

CONNECTIONS

CONSERVATION DISTRICT, EXTENSION SERVICE, FARM SERVICE AGENCY, & NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION SERVICE

September, 2007

CROP DISASTER PROGRAM (CDP) SIGNUP BEINGS OCTOBER 15

CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered quantity and quality losses to 2005, 2006, or 2007 crops from natural disasters if the crop was planted before February 28, 2007, or in the case of prevented plantings, for crops that would have been planted before February 28, 2007.

Producers who incurred qualifying losses in 2005, 2006 or 2007 must choose only one year to apply for benefits. Producers may apply for benefits for losses to multiple commodities as long as the losses occurred in the same crop year.

Only producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits.

Producers must have suffered quantity losses in excess of 35 percent to be eligible for CDP.

The payment rate is set at 42 percent of the established price.

Assistance, together with any crop insurance or NAP payment received for the same crop and including the value of the crop production not lost, must not exceed 95 percent of the total

value of the crop absent the disaster.

Farmers may receive a maximum of \$80,000 in CDP benefits.

Toole County producers may begin submitting their "Proof of Loss" forms at any time. ♦

WOMEN STEPPING FORWARD FOR AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM

The Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium will be held October 2 & 3, 2007 at the Beaverhead Golf Course, Highway 41 North in Dillon. Early registration is \$50 due by September 20. The Symposium is sponsored by the State FAC, MT Agri-Women, MT Farm Bureau Women, WIFE and the MT Cattlewomen. The symposium provides a platform for women involved in the promotion of Montana's agriculture to learn of issues affecting rural agricultural communities, promote leadership development, and further support women's leadership roles.

An agenda including the registration form is available at the FSA office or by logging into the Montana FSA homepage at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>. ♦

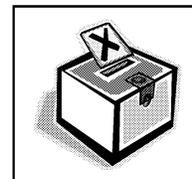
| INSIDE THIS ISSUE | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3 | DCP Final Payments |
| 5 | Drought Advisory Committee |
| 7 | It's for the Birds |
| 9 | CRP Payments |

COC ELECTION

Ballots for the county committee (COC) election will be mailed to eligible voters by November 2.

The final date to submit ballots to the FSA county office is December 3.

Please vote and have your voice be heard for USDA programs to fit the needs of the local community. ♦



LIVESTOCK DISASTER PROGRAMS UNDERWAY

Signup for the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) began September 10, 2007.

These two disaster programs provide benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths, feed losses, and additional feed costs caused by natural disasters that occurred between January 1, 2005 and February 28, 2007.

To be eligible for LIP and LCP, an owner or contract grower's livestock must have been located in a county or contiguous county designated a natural disaster by the President or declared by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture between January 1, 2005 and February 28, 2007. **Toole County does not fall into either one of these categories**, unless land is owned or a cash lease paid (not based on AUM's) in an eligible county. Livestock producers incurring livestock losses in 2005 or 2006 calendar years may only select one year in which to receive assistance.

To be eligible for LIP, the owner's livestock must have:

- Died in an eligible county as a direct result of an eligible disaster event after Jan. 1, 2005 and before Feb. 28, 2007; must have died no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable disaster period (s) but before Feb. 28, 2007; and in the calendar year for which benefits are requested.
- Been maintained for a commercial farming operation on the day they died; and
- not been produced for reasons other than commercial farming. This includes wild free roaming animals or animals used for recreational purposes, such as hunting, pets, roping or for show.

Applications should submit form FSA-900 to the local office. The producer should include a copy of the grower contract if they are a contract grower and any other supporting documents required for determining eligibility. Supporting documents must show evidence of loss, current physical location of livestock in inventory, and location of the livestock at the time of death. The quantity and kind of livestock that died as a direct result of the eligible disaster event may be documents by

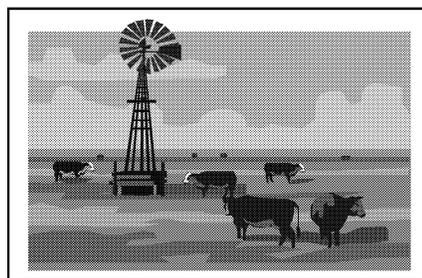
purchase records, veterinarian records, bank or other loan papers and any other documents verifying the death of the livestock.

To be eligible for LCP, producers must have:

- Either owned or cash-leased eligible livestock (but not both for the same livestock) on the beginning date of the applicable disaster periods (s); and
- Suffered an eligible feed loss from produced or purchased forage or feed, or incurred additional feed costs as a result of an eligible disaster event (s) during the applicable disaster period (s) and the feed lost or additional incurred feed costs were intended for use with eligible livestock.

