

MAY 2008

FARM FOCUS



Stillwater Farm Service Agency

334 North 9th Street
Columbus, MT 59019
Phone: (406) 322-5348
Fax: (406) 322-4816

Stillwater County Committee

Susan Arnold – Member
Robert Yates – Member
Lance Eisenman – Member

Stillwater County Personnel & Ext.

Dane Schneidt, CED -104
Donna Linger, PT -105
Michelle Eder, PT -100
Susan Pederson, TP -106

Sweet Grass Farm Service Agency

US HWY 10 East
P.O. Box 610
Big Timber, MT 59011
Phone: (406) 932-5159
Fax: (406) 932-5285

Sweet Grass County Committee

Donald Kinsey – Member
Kevin Halverson – Member
Kate Binckley – Member

Sweet Grass County Personnel & Ext.

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

REMEMBER:
FARM SAFETY

Changes to Your Farming Operation

To ensure a smooth transition when a new Farm Bill is passed, FSA is encouraging 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. It is anticipated there will be policy changes and new forms to complete when new programs are implemented. Details will be published in this newsletter as they are known.

The Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (IPEA) implemented stronger internal controls and reviews of payments issued. **The FSA database of payments issued will be compared against the Social Security Administration (SSA) database of deceased individuals.** It is very important that FSA be notified of the death of a landowner, member of an entity, or anyone that may be earning USDA benefits. There are actions that can be taken to ensure payments are issued correctly and not considered an overpayment. Contact your local office for more information.

Measurement Service Charges

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.

An "Initial Fee" is required at the time the measurement service is requested and the fee must be collected before the measurement service is performed. The initial fee will be the basic rate plus the hourly minimum. Once the service has been completed the actual fee will be calculated. The initial fee will be subtracted from the calculated fee and a letter will be sent informing you of the additional amount owed. If the amount is \$9.99 or less then 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.

Bin site measurements will be calculated according to the farm number and the physical location of the bins:

- for one farm with multiple bin sites, only one FSA-409 (a written request to have acreage measured by FSA) is required;
- for multiple farms and all the grain is stored in bins at one site, only one FSA-409 is required where the bin site is physically located;
- for multiple farms with a different bin site for each farm, a separate FSA-409 is required for each farm and bin site.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

1) HAVE YOU RETURNED YOUR MARKED MAPS??

MAPS DUE BY MAY 16TH

2) HAVE YOU REVIEWED YOUR FSA-578 FOR CROPS AND SHARES??

3) HAVE YOU RETURNED YOUR SIGNED FSA-578??

ABOVE STEPS NEED TO BE COMPLETED BY JULY 15TH

CRP INFORMATION & UPDATES

Responsibilities for CRP Contract

Holders

CRP contract holders have certain responsibilities for carrying out the terms and conditions of the CRP contract. Those include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Control all weeds, insects, pests and other undesirable species to the extent necessary to ensure that the establishment and maintenance of the approved cover is adequately protected and there is no adverse impact on surrounding land.
- ✓ Establish and maintain the required vegetative or water cover and other required practices.
- ✓ No activity may be conducted on CRP acres without authorization.
- ✓ Prior approval must be received from FSA before any harvesting, grazing or other commercial use of the forage may begin.
- ✓ If land with a CRP contract is sold, the new owners should notify the local county FSA office if they want to continue the contract.

If CRP land is sold and the new owner does not wish to continue the CRP contract, the previous CRP participant will be required to repay all payments received on the contract plus interest and liquidated damages. Liquidated damages are equal to 25 percent of the annual rental payment on those acres not contracted by the new owner.

CRP Management Activities

Beginning with CRP Signup 26 and Continuous CRP Signup 27, all new CRP contracts were required to have a management activity included in the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO).

Management activities must be completed during years 1 & 2 and years 5 & 6 of the 10-year contract.

Management activities may include:

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

Contact the county office for more detailed information.

