

## Montana FSA Reorganization Plan

### Sweet Grass County Profile

#### 1) Proposed Consolidation

It is proposed that the Sweet Grass County Office at Big Timber, Montana be closed and the workload and staff consolidated into the Stillwater County Office in Columbus, Montana.

#### 2) General Description of County

Sweet Grass is a small two-person shared management office in Big Timber with approximately 136 active FSA clients. It is a small to medium sized county in south central Montana with 81% of its farmland in Pasture and 12% devoted to cropland. Sweet Grass ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in livestock production and 47<sup>th</sup> in small grains production in the state. Sweet Grass had 92 DCP and 8 CRP contracts in 2005.

#### 2) County Statistics

- Number of producers 149                      Percent of State .6%
- Producer Payments \$784,625                      Percent of State .22%
- Number of employees 1

(Note: Number of Producers and payments derived from 2005 CCC-1099 data)

- Cost to benefits ratio .219

(Note: This represents the administrative cost in dollars to deliver one dollars worth of benefits in the county office)

#### 3) Destination County: Stillwater County (Columbus)

- Columbus is 41 miles from the Sweet Grass County (Big timber) FSA office
- Workload - Due to the distances from other FSA county offices it is anticipated the majority of the producers will travel to the Columbus Office for FSA programs
- Employees – there is one employee assigned to the Big Timber office. That employee will be reassigned to the Stillwater County office.

#### 4) Makeup of Receiving County

The receiving office (Columbus, Stillwater County), upon implementation of the plan will be composed of one 3-5 member Area Committee, one County Executive Director and 3 Program Technicians.

#### 5) Travel impact on producers

- Included is a map of the proposed combination to include Sweet Grass and Stillwater Counties. The map shows the approximate number and locations of producers in Sweet Grass County. Producer numbers on this map may be different than the producer numbers above, due to using 2001-2006 as the base years for this figure. This will include all producers visiting the office, and would also include EQIP and disaster applications. FSA no longer has responsibility for EQIP.
- The Columbus office is 41 miles from the Big Timber office. Approximately 50% of the producers live between the two offices so their additional mileage to a

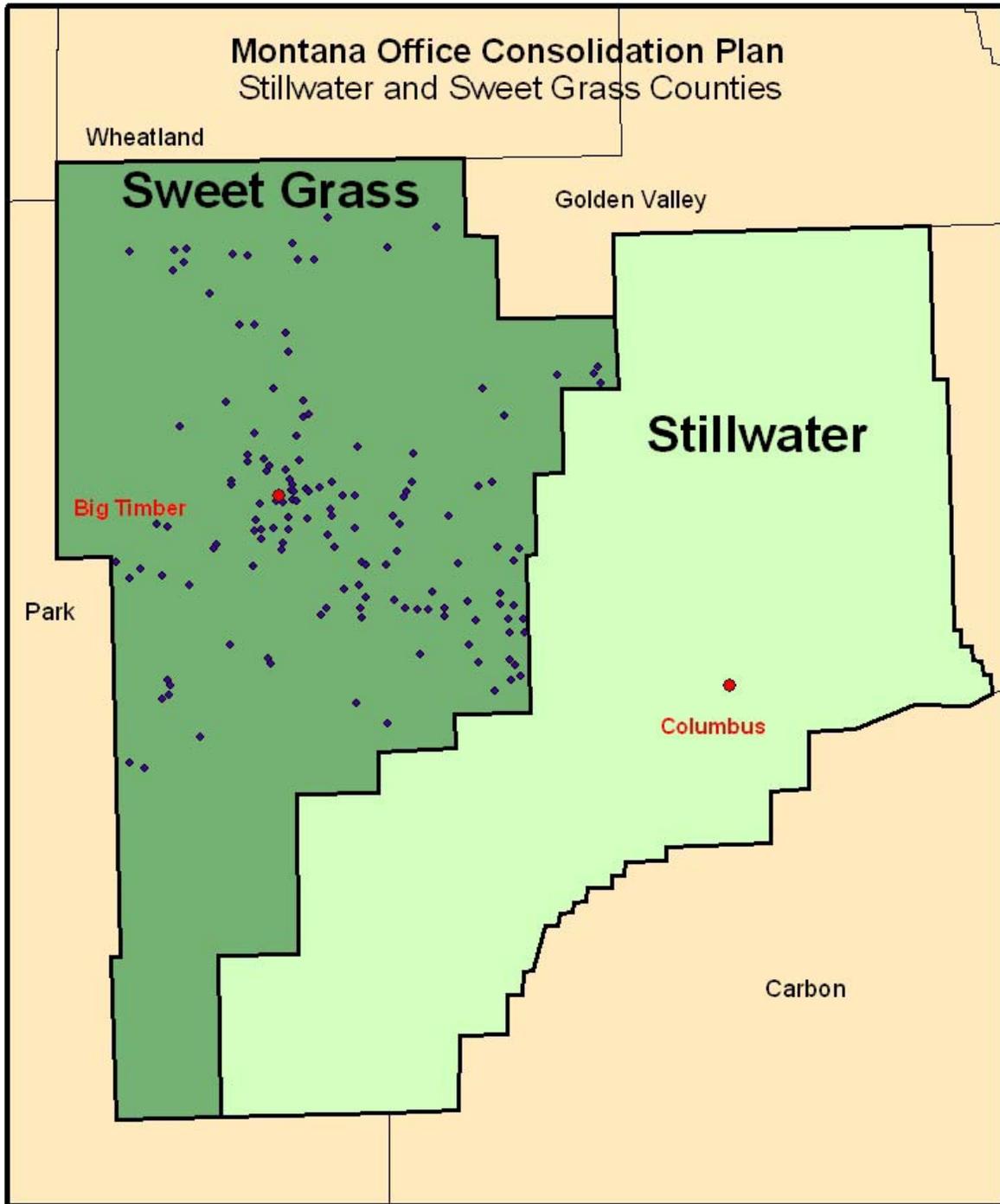
consolidated office will be less than an additional 41 miles on a good interstate highway. Approximately 50% of the Sweet Grass County producers will have the full 41 additional miles to travel. 10-15% of the Sweet Grass County producers will have a shorter distance to travel to the consolidated office than they currently travel to the Sweet Grass County Office

6) Specialized Service Needs/Outreach

An integral part of the Montana FSA Reorganization Plan is to streamline or change business practices focused at requiring less visits, on the part of the producer, to the county office to do business with FSA. These changes will be implemented in all counties within the state with the intent to make participation for all producers easier and more efficient. In addition to those initiatives, FSA will reach out to communities where the closure of an office burdens producers with excessive distances to travel to the nearest FSA office. This outreach effort may include, sign-up meetings where the producer will be able to sign up with an FSA official in the producer's own community, informational meeting in the outlying communities, office days in the outlying communities during implementation of the plan, or 1-800 numbers installed in the FSA office.

One of the focuses of the public meetings to be held will be to solicit ideas from producers how FSA can best meet their needs on an ongoing basis.

Montana Office Consolidation Plan  
Stillwater and Sweet Grass Counties



**Legend**

 Producer Location	 Town
 Recommended Closed	 Receiving County



Map Created on February 21, 2007.