To apply, producers must complete form FSA-901 at their local office; bring adequate proof that the feed loss or incurred additional feed costs were for the claimed eligible livestock and occurred as a direct result of an eligible disaster event during an eligible disaster period (s) in the calendar year for which the benefits are being requested.

For detailed explanations of eligible livestock and eligibility requirements, logon to the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt>. ♦



NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NAIS)

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) developed policies for implementing NAIS for protecting U.S. livestock and poultry from potentially devastating pests and diseases through an identification system that enabled faster response with more precision.

NAIS consists of three components: 1) premise registration, 2) animal identification, and 3) animal tracking. Premise registration is the foundation of the NAIS and is the first component to be implemented. Premise registration is voluntary, free, quick, and does not commit producers to participate in the other components of NAIS. To find out how to register a premise, visit USDA's NAIS website at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>. ♦

2007 COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

FSA will be conducting compliance reviews and spot checks a little differently in 2007. Instead of selecting individual farms, contracts, loans, LDP's, etc. for spot check and review at the local level, a nationwide selection of producers was made by the national FSA office. Producers were selected based on their participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment Program (DCP), Loan Deficiency Program (LDP), Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL's), and the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). A representative sample of FSA employees, County Committee (COC) members, and other "required" producers were also selected for spot check and review.

FSA County offices may spot check additional producers if they have valid concerns that warrant the spot check and review.

For 2007, all producers selected shall be spot checked or reviewed for:

- Compliance with all programs in which they participated or received benefits, and;
- Acreage reporting accuracy.

Producers may be subject to a spot check or review if they participated in any of the following programs:

- Crop disaster program (CDP)
- CRP maintenance and practice checks
- DCP
- Acreage Reporting
- LDP's/Marketing Assistance Loans
- NAP

The reviews will take place throughout the year applicable to the certain program or activity. ♦

2007 LOAN RATES

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|-----|----------|
| HRW | = \$2.84 | HRS | = \$2.67 |
| HAD | = \$2.97 | | |
| OATS | = \$1.25 | BLY | = \$1.85 |
| PEAS | = \$6.12 cwt | | |
| CANOLA | = \$8.20 cwt | | |

DCP SIGNATURE DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

Producers enrolled in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) have until September 28th to provide all contract signatures for share acres and late-filed fees. **The Toole County office will begin process the final 2007 payments October 15, 2007.**

NOTE: A number of questions have been received regarding the restoration of DCP base acreage from CRP contracts expiring on September 30, 2007. Currently, the 2002 Farm Bill provides for restoration of lost base acres when a CRP contract expires. That provision ends September 30, 2007 with the expiration of the 2002 Farm Bill. When a new Farm Bill is passed by Congress, FSA will provide details as they become available. ♦

BEGINNING, SMALL AND LIMITED RESOURCE FARMS: Do You Require Financial Assistance to Fund Conservation Program Initiatives?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and FSA have worked cooperatively to make USDA programs more available and readily accessible to beginning, small, and limited resource producers.

As many producers move from the initial contract development of especially the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), many face the inability to acquire the initial capital investment for their cost-share portion needed for contract implementation. Even with increased cost-share rates, the challenge of providing the up-front share may present problems to full contract implementation.

USDA provides some options. FSA has several loan programs available that may help with the upfront costs associated with program implementation. Use of FSA loan programs, in conjunction with conservation programs, has the potential to improve the effectiveness of both NRCS and FSA programs. FSA loans can be used for various farm purposes such as farm improvements, which would cover conservation projects and practices, and payment of costs associated with land and water development for conservation use purposes. Loan funds may be used to finance the producer's share of the project cost, and also as interim financing on the Federal cost-share portion paid upon completion of the conservation program project.

Contact the FSA or NRCS office for options available and further information on how FSA loans can assist with completing conservation projects. ♦

RURAL YOUTH LOANS

FSA makes loans to individual rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, and similar organizations.

Each project must be part of an organized and supervised program of work. The project must be planned and operated with the help of the organization adviser, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience.

Who may borrow?

To qualify for a loan, an applicant must:

- Be a citizen of the United States (or a permanent resident), which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;
- Be between 10 and 20 years old;
- Live in a town of less than 10,000 residents;
- Be unable to obtain a loan from other sources; and
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work, as outlined above.

The project adviser must recommend the project and the loan and agree to provide adequate supervision.

