

January/February 2008

So. PUGET SOUND FSA NEWS

FSA Provide Disaster Assistance

The Farm Service Agency currently has two programs to assist producers who incurred farm damage due to flooding and high winds in Thurston and Mason Counties. The programs are the Emergency Conservation Program and the Emergency Loan Program.

EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM (ECP)

Purpose: The purpose of ECP is to rehabilitate farmlands and conservation facilities damaged by natural disasters. The program provides cost/share assistance to remove debris, grading/shaping/leveling land adversely impacted by erosion and siltation; restoring permanent vegetative cover, repairing damaged conservation facilities and reconstructing fences destroyed by natural disasters. The maximum payment limitation is \$200,000 per person. ECP funds can only be used to repair damage that is so severe federal assistance is required. The FSA County Committee will determine on a case-by-case basis if the applicant can repair the damage without assistance and without causing a financial hardship.

Funding: While funding has been requested, it is anticipated that it will be several weeks before funds are actually available for approval. Producers need to be aware that until approved in writing, any work done prior to approval will be at their own risk. There is no guarantee of funds until an application is approved.

Producer Eligibility: By law, ECP eligibility is limited to commercial agricultural producers. One must qualify as an owner, operator, or sharecropper on a farm that produces crops, livestock, trees, or field-grown ornaments. Farm operations that raise only recreational animals are not eligible for ECP. To earn benefits, one must pay for part of the rehabilitation costs. Operators and owners can both earn benefits on the same farm provided both share in the cost of the restoration work.

Land Eligibility: Eligible land includes any land that was normally used for growing crops or used for pasture and hay. This includes land devoted to Christmas trees and container-grown nursery stock. Timberland is not eligible for ECP.

Starting Work: To be eligible for benefits, an application needs to be completed prior to starting work. For ECP purposes, starting work includes purchasing materials and signing contracts. A waiver can be obtained if the nature of the disaster required immediate action and an application is signed during the signup period. Please note a producer who requests benefits in February for work that was done in January may be very disappointed.

Items Eligible & Ineligible for Cost/Sharing: Most direct costs are eligible for reimbursement. This includes the "rental value" for one's own equipment. Ineligible cost items include permit fees, one's own transportation costs, cost of pumps and pumping accessories, and donated materials. If woody debris is salvaged as firewood or used for commercial purposes, the cost of cutting firewood and "harvesting" is not eligible. Costs for repairing damaged fences where most of the pieces are still available and it is feasible to salvage the material are not eligible for reimbursement.

Documentation: The name of the game is documentation. Invoices are critical to obtaining reimbursement. A record of one's own labor and equipment use (i.e., how many hours each day doing what kind of work) is important to obtain proper reimbursement. Photographs can be invaluable.

Practice Completion: Generally, all practices must be completed within six months of approval. Extensions of up to six additional months can be obtained under meritorious conditions.

Signup Period: The signup period has been set for January 7 through February 8, 2008. There are several ways a producer in Thurston and Mason County can sign up for ECP. Call the Puyallup FSA office and request an application be mailed or make an appointment to meet with a FSA representative at your local Conservation District (CD) office. A representative will be in the Thurston CD on Tuesday 15, 22, and 29 of January and February 5, from 10 am to 3 pm, or in the Mason CD on January 16, 23, and 30, and February 6, from 10 am to 3 pm.

Pierce County FSA

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(253) 845 9272
Fax (253) 445 9934

Office Hours

Monday – Friday
8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

County Committee

Lucy Cerqui, Chair
Harry Petersen, V-Chair
John Kingsbury, Member
Cindy Stolz, Member
Faith Sasaki, Advisor

Office Staff

George Jaquish, CED
Kathy Modin, PT

Farm Loan Staff

Mark Turner, FLM
(360) 354-5658
Jeff Peterson, FLO
(360) 748-0084

COC Meeting Schedule

January 17th, 2008
February 21st, 2008

Holiday Closures:

MLK birthday, Jan 21st
Presidents Day, Feb 18th

Web Sites

www.fsa.usda.gov – FSA National

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa/> - WA State FSA

<http://www.usda.gov> - USDA

South Sound Farm Forestry Association (360) 705-1888

Handicapped

Accommodations: Special accommodations will be arranged for those persons with a physical, vision, or hearing impaired disability. If special accommodations are needed, please contact our office



EMERGENCY LOAN PROGRAM

Emergency Loans are available to commercial agricultural producers who cannot obtain credit at normal terms and rates from the private sector. The current loan rate is 3.75%. It is a fixed rate. Emergency loan funds can be used to restore/replace essential property, pay production costs associated with the disaster year, pay essential family living expenses, reorganize the farming operation, or refinance certain existing debt. Loan amounts are limited to the smaller of \$500,000 or the actual value of the physical losses. Emergency loans are considered a temporary source of credit and borrowers are reviewed periodically to determine whether they can return to commercial credit in the private sector. Emergency Loans must be requested within eight months of the disaster declaration which was made earlier this month. For more information, please contact Jeff Peterson or Ruth Wynn at (360) 748-0084.

County Committee Election Results

The results of the recent County Committee Election are as follows:

- Cindy Stolz, elected as Regular Member
- Ruth Nelson, elected as 1st Alternate

Cindy's term will start January 1, 2008, and will run for three years. Congratulations to Cindy for being elected to the South Puget Sound Area Committee.

Dairy Disaster Assistance Program (DDAP-III)

DDAP-II will help dairy producers recover production losses resulting from a variety of adverse weather conditions that occurred between Jan. 1, 2005 and Feb. 28, 2007. DDAP-III compensates producers for production losses that resulted from lost herds or dumped milk when dairy plants closed or the natural disaster damaged the containment equipment. Additionally, power outages, fuel shortages, and infrastructure damage may have temporarily interrupted the flow of dairy products to markets.

To be eligible for DDAP-III, dairy producers must have suffered losses in primary and contiguous counties declared or designated a natural disaster. Also, producers in counties receiving an FSA Administrator's Physical Loss Notice determination are eligible.

Eligible dairy producers can sign up for the Dairy Disaster Assistance Program (DDAP-III) at local Farm Service Agency (FSA) service centers.

For additional information about the Dairy Disaster Assistance Program check the Farm Service website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> or call your local Farm Service Agency office at (253) 845-9272.



County Executive Director

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-5964 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.