

October 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Alaska State FSA Newsletter

Alaska State Farm Service Agency

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Palmer, AK 99645
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Northern County Office
PO Box 585
Delta Junction, AK 99737

County Executive Director/Farm Loan Manager

Lloyd Wilhelm
907-895-4242 ext 150
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USDA Reminds Farmers and Ranchers of Nov. 3 Deadline to Submit Your RTCP Receipts

The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Program (RTCP) signup ended on September 8, 2017. This program covered transportation expenses incurred from October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017. If you applied for the RTCP program, and have not turned all your receipts in to the FSA office, now is the time to do so. Applicants will have until Nov. 3, 2017, to provide supporting documentation. If you have any questions, contact your local FSA office.

For more information on RTCP, farmers and ranchers in the eligible areas can visit their FSA county office or the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or www.fsa.usda.gov/ak

loyd.wilhelm@ak.usda.gov

Southern County Office
800 W Evergreen, Ste 216
Palmer, AK 99645

**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan
Manager**

Erin Sturdivant
907-761-7754
Fax: 907-761-7789
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erin.sturdivant@ak.usda.gov

Hours Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Committee Meetings:
Northern Co TBA
Southern Co Nov 14, 4:00 pm

Please contact your local FSA
Office for questions specific to
your operation or county.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and Farm Loan programs (FLP). If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

Alaska FSA Urges Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

USDA encourages farmers and ranchers to make their voices heard by voting in the upcoming Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee elections. Beginning Monday, Nov. 6, 2017, USDA will begin mailing ballots to eligible farmers and ranchers across the country. Producers must return ballots to their local FSA offices by Dec. 4, 2017, to ensure that their vote is counted.

Nearly 7,700 FSA County Committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster, emergency programs and program eligibility.

The following are this year's candidates who have been nominated in their LAA's to serve as a committee member. All candidates have agreed to serve if elected.

Northern County LAA-2 includes where the Clearwater road intersects the AK Hwy NE to north line of Southeast Fairbanks census area, proceeding NE to Canadian border, then SE following Canadian border, where the Alaska Gateway Regional Educational Attendance Area (AKGREAA)

line intersects the Canadian border, turning NW following AKGREAA line to the AK Hwy, then proceed NW on AK Hwy to Clearwater road.

Dani Lane resides in LAA-2 and has produced Hay, Goats, Garlic, Turkeys, and Chickens for over 7 years. Dani is an active member of the Delta Ag community and while growing up served as State Vice President of FFA for 1 term.

Steven Helkenn resides in LAA-2 and has produced Hay, Oats, Barley and raises pigs and cattle for over 37 years. Steven has served on the FSA County Committee in the past and has lived and farmed the same farm for all these years.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Northern County FSA Office at 10:00 a.m. on December 7, 2017.

Southern County LAA-3 Includes the Matanuska Borough.

Janet Dinwiddie grew up in Palmer the heart of Matanuska Valley. She was raised on her family's upick vegetable farm-Pyrah's Pioneer Peak Farm. Pyrah's has been operating for 40 years raising a variety of crops and hosting public events and festivals to help provide a gathering place for the community. After high school Janet graduated from Utah State University. Eventually Janet and her family came back to Alaska, to help run Pyrah's.

Suzy Crosby moved from Montana to Alaska in 1983. Coming from a background in cattle ranching, she found that her real passion came in a smaller package – dairy goats! Suzy and her husband own and operate Cottonwood Creek Farm, where they have been operating a herd-share program and raising show-quality registered Alpine dairy goats since 2002.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Southern County FSA Office at 4:00 p.m. on December 7, 2017.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

Farmers and ranchers will begin receiving their ballots the week of Nov. 6. Ballots include the names of candidates running for the local committee election. Voters in the above County local administrative areas who do not receive ballots in the coming week can pick one up at their local FSA office. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 4, 2017. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2018.