What are some possible projects?

All projects must be an income producing project.

What is the maximum loan amount?

The maximum amount for FSA youth loans is \$5,000

What security is required?

Applicants must sign a promissory note and be responsible for repaying the loan. In some cases, a cosigner may be required. Loan collateral normally consists of items purchased with loan funds.

What are the repayment terms?

The repayment schedule will be worked out with FSA. Payments will be tailored to the type of project for which the loan was made. ♦

TOOLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT HAS ITEMS TO RENT OR BUY

| | |
|---|---|
| Ownership Maps: | |
| Toole County: | Large = \$20.00 Small = \$12.00 Booklet = \$25.00 |
| Liberty County: | Large = \$17.00 |
| Landscape Fabric: | 6' x 300' = \$92.00 6' x 500' = \$145.00 |
| Marking Flags: | 1 Bundle = \$8.00 |
| Paul Brown Soil Probe = \$45.00 | |
| 2 Transit & Laser Levels = \$20.00 per day * There is a \$100.00 deposit at time of pick up. Money is refunded if machinery is in good working order and not damaged. | |
| Tree Planter & Fabric Layer = No charge when fabric is ordered. | |

NATURAL STREAMBED AND LAND PRESERVATION ACT

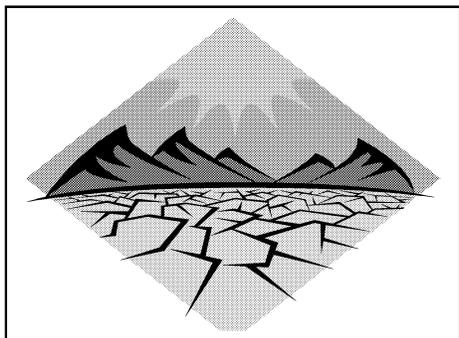
This is just a reminder for any private or non-governmental individual or entity that proposes to do work in or near a stream on public or private land, and plans to alter or modify the beds or banks of a perennial flowing stream must first apply for a 310 permit. Doing work without a 310 permit will cause hefty fines plus tearing out what has been done and replacing the river to its natural state at the cost of the violator. If you know of anyone in violation of the 310 law please contact the Toole County Conservation District at 434-5234 ext. 113. Depending on the project other permits may be required from other agencies. You can get an application form at the Toole County Conservation District or on line at www.dnrc.state.mt ♦

FOREIGN BUYERS NOTIFICATION

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of United States agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. FSA administers this program for USDA. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) could result in civil penalties up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property.

County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

AFIDA was enacted to establish a nationwide system to monitor ownership and purchases of U.S. agricultural land by foreign persons. ♦



TOOLE COUNTY DROUGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Toole County Drought Advisory Committee met September 6, 2007. Rick Tomscheck was elected chairman, and Jeannie Olmstead of the Toole County Extension Office remained secretary.

At the September meeting the drought committee defined their role in the county. They decided they were to act as a liaison between local producers and state and federal governments to gain better recognition and better solutions for drought conditions in the county. The committee can collect the facts on a drought by tracking information from the weather stations and the range clippings, which can then be used as supporting documents when we apply for government recognition.

Producers are always welcome to attend the Toole County Drought Advisory Committee. Producer reports on how the drought conditions are affecting them will be included in the minutes, which will be sent on to the state drought advisory committee. Producers are also welcome to ask questions about drought assistance and express concerns about assistance programs. The committee felt that as a board, complaints and recommended solutions endorsed by them may have more impact than those from a single producer.

Toole County supplied five weather stations a couple of years ago which are located around the county. Precipitation throughout the county varies considerably, and the purpose of the weather stations was to provide more accurate monitoring of precipitation. Of those stations, only one is currently functional. The commissioners will fund maintenance on the stations this year, and Calvin Kanning agreed to help maintain the weather stations.

The range clippings were begun two years ago, but have been recorded sporadically. The committee decided this was a useful way to monitor the severity of a drought, and will continue to collect range clippings from designated locations.

The committee also feels they can play a role in information dissemination by publishing information about drought conditions and drought relief programs. This can be done in the newspaper, the FSA newsletter and in mailings such as the letter that is mailed with the results of the soil moisture survey in the spring.

The Toole County Drought Advisory Committee plans on sending a representative to the state Drought Advisory Committee Meetings. The next upcoming meeting was September 19, and Rick Tomscheck attended. He will report on his experience at the next Toole County Drought Advisory Committee Meeting.

The next meeting of the Toole County Drought Advisory Committee will be October 18 at 10 am in the NRCS/FSA building.

