



July 2008

# Calhoun County News

**Calhoun County FSA  
USDA Service Center**  
13464 Preston Dr. Suite 100  
Marshall, MI 49068  
269-781-4263 ext. 2  
269-781-3199 ( fax)

**Web Sites**  
www.fsa.usda.gov/  
**FSA Forms**  
http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov

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

**County Committee**  
Keith Lawrence, Chairperson  
David Bosserd, Vice-Chair  
Rita Reincke, Member  
Denice Raymond, Advisor

**Staff**  
Kim Bates, Program Tech.  
Bonnie Baxter, PT  
Georgann Detty PT  
Ellen Kiessling, PT  
Jerry Motz, Field Asst.  
Phillip DeYoung, FLM  
Elizabeth Lake, CED

## Dates to Remember

**July 18**-Livestock Compensation Program deadline.  
**Aug. 1**-Final date to request farm combinations or divisions  
**Aug. 1**-Nominations due for County Committee.  
**Aug. 15**-Crop reporting deadline.  
**Sept. 30**-DCP Sign-up deadline.  
**Sept. 30**-Final date to purchase NAP coverage on Alfalfa

## 2008 Farm Program Sign-Up Announced

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 was enacted into law on May 22, 2008. The Act provides for continuing the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) for 2008 through 2012. The program for 2008 will be very similar to the program in 2002 -2007; however, expect changes in 2009 -2012.

- **Sign-up began June 25 and ends September 30, 2008;**
- The advance Direct payment is 22%;
- The one change for 2008 is that a farm having a total of 10 base acres or less will not receive DCP payments unless the farm is owned by socially disadvantaged or a limited resource farmer.

## Reminders

- You must have a signed rental agreement or the landowner's signature on the DCP contract;
- All farmers who produce a crop on the base acres are entitled to share in the DCP payment. **Landowners who do not have a risk in growing the crop are not eligible to receive a DCP payment;**
- You must annually report the use of the farm's cropland acreage;
- Comply with conservation and wetland provisions on all your land;
- Protect all base acres from erosion, and control weeds.



**APPOINTMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED...**your time is valuable, workload is high, staff is limited, so please call ahead! We really appreciate it.



## Report Crop Acreage

The annual, timely and accurate reporting of acres for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program, marketing assistance loans and Loan Deficiency Payments. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. And, crop acreage for Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must also be reported no later than **August 15, 2008**. **NOTE: Only the Owner or Operator on the CRP-1 (CRP contract), or person authorized by a power of attorney (POA), may sign the acreage report for the CRP land.**

Crop reports, form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. Producers need to file their acreage reports by August 15<sup>th</sup> for all crops. **NOTE: If you do not have an interest in the land being reported, either as landowner, operator or person authorized by POA you cannot report the acreage.**

**Prevented Planting:** Prevented planting needs be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date.

**Failed Acreage:** Reports of failed acreage must be filed before disposition of the crop, and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

## Emergency Farm Loans Available

USDA/FSA emergency farms loans are available in Calhoun County to all qualified farm operators as a result of losses caused by the following weather conditions:

<i>Designation Code &amp; Declaration Date</i>	<i>Disaster Description</i>	<i>Dates of Disaster</i>	<i>Final Date To Apply</i>
S2628 11/07/2007	Drought	04/01/2007 & continuing	07/07/2008
S2631 11/14/2007	Several Frost and Freeze Events	04/04/2007-06/13/2007	07/14/2008
S2636 11/20/2007	Tornadoes, Hail, Excessive Rain, and High Winds	05/15/2007-09/11/2007	07/21/2008
N950 6/25/08	Severe Physical losses only	06/06/08-06/15/08	02/25/09

Emergency loan funds may be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property;
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year;
- Pay essential family living expenses;
- Reorganize the farming operation; and
- Refinance certain debts.



All emergency loans must be fully collateralized. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000. Loans for crop, livestock, and non-real estate losses are normally repaid within 1 to 7 years; depending on the loan purpose, repayment ability and collateral available as loan security. In special circumstances, terms of up to 20 years may be authorized. Loans for physical losses to real estate are normally repaid within 30 years. In certain circumstances, repayment may be made over a maximum of 40 years. The current annual interest rate for emergency loans is 3.75 percent.

Calhoun County producers should contact Phill DeYoung at 269-781-4263 ext. 2.

## Calhoun County Committee Election Results

Voters in Local Administrative Area 2, which includes Leroy, Newton, Fredonia, Athens, Burlington, and Tekonsha Townships, elected **Rita Reincke to serve a three-year term on the County Committee**. Rita has served as the Advisor to the Committee for the past nine years.

## Committee Advisor Nomination Effective March 1, 2008

**Denice Raymond**, dairy farmer from Fredonia Township was nominated to serve a **one-year term as advisor to the County Committee**. Advisors serve as a voice for socially disadvantaged farmers to ensure fair representation.



## County Committee Election Information

One of FSA's responsibilities is to conduct County Committee elections in an open manner that ensures accountability. FSA will provide local organizations representing socially disadvantaged groups with detailed information about the election process. The agency is reaching out to agricultural communities to get equitable representation on their county committees.

