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

The 2021 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections began on Nov. 1, when ballots were mailed to eligible voters. **The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 6, 2021.**

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters in the Northern County local administrative area (LAA 3) and the Southern County local administrative area (LAA 1), who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2022.

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-3 which includes the area beginning at the SE corner of the Matsu Borough proceeding north to NW corner of SE Fairbanks Census area, east to line following Clearwater road intersecting AK Hwy, proceeding SE to AKGREAA line, south then SE following line to Canadian border, south following Canadian border to Chugach Mtn. Range, turning west following Chugach Mtn. west to SW corner of Matsu Borough. (Includes Delta Junction, Glennallen, and Kenny Lake.)

Matthew Bates is the co-owner of Blue Creek Livestock a family-owned business. The operation raises Cattle, Hogs, Goats, Sheep for meat. They raise their own forage hay for the animals. Matthew and his family moved to Alaska in 2016 from Idaho and have been actively involved in the community. They are members of Farm Bureau and have led the "Bucket Calf" program that enlightens youth to what agriculture is about. Matthew is a staunch supporter of agriculture in Alaska and feels local agriculture production is vital to Alaska's food security.

Kelly Patton and her family moved to Alaska in 2013 from Texas. They raised livestock and hay in Texas and raise hay in Alaska. They have participated in the CRP program. Kelly has been actively involved in FFA "Ag Mechanics Program" at the Delta High School. Has been members of Farm Bureau. Kelly supports agriculture in Alaska and states agriculture is vital to providing food security for all Alaska residents.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Northern County FSA Office at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 9, 2021.

Southern County LAA -1 which includes all of the following boroughs and census areas: Wade Hampton, Bethel, Dillingham, Bristol Bay, Lake & Peninsula, Aleutians East and West, Kodiak Island and the Kenai Peninsula Borough south of the Kasilof river (includes Homer and surrounding area).

Rita Jo Shultz is the managing partner of Alaska Perfect Peony (APP) a family owned business. APP was the first commercial peony cut flower farm in Alaska. APP manages several other peony farms and markets stems for several more. Past experiences include owner of Fritz Creek Gardens, a small retail nursery in Homer; 40 plus years in marketing positions, finance, 25 years in Commercial Real Estate Development, served in many positions with the Alaska Farm Bureau and is currently Chairman of the Certified American Grown organization representing 60% of the Cut flower and foliage farmers in the USA. Rita Jo was a nominee for 'Champions of Change for the Future of Agriculture' and invited to the White House and was recently named the 'Small Business Champion' for Alaska.

Paulette Selkirk is a farmer originally from New Mexico. Her dad and uncle taught her about farming and running the business at a young age. Her passion was to grow up and

have her own farming business one day. Her and her husband moved to Kodiak in 2009. She has been in the poultry business for over 25 years. She is the owner of Farmhouse Pantry, Livestock Feed & Supply. Her husband, children and grandchildren help with the operations, building the next generation of farmers. She sells fresh eggs, adult meat chickens and turkeys. Along with poultry she sells feed and hay to the community of Kodiak.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Southern County FSA Office at 1:00 p.m. on December 9, 2021.

More information on county committees, such as fact sheets, can be found on the FSA website at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections> or at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/ak>.

Tribal Agricultural Landowner Voting Eligibility in County Committee Elections

Members of American Indian tribes holding agricultural land are eligible to vote in a Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee election if the tribal member meets the minimum voting age. For purposes of FSA county committee elections, every member of an American Indian tribe is considered an agricultural landowner and eligible to vote as an individual, including individual Native American landowners of tribal lands, owners of trusts, owners of estates and land held in trust by the United States for the tribe, even if the individual does not personally produce a crop.

Native American landowners interested in participating as an eligible voter must contact their local USDA Service Center to register. Contact your local FSA office with any questions.