Please contact the Toole County Extension Service at 424-8350 for further information on this article or upcoming events. Montana State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Montana Counties Cooperating-MSU is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution. ♦

RAIN GARDENS

Our long hot dry summer made it difficult to keep up with lawn and garden watering. It also meant having to look at a lot of brown, dull lawns and plants. In our climate where it's important to conserve water, have you ever considered sprucing up the place with a rain garden?

Rain gardens are gardens built in a small depression and planted with perennial flowers and native vegetation. The main purpose of rain gardens is to reduce storm runoff while providing for an eye pleasing yard. They are strategically located to capture runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roofs, sidewalks, and streets. Rain gardens fill with a few inches of water after a storm and then water filters into the ground. Usually, storm runoff carries pollutants from streets, parking lots, and lawns which are directed into the sewer system and eventually discharged into streams or lakes. Not only do rain gardens reduce pollution runoff, but they also provide a habitat for wildlife. Recently, the US has seen a decline in pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Rain gardens would provide excellent habitat for pollinators if you were to plan some pollinator friendly species. Just because you live out in the country doesn't mean rain gardens aren't applicable either. Because a rain garden optimizes any rainfall, the need for watering is reduced. This is an important consideration when deciding whether to build a rain garden.

Location: Rain gardens must be strategically placed to intercept runoff from impervious areas. This means it would be good idea to place a rain garden in a low spot that you know collects rain water such as down slope from your house. If you can't locate a spot where rain water flows naturally to it, you can then use underground pipe connected to the downspout on your gutter or send the water along a constructed channel. Constructed channels can be built to blend in with the landscape. It is best to keep rain gardens at least 10ft away from building foundations. It is also advisable not to place a rain garden over any utilities.

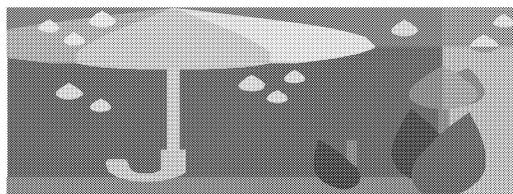
Size: Rain gardens typically are around 5 to 10 percent the size of the impervious surface generating the runoff entering the garden. For example, if the footage of your house roof is 2,200 square feet and you multiply this figure by 0.05 (5%), your rain garden would need to be 110 square feet or a garden roughly 11 feet long by 10 feet wide.

Garden Depth: A typical rain garden is between four and eight inches deep. Storm water runoff should spread evenly across the entire rain garden, to increase the opportunity for infiltration. To prepare for a rain garden, remove soil to create a depression area. To enhance infiltration, blend in soil, sand, and compost mixture and create deep, loose soil to absorb water and pollutants. Special consideration may be needed for clay soil. The most common cause of rain garden failure is soil compaction.

Plant Selection: Rain gardens can be planted to native and non-native species which can include shrubs, flowers, and grasses. The best method is a combination of both non-native and native species. Species that require constant moisture should not be considered. One method is to plant water tolerant plants in the middle of the garden and plant drought tolerant plants around the edges. Choose native plants based on site considerations for light, moisture, and soil. Vary plant structure, height, and flower color for seasonal appeal and butterfly habitat. Mowed grass borders are recommended around the garden.

Young plants, or plugs, are best for rain gardens because they are easier to establish and maintain. When laying plants out, randomly clump individual species in groups of 3 to 5 plants to provide more attractive color. It is a good idea to repeat these individual groupings to create repetition and cohesion in a planting. It is also a good idea to label your plants for the first year to help identify them from weeds as you maintain the garden. It is important to water rain gardens regularly throughout the first season. Once established they might require additional watering during drought or extended dry periods. It is recommended that you apply shredded wood mulch to the garden. The mulch helps retain moisture and discourages weed seeds from germinating.

So if you are looking for a way to spruce up your yard and do your part in helping the environment, a rain garden might just be for you. For more information, contact your local NRCS office. ♦



RANGELAND: IT'S FOR THE BIRDS

A recent survey revealed that bird watching is the fastest growing recreational activity in the world. Forty six million Americans consider themselves bird watchers and Montana ranked 1st, with 44% of the state labeling themselves as bird watchers. This industry amounts to \$32 billion in retail sales annually, and \$85 billion in economic benefits.

Here are some interesting tidbits of information about birds that lend to the reasons why they are found to be so fascinating.