The County Committee has set the violation rate at **\$16/acre** for any acres requiring a management activity but not completed during years 1 & 2 of the contract

NOTE: There are two primary nesting Dates

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*

Check the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO) for the primary nesting dates that apply to your CRP contract.

Dates to Remember:

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 – Acreage report deadline

August 1 – Deadline for reconstitutions

LIVESTOCK COMPENSATION PROGRAM –

Have you signed up for this program yet??

No deadline has been announced, but don't forget to submit your paperwork and application.



LOANS AND LDP'S

LOAN and LDP Violations

Incorrect Certification is either of the following:

- ❖ Certifying a quantity in excess of the quantity eligible for loan or LDP
- ❖ Making any fraudulent representation with respect to obtaining loans or LDPs.

Unauthorized Removal is the movement of any farm-stored loan quantity from the storage structure where the commodity was stored or structures that were designated when the loan was approved to any other storage structure whether or not the structure is located on the producer's farm without prior written authorization from the COC. Unauthorized removal is considered a violation if the producer does not maintain control of the commodity or CCC loses first lien on the collateral.

Unauthorized Disposition is the conversion of any loan quantity pledged as collateral for a farm-stored loan without prior written authorization from the COC.

Consequences of Loan and LDP Violations may be:

- ❖ Assessment of liquidated damages and other administrative actions, and shall be liable for monetary amounts as specified in the applicable regulations and terms and conditions of the applicable forms.
- ❖ Criminal prosecution under Federal Law.

Loan & LDP Final Availability Dates

Loans and LDP's are available to eligible producers who have:

- ❖ Reported acreage of the crop for which a loan or LDP is requested.
- ❖ Complied with all other program provisions

Request for loans and LDP's shall be made on or before the final availability date. Following are the final availability dates for crops harvested in 2007 for eligible grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, wool & mohair and honey:

Commodity	Availability Date
Corn, Grain sorghum, Mustard seed, Safflower seed, Soybeans, Sunflower seed, Dry peas, Lentils and Small chickpeas	May 31, 2008
Wool/mohair for wool/mohair clipped in calendar year 2008	January 31, 2009

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. County Committees may review noncompliance situations for good faith and provide relief in approved cases.

How Safe is Your Water Well?

Private water well owners have a responsibility to protect ground water from contamination and ensure their water system is providing good quality drinking water. Conducting an annual well check-up should be taken to ensure the proper operation of your well. A check-up will allow you to monitor water quality and extend the life of your system.

As a minimum, test your water annually for coliform bacteria and nitrates. Tests can also be conducted for contaminants specific to your area. Your water should be tested if there is a change in the water's taste, odor, or appearance; after the well system is serviced; or after a flooding event.

Inspect the well parts to ensure they are in good repair. The well should have a two-part cap with a rubber seal, if it does not, the cap should be replaced. Inspect your pressure tank and associated plumbing.

Check the area around the well for hazardous materials such as paint, cleaning supplies, motor oil, and pet waste. Never dump hazardous materials on your property or pour them down the drain. Dispose of old or unwanted prescription drugs and other medications by removing them from their original containers, mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter, put them into another container, and throw them into the trash. Although these are the best disposal methods now, they are not ideal. Some local pharmacies have unwanted drug take back programs.

Information on collecting samples can be provided by your water quality district, county sanitarian, or the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). You may also contact Taylor Greenup, Montana Watershed Coordination Council at 406/444-3527 or DEQ's Source Water Protection Program at 406/444-1595 or by logging on to <http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/swp>.

DONNA LINGER IS RETIRING!!

**Donna is ready to be a full time grandma and farm wife!!
Come and help her celebrate during our open house:**

- **Wednesday, May 28 – all day!**
- **Cake and Coffee provided**

**Stillwater County FSA Office –
334 North 9th Street, Columbus**

**THE COUNTY OFFICE NEWSLETTER IS AN
OFFICIAL AGENCY RECORD AND MAY BE USED
TO ESTABLISH LEGAL NOTICE OF PROGRAM
REQUIREMENTS.**

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