19: Office Closed – President's Day

March 8: COC meeting at 1:00 at FSA office

March 15: Deadline to purchase coverage for 2007 NAP crops – Contact the office with any questions

March 15: Sales closing date for MPCI on spring seeded crops. See your local insurance agent.

March 31: Final loan/LDP availability date for various crops harvested in 2006 and deadline to request 2006 GRAZE-OUT payments

April 2: Deadline for payment limitation changes

April 15: Acreage reporting date for producers with the Group Risk Program (GRP) for grazing

May 1: Pull off date for livestock from NAP forage acres. Check with your Agent for MPCI pull off date.

May 15 – August 1: Primary nesting period season on CRP acres

FSA NEWS

WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR ADVANCE PAYMENT for 2007? Please contact the FSA office for an appointment!

Enrollment for the 2007 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) began October 1. Contracts must be signed annually under DCP. You have until June 1, 2007 to enroll for the 2007 DCP program. Late-filed applications will be accepted through September 30, 2007, if accompanied by a \$100 late fee. Producers can opt out of participating in the program any year if they choose.

Under DCP, payments are computed using the base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices. Counter-cyclical payments are issued only when the effective price (which takes into account the direct payment rate, market price and loan rate) for a crop is below the target price for the crop.

The Fallon County FSA office is currently taking appointments for producers who are eligible for 2007 DCP payments. **To get your 22% advance payment please set up an appointment to review your operation paperwork and sign the CCC-509 (contract) for 2007.**

Please review your farming operation as you will need to let the FSA office know if you will have a change in your operation for the 2007 crop year. This would be changes in a lease, land changes such as selling or buying, changes in a corporation or partnership. Please ensure that the FSA office has a current copy of all leases and that these leases are in the eligible entity name. **Again, please call for an appointment for the 2007 DCP program so that your advance payments can be made. Thank you.**

GRAZE-OUT Application Period Ends March 31

The 2002 Farm Bill provided GRAZE-OUT payments instead of loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for 2002 through 2007 crop years to eligible producers who:

- Elect to use acreage planted to wheat, barley, oats, or triticale, for the grazing by livestock, and;
- Agree to forgo any other harvesting of the commodity on this acreage during the applicable crop year.

The application period for GRAZE-OUT begins the first day of mechanical harvest as determined by the local County Committee and ends on March 31 of the calendar year following the year the crop is normally harvested.

Local county committees are responsible for determining the beginning harvest date in the county for wheat, barley, oats, and triticale.

Congratulations!!!!

Congratulations to Robert Wenz who was re-elected to the three (3) year term as Fallon County FSA Committee person to represent the LAA 3 voting community. Also, a big thank to Janet Stickney for running in the election and who also will serve as the alternate for the LAA 3 community. Thank you to those who took the time to vote. A committee person has a very important job for USDA and the producers in Fallon County. We look forward to working for and with Robert and Janet for the next three (3) years.

The Fallon County Committee regularly meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month, unless there would be program deadlines or a schedule conflict that needs accommodating. Feel free to attend a meeting and visit with your County Committee members.

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2007 LDP Application Reminder to Wool and Mohair Producers

To be eligible for a loan or LDP, a producer must maintain beneficial interest (title, risk of loss, and control of the commodity) through the date on which the loan is repaid or LDP is requested. Beneficial interest will be considered to be lost upon the earlier of delivery to the wool pool or delivery to an agent of the wool pool. If beneficial interest will not be lost immediately after shearing, producers must submit an LDP request on form CCC-633 EZ before losing beneficial interest. If beneficial interest will be lost immediately after shearing, your LDP request must be submitted prior to shearing. Please stop by the office and sign the CCC-633 EZ to ensure your eligibility for a 2007 LDP.

The 2007 crop year wool and mohair loan rates are the same as the 2006 crop loan rates.

EASTERN MT PILOT PROJECT **“FOCUS MEXICO”**

2007 Focus Mexico Educational Series and Tour:

This project will allow eastern Montana beef cattle producers the opportunity to study the structure of the global beef industry and experience the relationships between American and Mexican beef industries. It provides the means for producers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to examine another country's beef system without financial hardship. It provides a vehicle for producers to set foot in Mexico after being prepared in advance for what they will see, hear and touch. Finally this project provides a template for immediate outreach and eventual furthering of the concepts, initiatives and objectives of the Institute for Global Beef Studies. The series starts on February 8. Contact Nico at the Fallon County Extension office for more information at 778-7110.

FSA Plans to Reorganize

In the next few weeks, FSA in Montana will submit a final plan to the national FSA headquarters in Washington D.C. for their review and acceptance for shifting the way FSA does business across Montana. The plan includes:

- The closure of seven FSA offices across Montana including Lewis and Clark, Meagher, Park, Ravalli, Sanders, Sweet Grass, and Treasure. These offices will be consolidated with neighboring counties. Producers served by an office which is closed will have the choice to do business with any office in a contiguous county.
- Re-distribution of staff to be placed in offices where workload is the highest. The consolidation of offices would increase staffing levels of employees statewide.
- Employee retention. No FSA employee will be forced out of employment due to a consolidation action. In the seven offices targeted for closure, there are ten employees affected. All employees will be offered employment in the receiving office of the closure.
- Increased utilization of technology capabilities. To reduce producer visits to FSA offices: 1) toll-free phone numbers will be utilized; 2) increased opportunities for clients to do business remotely through mail, fax, e-mail or web-based applications; and 3) providing a periodic presence in strategic locations in closed counties such as informational meetings, application sign-up meetings, and FSA office days.
- A commitment to providing increased producer education of programs administered by FSA and what is needed to receive benefits from those programs. Increased education will reduce the amount of time clients spend applying for program benefits at their local FSA office.