- geese & vultures fly at 29-37,000feet
- mallards fly at 21,000feet as documented by a collision with a plane
- common tern migrates 16,000miles
- a peregrine falcon has been clocked at 175mph on a downward stoop
- the ruby-throated hummingbird beats its wings 70times/second (4200 times a minute)
- the Thick-billed Murre can dive 689ft below the water surface
- some eagle nests are 20feet wide, 10 feet deep and weigh over a ton
- some hummingbirds weigh less than a nickel
- 90% of all extinct species are birds

Unfortunately, many of these migratory birds are experiencing significant declines in their numbers. Loss of habitat is the primary cause for the decreasing number. Since they do migrate, managing their habitat on two continents becomes that much more challenging.

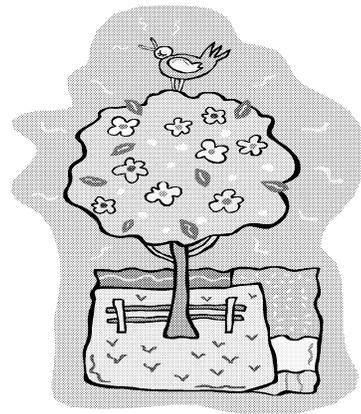
A recent 10 year Natural Resource Inventory showed that Toole County had a significant decrease in native rangeland which was mainly due to breaking native sod. The short grasses on these native rangelands provide essential and irreplaceable habitat for many of the migratory songbirds.

Native rangeland often has a diversity of plant and animal life that goes unnoticed and consequently undervalued. In terms of forage production, some of this rangeland may not be as economically valuable, but in terms of habitat and future generations, it is priceless.

Certain rangeland management strategies can help to promote bird habitat and are also beneficial to the health of the rangeland and soil as well. Consider utilizing a rest or deferred rotational grazing system. This will enable those rested pastures to provide essential bird habitat during the nesting season and will enable the cool-seasoned grasses that typically dominate our range to form and set their seed. Since many birds, utilize litter and last year's thatch to build their nest under and with, it also helps to precede the rest with light grazing.

Carefully considering the long term and in-tangible consequences of breaking rangeland should always be employed, especially in light of the declining bird populations. The reports tell us that Americans and Montanans really do care about these birds, but we sometimes are unaware of how our actions affect them.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service can help you to develop grazing strategies to help enhance the habitat for our feathered friends. Please contact your local NRCS office for more information. ♦



DO YOU HAVE A DIRECT DEPOSIT CHANGE?

Do you receive your payments by direct deposit? Have you changed account numbers; or have you moved accounts to a different bank? Has your bank been purchased by another one? If so, a new form will need to be filed with the Toole County Office, in order for your payment to get to the right place. If the new information is not updated it could hold up any payments (DCP and CRP) sent out in October. This becomes an issue particularly for anyone that has accounts at Heritage Bank which is now the US Bank. All of the account numbers and routing numbers have changed. ♦

USDA SERVICE CENTER

Phone: 406-434-5234

FAX: 406-434-2718

CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS

Terry Tomsheck, Chairman

Steve Ahrens, Vice Chairman

Bob Pace, Treasurer

Roger Smedsrud

Dick Steinbacher

Willie Wilson, Sunburst Urban Supervisor

Sara Shepard, Administrator (Ext 113)

NRCS STAFF

Misty Vermulm (Ext 110)

Lance Wallewein (Ext 115)

FSA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Tim Fenger, Chairman

Chuck Kelleher, Vice Chairman

Kathy Rankin, Regular Member

FSA OFFICE STAFF

Bob Hermance, County Executive Director (Ext 107) *email: robert.hermance@mt.usda.gov*

Ed Daugherty, Farm Loan Manager (Conrad-278-7611)

email: william.daugherty@mt.usda.gov

Rogene Halver- NAP, & Grain, Bin, & Farm Loans (Ext 103)

email: rogene.halver@mt.usda.gov

Carla McNamara-Payment Limitation & Direct Counter Cyclical Payment Program (Ext 101)

email: carla.mcnamara@mt.usda.gov

Dale White-CRP & Maps (Ext 106)

email: dale.white@mt.usda.gov

Lynda Fretheim-Certification & Maps (Ext 104) *email: lynda.fretheim@mt.usda.gov*

CRP PAYMENTS BEGIN IN OCTOBER

FSA will begin issuing Conservation Reserve Program payments to eligible producers in October, 2007. In Montana, FSA will issue more than \$116.9 million dollars to eligible CRP participants. The payments are annual rental payments earned on 3,480,849 acres enrolled in CRP in Montana. **Please note:** The Toole County payments may be later than usual since the office is in the process of updating the computer systems with the new CLU measurements for more than 900 contracts.