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with the Northern or Southern County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for the Northern and Southern County Offices:

For 2022 Crop Year

September 30, 2021	Value-loss crops and controlled environment crops (except Nursery)
December 15, 2021	Fall-Seeded Small Grains
January 2, 2022	Honey
May 31, 2022	Nursery
July 15, 2022	All other spring planted crops, CRP, Perennial Forage

Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact the Northern or Southern County FSA office to set up an in-person or phone appointment.

To file a crop acreage report, you will need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

More Information

For questions, please contact the Northern County FSA office at 907-895-4242 ext 150 and the Southern County FSA Office at 907-761-7754.

USDA Builds Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses to agricultural producers who are certified organic or transitioning to organic. USDA will make \$20 million available through the new [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program \(OTECP\)](#) as part of USDA's broader [Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative](#), which provides new, broader and more equitable opportunities for farmers, ranchers and producers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, certified organic and transitional operations faced challenges due to loss of markets, and increased costs and labor shortages, in addition to costs related to obtaining or renewing their organic certification, which producers and handlers of conventionally grown commodities do not incur. Transitional operations also faced the financial challenge of implementing practices required to obtain organic certification without being able to obtain the premium prices normally received for certified organic commodities.

Eligible Expenses

OTECP funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Certified operations and transitional operations may apply for OTECP for eligible expenses paid during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. For each year, OTECP covers 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category (crop, livestock, wild crop, handling and State Organic Program fee). This includes application fees, inspection fees, USDA organic certification costs, state organic program fees and more.

Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. This includes fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan.

For both certified operations and transitional operations, OTECP covers 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the expense of soil testing

required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

Applying for Assistance

Signup for 2020 and 2021 OTECP will be Nov. 8, 2021, through Jan. 7, 2022. Producers apply through their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office and can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364. Visit farmers.gov/otecp to learn more.

Additional Organic Support

OTECP builds upon USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) which provides cost share assistance of 50%, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope, to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the NOP. This year's application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021.

Additionally, USDA's Risk Management Agency announced improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Program including increasing expansion limits for organic producers to the higher of \$500,000 or 35%. Previously, small and medium size organic operations were held to the same 35% limit to expansion as conventional practice producers. Also, producers can now report acreage as certified organic, or as acreage in transition to organic, when the producer has requested an organic certification by the acreage reporting date.

To learn more about USDA's assistance for organic producers, visit usda.gov/organic.

As USDA looks for long-term solutions to build back a better food system, the Department is committed to delivery of financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers and businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Since USDA rolled out the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative in March, the Department has provided support to America's farmers and ranchers including:

- \$18 billion in [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#) payments, including a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers since the program reopened in April 2021.
- Over \$35 million in assistance for those who had to depopulate livestock and poultry due to insufficient processing access ([Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program](#)).
- Over \$7 million to date for the logging and log hauling industry ([Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers](#)). Final payments are being calculated to be disbursed soon.
- \$1 billion to [purchase healthy food for food insecure Americans and build food bank capacity](#).
- \$350 million in [additional dairy assistance related to market volatility](#).
- [\\$500 million deployed through existing USDA programs](#).

For more details, please visit www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance.

USDA Accepts 2.8 Million Acres for the Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has accepted 2.8 million acres in offers from agricultural producers and private landowners for enrollment into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in 2021. This year, almost 1.9 million acres in offers have been accepted through the General CRP Signup, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has accepted over 897,000 acres for enrollment through the Continuous Signup. The Continuous Signup remains open and CRP Grasslands Signup closed last week, so USDA expects to enroll more acres into all of CRP than the 3 million acres that are expiring.

The 4-million-acre shortfall in CRP would have had the following impacts:

- More than 359,000 acres less annual forage under CRP Grasslands;
- A loss of 1,500,000 acres of quality wildlife and pollinator less habitat for wildlife;
- 20% fewer apiaries in major production regions meeting critical forage thresholds;
- A loss of more than 4 million upland game and other grassland birds;
- About 90 million pounds of nitrogen entering waterways;
- Over 30 million tons of soil eroded, leading to increased pollution and sedimentation in streams and rivers; and
- Foregone sequestration of more than 3 million metric tons of CO₂.