After review and concurrence by the FSA national headquarters, the Appropriations and Agricultural Committees of both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate will be notified of the plan. Concurrently with that notification process, public meetings will be held in those communities affected by the office closures. A final decision will then be made on the plan and implementation will begin.

NRCS NEWS

EQIP Contract Development and Deadlines

Landowners must first contact their local county Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. NRCS staff will meet with the landowner to discuss the landowner ideas and discuss alternatives and recommendations. Together a conservation plan is developed that incorporates the landowner's objectives with ideas to help make their resources more sustainable.

If conservation practices are identified as needed, a landowner can decide to apply for any one of a handful of conservation programs offered by USDA. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers cost share assistance up to a maximum of 75% (90% for Beginning Farmers or Limited Resource Producers) for installing new conservation practices or incentive payments for trying new management techniques.

If the landowner decides to apply for EQIP, the landowner completes the form CCC-1200 obtained at their local USDA Service Center or from the National NRCS EQIP Web Page. The NRCS staff person will "rank" or score the application based on a ranking evaluation specific for their county or resource concern (see How EQIP Works). This score will be compared with other applications in the specific EQIP funding pool. If accepted, the landowner enters into a multi-year contract (from 1 to 10 years) with USDA that schedules the implementation of the practices in a time frame that works for the individual.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round, however, if you have conservation practices you've been considering, please contact the office immediately, as the deadline for EQIP has been moving to an earlier date each year. If you have questions about what practices are cost-shared or how the contracts are managed, please contact Ann or Kalyn at the Baker NRCS Field Office at (406) 778-2238 x. 3 or online at <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/>

NAP DEADLINE FOR 2007 – MARCH 15

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE NAP DEADLINE FOR Non-insured Assistance Program is – MARCH 15, 2007. You may have linkage requirements from the 2004 disaster program that required you to purchase NAP for a crop being planted in 2007. Please check with the FSA office if you have **ANY** questions. **Remember MARCH 15, 2007 NAP DEADLINE!!!!!! Also, the Multi-peril crop insurance spring-seeded crop. Insurance is now available for feed type barley varieties that are harvested for seed/grain, please check with your insurance agent for information.**

Reminder of Managed Haying and Grazing for 2007 on CRP acres

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the Managed Haying and Grazing practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Before the new Farm Bill, haying and grazing of CRP acreage was permitted only during droughts or similar weather-related emergencies. CRP participants may perform **Managed haying and grazing** of CRP acreage after receiving approval from their local FSA office. No haying or grazing of CRP acreage is allowed during the FSA State Committee designated primary nesting season which is May 16th through August 1st. Producers can graze eligible CRP acres under the Managed program from February 15th through May 15th and August 2nd through November 13th. For more information on the Managed Haying and Grazing practice, contact your local FSA office at (406) 778-2238 Ext. 2 or logon to the Montana FSA website at: <http://www.fsa.gov/mt>

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PERMIT NO. #54



SNOWFALL FOR 2007

“The snowfall season has gotten off to a slow start and statewide mountain snow pack is below average,” said Roy Kaiser, Natural Resources Conservation Service water supply specialist. The NRCS provides mountain snow pack data and stream flow forecasts by evaluating data gathered at automated and manual sites located throughout the foothills and mountains of the western United States.

“The snow water content recorded on Jan. 1, 2007, represents about 45 percent of the seasonal snowfall,” said Kaiser. “Even though this year has had a slow start, there remains more than half of the season for improvement.” Over the past week, mountain snow pack has improved by 16 percent west of the Continental Divide, seven percent east of the Divide, and 13 percent in the St. Mary river basin. Mountain precipitation for Dec. west of the Divide was 71 percent of average and east of the Divide was 72 percent of average. According to Kaiser, westerly storm patterns have provided good fall moisture, especially west of the Divide.

Mountain snow water content statewide was 82 percent of average and 84 percent of last year. West of the Continental Divide, mountain snow water content was 85 percent of average and 99 percent of last year. East of the Continental Divide, mountain snow water content was 79 percent of average and 76 percent of last year. Across Montana, stream flows are forecast to average between 70 and 87 percent, for the period April 1 through July 31. West of the Continental Divide, stream flows are forecast to average between 79 and 93 percent and east of the Continental Divide, stream flows are forecast to average between 63 and 83 percent.

Year End Reviews

Producers that have a farm loan with FSA are reminded they must provide data for their Year-End Analysis (YEA) to their loan officer each year. Borrowers are urged to provide this information timely so that their files can be maintained. If you have questions or concerns with the Farm Loan Program, please contact Robin Markuson at (406) 775-6355 Ext. 102.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Temporary Program Technician - The Fallon County Farm Service Agency (FSA) office is seeking a Program Technician. This is a temporary position starting the first part of April. Work will primarily involve performing office clerical work. Applicant should have clerical knowledge and be able to understand terminology used at the FSA office. Starting wage is \$9.78 an hour. Please contact the Miles City Job Service (406) 232-8346 or the Fallon County FSA office at (406) 778-2238 Ext. 2 for application forms or further information. Applicants will be required to take a typing/data processing test at the Miles City Job Service. The deadline to submit applications to Job Service is February 12, 2007.