OVERVIEW

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, annual rental payments and cost-share assistance can be received to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on eligible farmland. The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and it provides cost-share assistance for up to 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years.

BENEFITS

CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country. ♦

ONE MONTH EXTENSION FOR MILC PAYMENTS

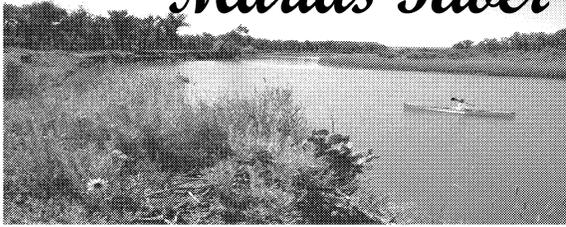
The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program payment rate calculation at 34 percent has been extended for the month of September 2007.

The MILC program compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a specified level.

The one month extension was provided through the Agricultural Assistance Act of 2007. Under previous law, the MILC payment period and 34 percent rate expired at the end of August 2007, and the payment rate for September 2007 was zero percent.

Dairy producers must contact the local FSA office to change their production start month to September 2007. ♦





Picture by Roger Zentzis

NEWSLETTER

Protecting and Improving The Land and Resources

CLEAN WATER: WHO NEEDS IT?

Clean water—we need it for our health, recreation, and industry. We all want it—and we all affect its quality. To maintain adequate water quality, we must look at all activities that take place in an area and make sure that their environmental impacts on nearby waterways are minimal. Watershed management is simply a systems approach to environmental protection.

What is a watershed? A watershed is an area of land that drains into a lake or river. As rainwater and melting snow run downhill, they carry sediment and other materials into our streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. A watershed is the area of land that catches all precipitation (such as rain and snow) and drains or



seeps into a marsh, stream, river, lake or groundwater. You are in a watershed now. Understanding your watershed is the first step in protecting the water and other natural resources. Healthy watersheds are vital for a healthy environment and economy. Because surfaced groundwater is part of the total water cycle, wellhead and aquifer protection follow similar concepts and approaches.

(copied from the Pipeline newsletter Fall 2006)

Pallid Sturgeon Study

Sue Camp with the Department of the Interior-Bureau of Reclamation in Billings attended a meeting of the Marias River Watershed and presented an overview of her study in the Upper Missouri River Basin primarily on the pallid sturgeon. This study also includes the shovel nosed sturgeon. The annual spring rise of water levels in the streams cue the adult fish to move upstream for spawning. We have not had

a natural spring rise for numerous years due to the prolonged drought. However, short-term 2006 spring runoff water was released from Tiber Dam to mimic the natural spring rise to study the effects on sturgeon spawning and track spawning locations on the Marias. The study will continue for four years. There will be no spring rise in 2007 due to lack of inadequate reservoir water from low run-off and

Education Committee:

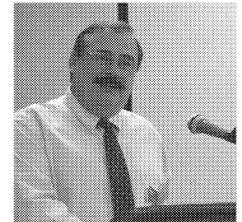
A survey was conducted in the Glacier, Liberty, Pondera, Toole CDs, with information gathered for development of 2008 activities. Questions related to salinity concerns and issues, public access, alternative energy interest, pasture-rangeland assistance, farm land assistance, noxious weeds, stream bank erosion. Thank you to all who replied. Your participation is appreciated. Special thanks to the County FSA offices for including the survey in their mailings.

Landowners if you are interested in participating in the Marias River Watershed please call one of the conservation districts in your area.

Pondera 406-278-7611 ext. 101
Glacier 406-873-5752 ext. 101
Liberty 406-759-5778 ext. 102
Toole 406-434-5234 ext. 113
Big Sandy 406-378-2298
Hill 406-265-6792 ext. 101
Chouteau 406-622-5627 ext. 101

Coordinator Resigns

Roger Zentzis, Technical Coordinator, has resigned from the Marias River Watershed. He has taken a teaching position with the Browning High School in Browning. The board regretfully accepts his resignation and wishes him all the best. Roger also has developed a new brochure that will be used in promoting the MRW. Copies will be made and distributed at fall-winter meetings to promote the watershed. He will be available for limited assistance during the school year on designated watershed tasks when time allows.



