



NEWSLETTER



May 2013

2013 FSA County Committee Elections

**Lake County
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Hours

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

County Committee

**Jim McNeley
Martin Landa
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Office Staff

Marti Hamilton

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to all farmers and ranchers, whether beginning or long-established, large or small operation. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and represent all constituents. This means wherever possible, minorities, women or lower income producers need to be on the committee to speak for these underrepresented groups.

County committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility.

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws and members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

Election Period

June 17, 2013 – The nomination period begins.

August 1, 2013 – Last day to file nomination forms (FSA-669A) at the county office.

November 4, 2013 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

December 2, 2013 – Last day to return completed ballots to the county office.

January 1, 2014 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

Who Can Hold Office

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate.

Not have been:

- Removed or disqualified from the office of county committee member, alternate or employee
- Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement or any other felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

Nominations

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. This form is available at the county office and [online](#).

Nomination forms for the 2013 election must be postmarked or received in the county office by close of business on August 1, 2013.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. Nomination forms are filed for the county committee of the office that administers a producer's farm records.

Who Can Vote

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled "FSA County Committee Election – Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member."

Crop Reporting

After spring planting, producers should certify their 2013 acreage. Filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs.

Failed acreage must be reported within 15 days of the disaster event and before disposition of the crop. Prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date.

Acreage reports are required for many Farm Service Agency programs—acreage reports are to be certified by July 15.

CRP Sign-Up Starts May 20th

USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20, 2013 and ending on June 14, 2013. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the program can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract which is 10-15 years.

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on September 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit the county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

NAP Loss Filing

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

NAP Production Records

Production records for individual crops need to be filed at the county office to establish an approved NAP yield. If this is the first year you participated in NAP, you can provide production and acreage information from prior years to establish your yield. If you participated in NAP in previous years, you must report your production and acreage on a yearly basis to keep your yield up-to-date.

Records submitted must be reliable or verifiable. Records need to show crop disposition. We recommend producers submit production records as soon as harvest is complete. **All production records must be submitted by the subsequent crop year's final acreage reporting date—for 2012 this is July 15, 2013.**

Farm Record Change

Remember to provide all changes to your farm records to the county office for the current crop year. If you are changing your operation entity type, adding or dropping cropland or farms, or adding

entities to your operation, contact the county office to update your file.

DCP/ACRE Sign-Up Continues

The sign-up period for DCP and ACRE are still open. Producers are encouraged to sign up for DCP before the August 2, 2013, deadline. An even earlier deadline is for ACRE, which will end June 3, 2013. The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, they must be compliant with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to ensure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

Hay Net

Producers are encouraged to use Hay Net on the FSA website (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet>). This online service allows producers with hay and those who need hay to post ads so they can make connections. Hay Net is a popular site for farmers and ranchers who have an emergency need. Individual ads can be posted free of charge by producers who complete a simple online registration form the first time they use the site.

Guaranteed Loan Program

The Farm Service Agency loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program has increased to \$1,302,000. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The lending limit increases every year according to an inflation index. The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness has increased to \$1,602,000.

As a reminder, the one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan.

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.

Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers

FSA assists beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

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

Land Contract (LC) Guarantees

The Land Contract (LC) Guarantee Program is a valuable tool to transfer farm real estate to the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Guarantees will be offered to the owner of a farm who wishes to sell real estate through a land contract to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. The guarantee reduces the financial risk to the seller. FSA offers two types of guarantees:

- Prompt Payment Guarantee - A guarantee up to the amount of three amortized annual installments plus the cost of any related real estate taxes and insurance.
- Standard Guarantee - A guarantee of 90 percent of the outstanding principal balance under the land contract.

The guarantee period is 10 years and the contract payments must be amortized for a minimum of 20 years. The purchase price of the farm cannot exceed the lesser of \$500,000 or the market value of the property.

For additional information you can read the [Land Contract Guarantee Program Fact Sheet](#).

Online Data Tool for Public

The USDA Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Program Statistics query tool, known as REGStats, is the official new tool of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for making program application and participation rate data available to the public on the Internet.

The REGStats website provides summary information about the number of individuals and entities that apply for, and receive, federal assistance from four USDA agencies or mission areas – the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD), and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The information available in REGStats includes the number of applicants and recipients, by fiscal year, for USDA programs available to agricultural producers and landowners, categorized by race, ethnicity, and gender. Summary totals may be obtained nationally, or by state and county for the 50 states, as well as the U.S. territories. Visit the online site: <http://www.regstats.usda.gov>

Selected Interest Rates for May 2013	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.375%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.500%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency Loans	2.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans	
• 7 year term	1.250%
• 10 year term	1.875%
• 12 year term	2.125%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans	2.375%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

Dates to Remember	
May 20	CRP sign up starts
May 23-24	Office closed—employee on leave
May 27	Office closed in observance of Memorial Day
June 1	Farm record change deadline
June 3	ACRE 2013 deadline
June 14	CRP Sign up ends
June 17	COC nomination period begins
July 15	Acreage reporting deadline
August 1	COC nomination deadline
August 2	DCP 2013 deadline