

Lewis & Clark County FSA
790 Colleen Street
Helena, MT 59601

County Committee Members

John H. Baucus, Chairman
Carol Troy, Vice Chairperson
Gary Dobler, Member

FSA Office Personnel

Nina Fonk, Co. Executive Director
Kathy Peters, Program Technician
Alex Potter, Office Assistant
Fred Smith, Farm Loan Manager
Hal Plummer, Field Person

The Lewis & Clark County Committee regular scheduled meeting is the last Thursday of each month.

Dates to Remember:

April 18 – May 16 – Conservation Security Program Signup

May 15-July 15 – FSA State Committee established Primary Nesting Season for CRP

May 15-August 1 – Primary Nesting Season for CRP contracts affected by the National Wildlife Federations settlement agreement with FSA

June 2 – Final loan/LDP availability date for Corn, Dry peas, Grain sorghum, Lentils, Mustard seed, Safflower seed, Small chickpeas, Soybeans, and Sunflower seed harvested in 2007

June 15 – COC Nominations Open
Notice of Loss – filed within 15 calendar days of the natural disaster occurrence or the date the damage to the crop or loss of production was apparent

July 15 – deadline to provide 2007 production for NAP APH

July 15 – 2007 NAP Application for Payment Deadline

July 15 –Deadline to Report Crops/Acres

August 1 – Deadline for Reconstitutions



Lewis & Clark County

May 2008

2008 Farm Bill

The 2008 Farm Bill has currently not been passed. FSA cannot predict the final terms of what Congress will adopt, however, to ensure compliance with future FSA program requirements, you should adhere to previously enacted rules.

We will be in touch with producers and issue another newsletter to keep you informed once we have information available regarding implementation of the 2008 farm bill that passes.

Please be patient with us. You may need to come into the county office more than one time over the next several months; to report your crop acres (by July 15), and to sign up for the future farm program and complete any related eligibility paperwork.



Failed Acreage or Prevented Planting

Producers who wish to receive failed acreage or prevented planting credit for historical crop reporting data for future FSA programs are required to report the failed or prevented planting acreage to FSA on form FSA-576, Application for Disaster Credit. Failed acreage must be reported before disposition of the failed crop. Prevented planting acreage must be reported within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

In order for the County Committee to approve failed acreage credit for historical crop reporting, the failed acreage must have failed due to natural disaster-related conditions and the crop must have been planted with the intent to harvest using farming practices consistent for the crop and the area.

In order for the County Committee to approve prevented planting acreage credit for historical crop reporting, the prevented planting must be due to natural disaster conditions rather than a management decision and preliminary efforts made by the producer to plant the crop must be evident, such as disking or ordering seed and fertilizer.



Report 2008 Crop Acres By July 15

The deadline to report your crop acres for 2008 is July 15.

You are required to report your crop acres if you participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), if you participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), if you intend to obtain a grain loan or a loan deficiency payment (LDP), or if you have an Application for Coverage for the 2008 Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

We also strongly recommend that you report your crop acres and any fruit or vegetable acres if you may be interested in participating in the (future) 2008 farm program, which was previously the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment Program (DCP). This is normally a requirement of the farm program which has not been enacted for 2008 as of yet.

If you do not certify your crop acres before July 15, 2008, a late-file fee will be assessed and all of the reported crops and acreages will be verified by a field visit.

The late-file fee is calculated according to the mileage to and from each farm and the time it takes to verify the crops and acreages. The basic rate is \$30.00 plus \$16 for the first hour and \$8 for every 30 minutes after the first hour. The minimum late-file fee that may be assessed per farm is \$46. In most cases, the fee will greatly exceed \$46.

The certification of crop acres determines eligibility for many USDA programs and if it is not completed, not completed timely or not completed correctly, you may be ineligible for a program.

We are scheduling appointments for 2008 certification. If you do not receive a letter notifying you of an appointment by June 20 and you wish to report your crop acres, please contact us before July 1 to schedule an appointment.

Report 2008 Crop Acres (continued)

You may need to come into the county office more than one time over the next several months; to report your acres/crops (by July 15), and to sign up for the (future) farm program and complete any related eligibility paperwork.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the county office.

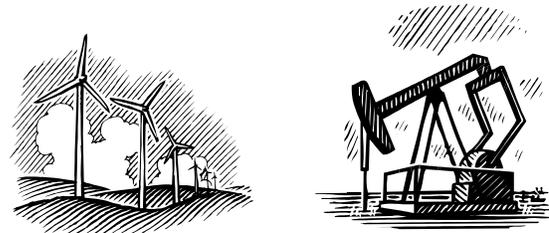


Conservation Compliance

Federal regulations discourage the production of crops on highly erodible cropland unless the land is protected from erosion by an approved conservation system. Status reviews are conducted to ensure producers follow a conservation plan on highly erodible land.