The Board and Regional Chairs

Paul Kronebusch-Chairman

Lawrence Bold

Barb Cole-Co-Chairman

Joe Weatherwax

Ken Augare

Ramsey Offerdall

John Rappold

Gary Arnst

Board Meetings are the first Tuesday of the month in Shelby, unless specified differently. The time for the meetings are 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Marias River Electric Hospitality Room. Everyone is invited to attend the meetings. Anyone wishing to sit on the board just ask any board member how.

drought conditions. The female pallid sturgeon starts to spawn at around 15 years of age and lives to be 50-60 years old.

The pallid sturgeon species is highly endangered, having a count of 30 to 50 adults above Fort Peck Reservoir. While originally they inhabited the entire Missouri River system, their habitat is restricted since they cannot survive in the reservoir.

(article taken from minutes written by Gloria Mason, Glacier County Conservation District Administrator)

CHESTER - The Marias River Basin Weed Control Association once again held their Float Trip and Weed tour. The tour was co-sponsored by the area Conservation Districts and the Marias River Watershed Group. Over 140 participants were registered for the event.

Participants met at the Tiber Marina, and then were bused down to the Moffat Bridge on the Marias River below the dam. The first stop was only one mile downstream, where Stan Huhtala of the Bureau of Reclamation talked about biological control methods and successes they have had along the river. Steve Becker of the Pondera County Weed District also talked about the sheep grazing project on the upper Marias River.

The John George Bottom was the next stop. After lunch Lee Ohlinger of Dow AgroSciences, and Jim Ghekiere, Liberty County Weed District, show a Russian knapweed control project using Milestone herbicide.

Root Weevils Released on Knapweed

By Colleen Gustafson, Glacier Weed Dist. Chair

Nearly 10 years ago the Glacier County Weed District (GCWD) released both *Larinus* and *Cyphocleonus* to start an insectary. Insects have been successfully harvested to redistribute to other knapweed infestations in Glacier County. Coordinated efforts of the Billings Area BIA, Blackfeet and Glacier Conservation Districts, and the GCWD continue to support this effort in integrated pest management.

The *Larinus* are a small flying beetle who feed on and lay eggs in the flower of diffuse and spotted knapweed. The larvae feed on the seedhead and reduce seed population. The *Cyphocleonus* are a large crawling insect who lay their eggs at the base of larger spotted and diffuse knapweed plants. The larvae then mine the central taproot, damaging the weed's vascular tissue and causing root-gall information, weakening and eventually killing the plant.



Knapweed Root Weevil

Part of the area was sprayed with Tordon and 2,4-D amine and the results were compared to the Milestone treatment.

Floater then jumped back into their rafts and continued down river to the take out point. A contest was held between the rafts on who could find the most different species of weeds as they traveled down the river.

After a bus ride back to the Marina, Jeannie Olmstead, Toole County Extension Agent, gave a presentation on record keeping for pesticide applicators. A weed ID contest was also held using the weeds that were collected by the rafts.

The fun and informative day was finished off by a delicious barbeque.

(Funding for the prize materials was provided by a grant from the Department of Natural Resource Conservation Mini-Education Grant Fund.)

Article by Tom Allen Liberty County MSU Extension Agent



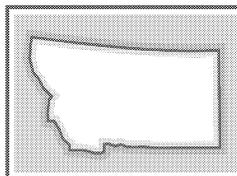
Picture by Roger Zentzis

Insects can be purchased from private vendors, with current cost at about \$1 per *Cyphocleonus* and 30 cents per *Larinus*. It is recommended that at least 100 insects be released per site. Currently there are no known programs where these insects can be provided without cost. Individuals interested in purchasing their own insects can contact their County Weed Control Office for details.

USDA-NRCS directs the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP). EQIP has a cost share item available for both chemical and bio-control of weeds, including the purchase of insects. For more information, contact your local NRCS office.

Montana Trivia

What is the one place in North America where falling water eventually flows into three oceans.



Answer: Triple Divide Peak in Glacier National Park

Alan Rollo, Teton-Sun River Watershed Coordinator guest speaker.

"Water quality, weeds, sustainable agriculture, fisheries, sub-divisions were determined to be issues from public input", said Alan Rollo. The annual weed pull donations have been noted for excellent in-kind support, and the Weed Whacker Rodeo is in its 10th year where knapweed is targeted for pulling. Approximately 1 ton of knapweed is pulled, bagged and burned per year, providing a reduction in weeds through a consistent annual program.

Rollo stressed that success is all about education and teamwork. Agencies and individual members have equal power, equal control within the watersheds. Communications are a key point to the success of the group. These watershed groups are locally led landowners and conservation districts within the area make final decisions on where to direct their energy.