Agriculture producers in Local Administrative Area LAA #3 (Albion, Clarence, Clarendon, Eckford, Homer, Marengo, and Sheridan) will be voting for their representative on the Calhoun County Committee. Keith Lawrence currently represents LAA #3 and is eligible to run again. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received by FSA no later than August 1, 2008.

## **New Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Practice**

The new practice is called *Diverse Grassland Planting* (CP38E). The practice is available in just 18 counties in Michigan. Eligible Calhoun County landowners can sign up for this practice at any time, it does not require a specific signup period.

Diverse grasslands and oak savannas have been declining drastically in Michigan over the past 150 years. In fact, native grasslands such as savannas are now considered one of the most threatened plant communities in Michigan. Grasslands are important to a wide variety of wildlife species, including both game and non-game species. With the support of CRP, financial assistance is now available to landowners who wish to improve the wildlife diversity of their property by restoring these unique habitats. Diverse grasslands of short grass prairies and tall grass prairies provide a variety of wildlife habitat for birds, mammals and insects. Grasslands are important to a variety of wildlife species by providing food and cover such as winter/thermal cover, nesting habitat and protective cover for rearing of that year's young.

**Eligibility-** Landowners and/or producers who have cropland that is either coming out of an existing CRP contract, or ground planted to cash crops 4 out of 6 years from 1996 to 2001, are eligible (*note: the cropping history will be changed to 4 of 6 years between 2002 and 2007 as of October 1, 2008*). Also, applicants must prove ownership for at least 12 months prior to the application.

### **Payments available:**

- Up to 100% cost share for preparation and establishment of the diverse grasslands.
- A one-time signing bonus between \$100 - \$150 per acre.
- Annual rental payments for enrolled acres (based on 3 predominant soil types)



## **CRP Cover Maintenance**

**Attention Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants:** cover maintenance is your responsibility and must be done according to your conservation plan. Mowing for cosmetic purposes or general weed control is not allowed and will result in financial penalties. Mowing maintenance activities may be allowed once per year, only if it's needed to maintain the approved cover, and only on the portion of CRP in need of maintenance. Mowing is permitted between August 1<sup>st</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup> to protect ground nesting wildlife and to allow adequate regrowth for winter cover. ***Producers may request permission to perform maintenance activities outside the specified timeframe, but each request has to be approved by the Calhoun County Committee on a case-by-case basis. Plan ahead and contact the FSA office prior to conducting any maintenance on your CRP acres.*** All 2008 requests to mow will be reviewed by the County Committee. Mowing on an annual basis is not an acceptable method of weed and woody growth control. The County Committee has the right to deny maintenance requests if previous mowing has not adequately solved the problem. Spraying a herbicide may be a viable option, but approval must be requested in writing and granted by the County Committee **BEFORE** you begin the maintenance activity.

## **What is Mid-Contract Management of CRP?**

Mid-Contract Management of CRP are activities that must be performed on certain practices to ensure the original plant diversity, wildlife benefits, and protections of the soil and water resources are present for the life of the contract. For CRP practices with grasses, legumes, & wildflowers, research has shown that typically 5-6 years after establishment the site becomes dominated by a thick growth of the grasses. To ensure wildlife habitat benefits in these sites, management is required to encourage legumes and wildflowers, and to ensure the grass is not too thick to limit small wildlife species from traveling through the cover to meet their needs. This is your responsibility and must be followed according to your conservation plan. If a variance is needed for the above stated policy, please contact the office. Variances can be pre-approved on a case-by-case basis.

## **Supplemental Disaster Assistance Programs for 2008**

The 2008 Farm Bill appropriated for Supplemental Disaster Programs

- SURE – Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm Raised Fish (ELAP)
- Livestock indemnity Program (LIP)

For producers to be eligible they must purchase at least the CAT level of crop insurance for all insurable crops and/or NAP coverage for non-insurable crops. Sales closing dates have passed for 2008. However, farmers may obtain a waiver for 2008 only; by paying an administrative fee of \$100 per crop not to exceed \$300 for the county or \$900 total for all counties. This buy in fee is non-refundable and must be paid no later than **September 16, 2008**. Contact office for more details.

## **Crop Disaster Program**

CDP has been expanded to provide benefits for losses suffered in 2005, 2006, or 2007. Producers must choose only one year to receive benefits. Only producers who purchased crop insurance or Non Insured Assistance Program coverage for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits. Losses must have exceeded 35%. The payment rate is set at 42% of normal price. Producers who have already received benefits for 2005 or 2006 can file an application for 2007 losses. If losses were greater in 2007 additional benefits will be paid.

The CDP now provides benefits to farmers who suffered *quality* losses (as well as quantity losses) from natural disaster and related conditions to 2005, 2006 or 2007 crops. Contact the office for further details.

### **Foreign Buyers Notification**

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holding to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the property.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of Discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please contact Elizabeth Lake at 269-781-4263, ext 2.**