

February 2014



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Alaska State and County FSA Updates

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Alaska FSA State Director News

ALASKA FSA Office

www.fsa.usda.gov/ak

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Delta Junction, AK 99737

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Director/Farm Loan Officer**
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Southern County Office
800 W Evergreen, Ste 216
Palmer, AK 99645

**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan Officer
Vacant**
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New Farm Bill is Good News for Alaska

The passage of the Agricultural Act of 2014 will give Alaska producers the certainty they need to invest confidently in the future. It will also give our rural communities additional tools to attract new economic opportunity and create jobs. During difficult times, children, working families, seniors and people with disabilities will have access to nutritious food. The potential of new products, treatments and discoveries will be strengthened through new agricultural research. This bill will accomplish those goals while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer.

Alaska FSA offices will have more detailed information soon to help farmers understand the new programs, but we already know that it will expand programs for beginning farmers, veterans, and organic producers, and invest in critical scientific research that will benefit our northern growers.

Local and regional food systems that also receive a critical boost under the new legislation, with additional support for food hubs, farmers markets and on-farm business with a local or regional focus.

The new Farm Bill also expands the potential for economic growth in Alaska

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Hours Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

State Executive Director

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State Committee

Arthur Keyes, Chair
Mike Schultz, Member
Nathan Soboleff, Member

Committee Meetings:

Northern Co. check AK website
Southern Co. check AK website

by investing in renewable energy and the emerging biomass industry.

Conservation programs will be streamlined to better target limited resources to areas of highest need, while building on record conservation and stewardship efforts underway today.

Livestock producers impacted by tragic long-term drought, blizzards and other weather-related disasters will now receive much-needed disaster assistance relief.

Stay tuned for more details about how these new programs will directly benefit Alaskans.

Job Openings at Palmer FSA Office

Congress not only passed the new Farm Bill, but it also recently passed an appropriations bill with enough funding to allow us to fill two vacancies in the Palmer office. We are looking for applicants with a passion for helping Alaska farmers succeed, and an interest in working with a great team of USDA farm professionals.

The two vacancies are for an Agricultural Program Specialist and a County Executive Director, both located in Palmer. For more information on how to apply please go to the Federal Government's Official Job site [USAjobs https://www.usajobs.gov/](https://www.usajobs.gov) They will both be open from Wednesday, February 12th to Tuesday, February 25th.

County Committee Elections Results

County committee elections are over, the ballots are counted and the results are in...

Northern County: McLaren "Mac" Carter of Central was elected to represent LAA 1 and Lawrence "Bruce" Davis of Nome will serve as the first alternate.

Southern County: William Hightower of Sterling was elected to represent LAA 2 and Abby Ala of Soldotna will serve as the first alternate.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

County committee members are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community. All recently elected county committee members and alternates will take office on February 18, 2014, and join the existing committee.

For more information about county committees and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Disaster Relief Available for Alaska Farmers and Ranchers

Farmers and ranchers who suffered agricultural damages due to flooding that occurred between October 27, 2013 and October 28, 2013 in the Kenai Peninsula Borough may be eligible for low-interest, federal loans to help recoup losses. Areas that were contiguous to the affected areas and are eligible for assistance are the Anchorage, Kodiak Island, Lake and Peninsula, Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs and the following Census Areas: Bethel and Valdez-Cordova.

A disaster designation M1461 recently announced by President Obama triggered the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Emergency Loan Program (EM). FSA is accepting loan applications in county offices until September 16, 2014.

Applicants must be established farmers and must have suffered an agricultural loss due to the disaster named in the designation. 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. The federal government does not intend to compete with private business, so applicants must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere to finance their needs.

Weather Related Losses on Farms and Ranches

FSA would like to encourage agricultural producers to report any significant weather related production and/or physical losses they may have suffered (or are currently experiencing) on their farms to their local FSA County Office. These losses will be included in any Disaster Assessment Report that is being compiled by the County Office to determine if a disaster declaration should be pursued to assist affected producers in the area.

Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of socially disadvantaged applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African-Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Microloan Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a new Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program

will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for up to \$35,000 to pay for start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000. Applicants can also obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should contact the local FSA office to setup an appointment with a loan official.

Rural Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Reside in a rural area, city or town with a population of 50,000 or fewer people
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the project and the loan, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Selected Interest Rates for February 2014

Farm Operating - Direct 2.000%

Farm Ownership - Direct 4.250%

Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher 1.500%

Farm Storage Facility – 7 year 2.375%

Farm Storage Facility – 10 year 3.000%

Farm Storage Facility – 12 year 3.125%

Commodity Loans 1996-Present 1.125%

Dates to Remember

Feb. 17, 2014 – Washington's Birthday Federal Offices Closed

Feb 18, 2014 - Newly elected County Committee Members take office

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(866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).



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