Projects are selected by need and application. Funding for overall infrastructure costs is covered mainly through Federal and State grants. Individual conservation districts do not absorb costs for administration of the grants.

Water facts.....

- More than 170,000 miles of streams and rivers meander through Montana. The state ranks third in total stream miles in the continental U.S.
- Montana contains the headwaters for three continental watersheds; the Columbia River, the St. Mary's River and the Missouri River.
- Water withdrawn for irrigation accounts for more than 97.6 % of water withdrawn in Montana each year and waters 2.82 million acres.
- 35% of Montanans rely on ground water for their drinking water. The remaining 65% use surface water.
- One gallon of used motor oil can contaminate up to one million gallons of water.

FIRE MANAGEMENT ON CRP

Bozeman, MT – With the hot, dry weather Montana faces during July and August, the USDA Farm Service

Agency (FSA) is reminding Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract holders their responsibility for fire management on CRP acreage.

Firebreaks can either be a strip of bare land or a vegetative cover that retards fire. Grazing is not allowed as an option to maintain firebreaks. Bare ground firebreaks shall be only allowed in high risk areas such as transportation corridors, rural communities, and adjacent farmsteads. If bare ground firebreaks are used, adequate erosion control treatments must be installed and maintained. Bare ground strips may serve as sites for the establishment of weeds. As required for the vegetative cover, weeds must also be controlled on bare ground strips. Lack of weed control measure could result in noncompliance of CRP provisions and assessment of payment reduction or termination of the affected acreage. It is the responsibility of the CRP contract holder to maintain the firebreaks.

CRP contract holders must acquire a modification to their current CRP contract that includes fire management. Contact your local FSA office for further requirements and required fire management specifications.

For information regarding other programs administered by FSA, logon to the Montana FSA website at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> or by visiting your local USDA Service Center. ♦

The purpose of the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) program is to provide forage products, such as hay, cubes, pellets, grain concentrates, or straw that are free of noxious weed seeds. ♦



FUN FACTS ABOUT FOOD

(From the FSA Kids website)

Did you know?

- Wisconsin is the state that grows the most cranberries. Each year cranberry producers grow more than 300 million pounds of cranberries.
- It takes about 10 pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese. The average cow produces 2100 pounds of milk a month or 210 pounds of cheese and about 46,000 glasses of milk a year.
- Americans gobble up 45 million turkeys each year – about one for every seven people.
- Three quarters of all raisins are eaten with breakfast.
- The biggest hamburger ever served weighed 8,266 lbs. It was cooked in 2001 at the Burger Fest in Seymour, Wisconsin. According to local legend, Charles Nagreen served the first burger in 1885 at the Outagamie County Fair.
- Maine produces almost all of the nation's wild blueberries.
- During the Alaskan Klondike gold rush, potatoes were practically worth their weight in gold. Potatoes were so valued for their vitamin C content that miners traded gold for potatoes.
- Almonds are actually stone fruits related to cherries, plums and peaches. California produces 80% of the world's supply of almonds. Japanese teenagers enjoy snacking on a mixture of dried sardines and slivered almonds.
- Not all carrots are orange. The first carrots originated some 5000 years ago were white, purple, red, yellow, green and black. The orange carrots we find in supermarkets today come from a variety bred in the 1700's by the Dutch.
- Alfalfa is supposedly the oldest known plant used for livestock feed. Records of its use date as early as 1000 BC in the Middle East.
- More than 87 billion eggs are produced in the US each year. The average person eats the equivalent of 254 eggs yearly.
- It takes 12 honeybees to produce a tablespoon of honey. ♦

Calendar of Events

| | |
|--------|--|
| Oct 8 | Office Closed-Columbus Day |
| Oct 13 | Deadline to remove hay or livestock from CRP |
| Oct 31 | Happy Halloween |
| Nov 22 | Office Closed-Thanksgiving Day |
| Dec 3 | COC Election ballots returned |
| Dec 6 | COC Election Ballots Counted |
| Dec 25 | Office Closed-Christmas Day |

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family 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 202-702-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director; Office of Civil Rights; Room 326-W, Whitten Building; 1499 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, D.C., 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD).

Toole County FSA
 1125 Oilfield Ave.
 Shelby, MT 59474

STANDARD RATE
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 SHELBY, MT
 PERMIT NO.
 2

.....
 "Special accommodations will be made for the physically handicapped, vision or hearing impaired person upon request. If accommodation is required, please contact Bob Hermance, County Executive Director at the above address; call 406-434-5234; or email: robert.hermance@mt.usda.gov