For more information, visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

USDA Issues Farm Safety Net and Conservation Payments

Total Exceeds \$9.6 Billion

USDA Farm Service Agency announced that over \$9.6 billion in payments will be made to producers through the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and

Conservation Reserve (CRP) programs. The USDA is issuing approximately \$8 billion in payments under the ARC and PLC programs for the 2016 crop year, and \$1.6 billion under CRP for 2017.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in revenue or prices for covered commodities. Over half a million producers will receive ARC payments and over a quarter million producers will receive PLC payments for 2016 crops, starting the first week of October and continuing over the next several months.

Payments are being made to producers who enrolled base acres of barley, corn, grain sorghum, lentils, oats, peanuts, dry peas, soybeans, wheat and canola. In the upcoming months, payments will be announced after marketing year average prices are published by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service for the remaining covered commodities. Those include long and medium grain rice (except for temperate Japonica rice), which will be announced in November; remaining oilseeds and chickpeas, which will be announced in December; and temperate Japonica rice, which will be announced in early February 2017. The estimated payments are before application of sequestration and other reductions and limits, including adjusted gross income limits and payment limitations.

Also, as part of an ongoing effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat, USDA will begin issuing 2017 CRP payments in October to over 375,000 Americans.

Signed into law by President Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation program in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers and landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species. In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Participants enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP payments are made to participants who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

For more details regarding ARC and PLC programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

USDA Processing Pending Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment Offers

Acceptance of Most 2018 Offers Temporarily Suspended

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will process many pending eligible offers for land enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and will temporarily suspend accepting most new offers until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

All current, eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, 2017, except for those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative (CP42), will be approved. Additionally, FSA is temporarily suspending acceptance of most offers going forward to provide time to review CRP allocation levels, and to avoid exceeding the statutory cap of 24 million acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide. USDA is accepting all pending continuous enrollment offers that were made beginning on May 4, 2017, and extending through Sept. 30, 2017, except Pollinator Habitat Initiative

offers. Pollinator acreage offers are being declined because the program has met its acreage enrollment goal. Effective immediately, USDA is suspending acceptance of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017. The suspension will continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for state-specific Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP Grasslands enrollment. Offers received on or after Oct. 1, 2017, are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Payment totals for 2017 were announced earlier this week totaling over \$1.6 billion.

For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) are a resource to help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

Depending on the applicant's needs, there are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a Joint Financing loan is \$300,000 and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

To be eligible, the operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farm Loan Graduation Reminder

FSA Direct Loans are considered a temporary source of credit that is available to producers who do not meet normal underwriting criteria for commercial banks.

FSA periodically conducts Direct Loan graduation reviews to determine a borrower's ability to graduate to commercial credit. If the borrower's financial condition has improved to a point where they can refinance their debt with commercial credit, they will be asked to obtain other financing and partially or fully pay off their FSA debt.

By the end of a producer's operating cycle, the Agency will send a letter requesting a current balance sheet, actual financial performance and a projected farm budget. The borrower has 30 days to return the required financial documents. This information will be used to evaluate the borrower's potential for refinancing to commercial credit.

If a borrower meets local underwriting criteria, FSA will send the borrower's name, loan type, balance sheet and projected cash flow to commercial lenders. The borrower will be notified when loan information is sent to local lenders.

If any lenders are interested in refinancing the borrower's loan, FSA will send the borrower a letter with a list of lenders that are interested in refinancing the loan. The borrower must contact the lenders and complete an application for commercial credit within 30 calendar days.

If a commercial lender rejects the borrower, the borrower must obtain written evidence that specifies the reasons for rejection and submit to their local FSA farm loan office

If a borrower fails to provide the requested financial information or to graduate, FSA will notify the borrower of noncompliance, FSA's intent to accelerate the loan, and appeal rights.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings and/or events should contact Lloyd Wilhelm, Northern CED, at (907) 895-4242, Erin Sturdivant, Southern CED, at (907) 761-7754 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).

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