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Office Message

Please remember the deadline to file your Acreage Report is July 15, 2023. We will need to know your plant dates, intended use, and shares in each crop. Along those lines, if you have any failed crops, FSA needs to be notified within 15 days of when the loss is first apparent. This is especially important for crops covered under our Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), but applies to all crops, as it affects your crop reports, which affect your benefits you receive through FSA programs. Please call the office when you are done planting to schedule an appointment.



County Committee Election—The office is now accepting nomination forms for LAA #1 which includes the Lower Valley. Deanna Clark has served the maximum term and we want to thank her for her commitment to the producers of the Farm Service Agency, she will be missed. All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by August 1, 2023. Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they participate or cooperate in a USDA program and reside in the LAA that is up for election.

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally.

All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and they may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

USDA Unveils Efforts to Streamline Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The USDA is streamlining its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to ultimately better help agricultural producers and private landowners conserve wetlands, productive farmlands and at-risk grasslands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is rolling out several improvements to this important program, which has more than 5 million acres of land enrolled, in response to feedback from producers, landowners and conservation partners.



Specifically, NRCS is updating its processes around appraisals, land surveys, as well as certifying eligible entities who help NRCS and producers enroll land into easements. These changes are for ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) as well as Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE).

Key program changes include:

- **Appraisals for ALE:** The threshold for national review of ALE appraisals is now \$3 million, raised from \$1 million. NRCS raised the threshold to align program requirements with increased land values, enabling the agency to better target staff resources and speed up implementation. Appraisals help ensure cost-effective and appropriate use of federal funds that are contributed to a conservation partner for their purchase of the ALE from the farmer or rancher.
- **Land Surveys for WRE:** NRCS plans to encourage procurement of land surveys earlier in the acquisition timeline, such as when an application has been tentatively selected for a WRE. These surveys help with locating land boundaries, which is needed to purchase and manage the easement. NRCS is also increasing its use of partnerships to assist with acquiring the land surveys and has simplified the review process for producer-acquired land surveys. This will speed up the time it takes producers and landowners to enroll.
- **Certification of Entities for ALE:** For ALE, NRCS works with eligible entities, such as American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations, to conserve prime farmland and at-risk grasslands. NRCS is working to expand the number of entities by launching a certification initiative to proactively notify potentially eligible entities that they qualify for administrative flexibilities. Certified entities have greater independence and less oversight in their purchase of easements funded under ALE. Information for entities on how to get certified is available on the ALE webpage.

These improvements are the first step in an ongoing effort to streamline ACEP as well as other NRCS conservation programs to ensure that they are easier and more convenient to utilize, and it will strengthen implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which included \$1.4 billion in additional funding for ACEP over five years. ACEP is administered by NRCS and aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring, and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands, and grasslands at risk to conversion to non-grassland uses. Healthy wetlands, grasslands and farmlands sequester carbon and provide many other natural resource benefits. NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs – including

ACEP – year-round. Producers interested in easements should contact their local Service Center or view their state application ranking dates.

Applying for Beginning Farmer Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:



- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

For more information contact, contact your Lincoln County USDA Service Center at 307-886-9001 or visit fsa.usda.gov.



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County Committee

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