



MARCH 2009

FARM FOCUS

Stillwater Farm Service Agency

334 North 9th Street
Columbus, MT 59019
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Stillwater County Committee

Susan Arnold – Member
Robert Yates – Chairman
Lance Eisenman – Vice-Chair

Stillwater County Personnel & Ext.

Dane Schneidt, CED -104
Michelle Eder, PT -100
Susan Pederson, PT -105
Marsha Schultz, PT -106

Sweet Grass

Farm Service Agency

US HWY 10 East
P.O. Box 610
Big Timber, MT 59011
Phone: (406) 932-5159
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Sweet Grass County Committee

Kevin Halverson – Vice-Chair
Kate Binckley – Chairman
William “Toby” Cheatham, Jr -
Member

Sweet Grass County Personnel & Ext.

Dane Schneidt, CED – 2
Marla Moen, PT – 2

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 15 – Spring grazing on CRP acres begins

March 16 – NAP Sales closing date for all crops except value loss crops and honey

March 16 – Crop insurance sales closing date for 2008 spring-seeded crops

March 31 – Final loan/LDP availability date for various crops harvested in 2008

May 14 – Spring grazing on CRP acres ends

May 15 - NAP Pull off date

May 15 – Beginning date of Primary Nesting Season

June 1 – DCP signup deadline

NAP DEADLINE MARCH 16

For the 2009 crop year it is imperative to purchase Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and catastrophic (CAT) level of crop insurance for all insurable and non-insurable crops. This is not only for production coverage but also for eligibility for the new permanent disaster programs created in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In order for producers to be **eligible** for assistance under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (**SURE**) Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, and Honey Bees, (**ELAP**), and the Tree Assistance Program (**TAP**) producers must obtain a plan of insurance for each insurable and non-insurable commodity on the farm, **excluding grazing**. To be eligible for assistance under the Livestock Forage Program (**LFP**) producers must obtain either coverage under the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Rainfall Index Pilot Program through crop insurance, or NAP coverage, or both on their grazing land.

Producers must file the required paperwork and pay the administrative fee by the NAP closing date of **March 16, 2009** for all crops except value-loss and honey. The deadline for value-loss and honey for 2009 has passed.

Please contact the office to ensure your eligibility for the new disaster assistance programs by March 16th.

Spring Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program Acres

The 2009 grazing period for managed grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres is March 15th through May 14th. CRP participants who want to graze their CRP contracts this spring must sign up at the office.

Grazing cannot begin until the participant (s) receives written approval from the local FSA county committee or its designee. Spring managed grazing must end before May 15th, which is the start of Montana’s Primary Nesting and Broodrearing Season.

Participants may graze CRP acres based on the rotation period (once every three years or once every 5 years) and other limitations that are included in their Conservation Plan of Operations. Producers wishing to graze CRP acres must first receive written notification of approval from the FSA county committee before managed grazing can begin. Livestock producers, who rent or lease acreage from the CRP participant, shall sign a statement agreeing not to sublease the CRP acreage and receive notification of approval from the FSA county committee, a copy of which they should provide to the CRP participant. All livestock must be removed from the CRP acreage when the calculated AUM’s are utilized, but no later than May 14th for spring grazing. CRP participants will be assessed a payment reduction for managed grazing which is calculated by taking the number of acres grazed, times the CRP per acre annual rental payment, times 25 percent.

Managed grazing *and* managed haying of CRP will be allowed in 2009, however, a starting date for the summer/fall managed grazing *and* managed haying for CRP will be announced later.

“The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (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, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD), USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.”

Changes to FSA Payment Processing

FSA deployed a new payment processing system the first part of December. Through the new system, all payments made by direct deposit will be processed through the Federal Reserve Bank and will be received in the participants account within 2-3 days of processing. For participants without direct deposit who receive payment by check, the U.S. Treasury will issue the payment and delays up to possibly 7 days should be expected.

Changes to Farming Operation

FSA encourages producers to notify us of any changes to your farming operation including land ownership or lease changes, entity changes including members and shares, and who is authorized to sign documents for the operation or individuals.

New Loan Interest Rates Provided

The interest rate for Marketing Assistance Grain loans changed at the beginning of 2009. The interest rate is 1.625%. This rate will stay in effect until the loan is paid in full.

Final Loan/LDP Availability is March 31

March 31 is the final loan/LDP availability date for Barley, Canola, Flaxseed, Oats, Rapeseed, Crambe and Wheat. For the 2008 crop of the commodities listed above, loans and LDP's will no longer be available after March 31, 2009.

Mixed Grain/Hay Loan LDP Eligibility

USDA does not establish loan rates for mixed commodities. A mixed commodity harvested as grain that does not meet grading standards is not eligible for a loan or Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP). A mixed commodity that is hayed or harvested as silage is not eligible for an LDP.