Like other USDA conservation programs, CRP is a voluntary program that has a variety of options that can be tailored to the specific conservation issues of a state or region and desires of the landowner. The options run the gamut from working lands such as CRP Grasslands to partnerships with states and private entities to target a specific joint concern such as water quality or quantity.

Continuous CRP Signup

Continuous CRP allows USDA to target the most sensitive land like highly erodible land, the most environmentally beneficial land like wetlands and buffers along streams and rivers, or locally identified critical habitat like State Acres For Wildlife. This targeted approach also reduces the whole-farm type enrollment in CRP that was more common when it first began and helps meet the conservation goals while maintaining the majority of the land in production agriculture. FSA has accepted offers from over 37,000 producers to enroll more than 897,000 acres through the Continuous Signup. This is double the enrollment from last year and three times the enrollment from 2018 and 2019. FSA expects this process to be completed by the end of September so contracts may start on October 1, 2021.

The growth in the targeted enrollment through Continuous Signup is due to a recommitment of USDA to incentives and partnerships that brought in nearly 1.4 million acres in 2016 and 2017. These efforts have also included the expansion of the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rives Initiative 30-year (CLEAR30) from two regions to nationwide

as well as moving State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practices from the General to the Continuous signup. This year, offers for 20,000 acres have been submitted for CLEAR30 and 296,000 acres in SAFE practices.

General CRP Signup

FSA opened the General CRP Signup 56 in January 2021 and extended the original deadline to July 23, 2021, to enable producers to consider FSA's new improvements to the program, which included higher rental payments and more incentivized environmental practices.

Additionally, FSA introduced a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This incentive provides a 3%, 5% or 10% incentive payment based on the predominate vegetation type for the practices enrolled – from grasses to trees to wetland restoration.

Through CRP, producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. In addition to the other well-documented benefits, lands enrolled in CRP is playing a key role in mitigating impacts from climate change.

A full list of changes to CRP, including those to the Continuous and General Signups, can be found in our "What's New with CRP" [fact sheet](#).

More Information

In April, [USDA announced several changes](#) to CRP to increase participation while improving climate-related and other environmental benefits. CRP sequesters carbon while preserving topsoil, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, reducing nitrogen runoff, and providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

The 2018 Farm Bill established a nationwide acreage limit for CRP, with the total number of acres that may be enrolled capped at 25 million acres in 2021 and growing to 27 million by 2023.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation's lands, biodiversity, and natural resources, including our soil, air, and water. Through conservation practices, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers, and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including state, local, and tribal governments.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing

systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can 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.

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 \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

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 farm loans, please contact the Northern County FSA office at 907-895-4242 ext 150 and the Southern County FSA Office at 907-761-7754.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
 - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information about farm loans, please contact the Northern County FSA office at 907-895-4242 ext 150 and the Southern County FSA Office at 907-761-7754.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings and/or events should contact the Northern County FSA Service Center, at (907) 895-4242, ext. 150, Southern County FSA Service Center, at (907) 761-7754 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

Alaska State Farm Service Agency

800 E. Palmer-Wasilla Hwy., Suite 216
Palmer, AK 99645

Phone: 907-761-7738
Fax: 907-761-7789

Northern County FSA Service Center

PO Box 585

Delta Junction, AK 99737

Phone: 907-895-4242 ext. 150

Fax: 855-711-9095

Hours:

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

Southern County FSA Service Center

800 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy. Ste 216

Palmer, AK 99645

Phone: 907-761-7754

Fax: 907-761-7789

County Committee Meetings

Northern Co December 9, 10:00 a.m.

www.fsa.usda.gov/ak

Southern Co December 9, 1:00 p.m.

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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