In addition to the highly erodible land, a person may not plant an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after Dec. 23, 1985, or convert a wetland to make agricultural production possible after Nov. 28, 1990.

Failure to comply with these provisions will cause a person to be ineligible for USDA benefits.



Wind Turbines or Oil/Gas Leases

If you have mortgaged your land to FSA, approval is required prior to entering into wind turbines or oil/gas leases or development. Failure to obtain prior agency approval could result in loan default. Please check with the office if you are considering any of these options.

CRP Maintenance Incentives

When the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was originally announced a \$5/year maintenance rate was added to the contract to maintain the cover. In 2006, that rate was lowered to \$4/year. As of April 11, 2008, that rate has been lowered to \$2/year. The new rate does not affect any contracts previously approved and only applies to contracts approved after April 11, 2008.

CRP Management Activities

Beginning with CRP Signup 26 and Continuous CRP Signup 27, all new CRP contracts approved after May of 2003 were required to have a management activity included in the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO). Management activities must be completed before the end of year 6 for 10 year contracts and before the end of year 9 for 15 year contracts. These activities are eligible for cost-share assistance.

Management activities include:

- Residue Management
- Ground Disturbing
- Interseeding Legumes
- Fabric Management
- Fertilization
- Prescribed Burn

Contact the county office for more detailed information.

2008 Managed Grazing Periods

The FSA Montana State Committee has approved two 60-day managed grazing periods for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for 2008.

- Spring managed grazing can occur March 15th through May 14th
- Summer managed grazing can occur July 16th through September 13th

Grazing cannot be conducted on CRP during the primary nesting season. There are two primary nesting dates for Montana; May 15 to July 15 and May 15 to August 1. Please check your Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO) or contact the county FSA office to verify the dates that apply to your contract(s).

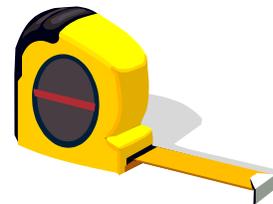
Prior approval must be obtained from FSA before any harvesting, grazing or other commercial use of CRP acreage begins.



Remember To Report Change in Farming Operation

Producers are reminded to notify this office when you have a change of address, a sale of land, a change in operator, or a change in entity. This is vital to assist this office in keeping up-to-date records.

It is also very important to notify FSA of the death of a landowner, member of an entity or anyone that may be earning USDA benefits. FSA payments are now being compared to Social Security Administration (SSA) records of deceased individuals.



Measurement Services

An initial fee is required before a measurement service is performed. On-farm measurement is charged at:

- Basic farm fee of \$30.00;
- Plus an hourly rate of \$16.00 for the first hour and \$8.00 for each additional ½ hour after the first hour. The minimum is 1 hour.

The hourly rate includes the time to travel from the FSA county office to the farm, complete the measurement service and return to the county office.

Once the service has been completed, the actual fee will be calculated. The initial fee will be subtracted from the actual calculated fee and a letter will be sent informing you of the additional amount owed. If the amount is \$9.99 or less, an additional fee is not required.

In-office measurements are charged at a basic farm rate of \$15.00 plus a 30-minute minimum rate of \$8.00.

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Important Dates to Remember

June 15 – COC nominations open
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July 15 – Acreage report deadline
August 1 – Farm Reconstitution Deadline

COC Election Approaching

Beginning **June 15, 2008**, nominations are being accepted for candidates for County Committee (COC) positions.

A county or area served by the COC is divided into local administrative areas (LAA). Each LAA is represented by one member on the county committee. Only one LAA holds an election each year. This year the LAA open for election is for the northern (Augusta) area of Lewis & Clark County, currently represented by Carol Troy.

The nominee must sign the nomination form in order to be nominated as a COC member.

Nomination forms are available at the county office or by logging on to the Montana FSA website at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt>.

Please remember that as a county committee member you are the local voice of how FSA programs are administered to meet your local community and resource needs.

Nomination forms must be submitted to the FSA county office by **August 1, 2008**. Ballots will be sent to eligible voters beginning November 3, 2008. The final day for voters to submit their voted ballots is December 1, 2008.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact Nina Fonk, County Executive Director at 790 Colleen Street, Helena, MT 59601 or (406) 449-5277 extension 2 or through e-mail at nina.fonk@mt.usda.gov