Eligibility for Grain/Oilseeds/Pulse Crops Harvested as **Grain** – If a mixed commodity is harvested as grain and a farm-stored loan or LDP is applied for, a sample of the harvested crop must be taken to a licensed Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) laboratory for grading, at the producer's expense. Loan or LDP eligibility will be determined based on the results of the sample.

Eligibility for Grain/Oilseeds/Pulse Crops Harvested as **Other Than Grain** – If the mixed commodity is harvested as hay or silage, there is no test to determine the percentage of each commodity in the mixture to establish the grade and class. Therefore, crops planted in a mixture and hayed or harvested for silage are not eligible for an LDP.

A commodity planted as a nurse crop with alfalfa may be eligible for an LDP if a full seeding is planted and the commodity is reported as the intended use for grain or forage. The County Committee may require documentation to support the seeding rate.

CRP Management Activities

Starting with CRP Signup 26 in 2003, all new CRP contracts are required to have a management activity included in the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO). For those contracts that were maintained 50% in 2008, the remaining 50% will need to be completed in 2009. Please contact our office if you have any questions as to your options. If participants fail to complete their mandatory management activities, it can result in contract violations.

- All management activities are to be completed outside the National Wildlife Federation primary nesting and brood rearing season established as May 15 through August 1.
- Management activities are scheduled early in the spring to allow the vegetative cover to recover in order to provide adequate wildlife habitat prior to the beginning of the primary nesting season.
- Management activities scheduled later in the fall are to provide protection of soils and water resources.

2009 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program Signup

The 2009 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) program for farms with base acres began December 22, 2008 and will continue until June 1, 2009. Farms may not be enrolled after June 1 of the applicable contract period. There are no late filed provisions for contract years 2009-2012. **Applications were mailed out in February.**

Commodities covered by DCP include: wheat, corn, grain sorghum, including dual purpose varieties that can be harvested as grain; barley, oats, soybeans, canola, flaxseed, mustard seed, safflower, crambe, sesame seed, rapeseed and sunflowers including oil and non-oil varieties. Pulse crops have been added as an eligible commodity for the 2009 crop year for counter-cyclical payments only. Pulse crops include dry peas, lentils, small chickpeas (Garbanzo bean, Desi), and large chickpeas (Garbanzo bean, Kabuli). Base acreage may not exceed the available DCP cropland acreage on the farm. A producer with the sum of the base acreage on the farm with 10 acres or less must be a minority or limited resource farmer or rancher to be eligible for DCP payments. Reconstitutions of farms with 10 base acres or less are now allowed.

Direct and Counter-cyclical payments for the 2009 year will be made on 83.3 percent of the farm's base acreage. Final direct payments will be issued in October 2009.

Direct payment rates are:

Barley	\$0.24/bu
Corn	\$0.28/bu
Grain Sorghum	\$0.35/bu
Oats	\$0.024/bu
Other Oilseeds	\$0.80/cwt
Soybeans	\$0.44/bu
Wheat	\$0.52/bu



Planting flexibility is allowed but includes planting restrictions for fruits and vegetables on base acreage without farm or producer history. To maintain eligibility: 1) meet Highly Erodible Land and Wetland provisions requirements; 2) report all cropland acres; 3) meet actively engaged in farming and person determination requirements; and 4) comply with adjusted gross income provisions. Payment limitation amounts are \$40,000 for direct payments and \$65,000 for counter-cyclical payments.

COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS

Stillwater – Rob Yates from Fishtail won the election. This will be Rob's third 3-year term as a member.

Sweet Grass – William "Toby" Cheatham Jr. from Big Timber won the election. William is replacing Don Kinsey.

We would like to thank Mr. Kinsey for his dedication and service to the FSA Committee.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact:

Dane Schneidt, CED

(406) 322-5348 ext. 104 (Stillwater)

(406) 932-5159 ext. 104 (Sweet Grass)

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK is March 15-21, 2009.

It is a time to celebrate American agriculture and honor the people who work to meet our everyday needs. FSA in Montana thanks the many farmers and ranchers we work with on a daily basis.



Extension Service to Conduct ACRE/SURE Workshops

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Contact</i>
March 10	2 p.m. – 5p.m.	Sidney	USDA ARS Lab	Ben Larson 433-1206
March 11	2 p.m. – 5p.m.	Miles City	Courthouse Conference Room	Cindy Berg 874-3370
March 12	5:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Billings	Billings Hotel & Convention Center	Steve Lackman 256-2828
March 13	9 a.m. – noon	Lewistown	Fergus County Sheriff's Complex	Darren Crawford 535-3919

Stillwater County Producers: The FSA Office will be having an open house to help Beverly Stewart celebrate her upcoming retirement!!!
 April 21st – Cake and Coffee provided