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A Message from the Weston County Executive Director



November has always been a time for me to take a moment from my busy life and think upon the many blessings I have and the people for whom I am grateful.

At FSA, it's very easy to get caught up in the numbers, the rules, regulations, deadlines and administrative tasks. But at the end of the day, our work is really about the people. About you. And I am truly grateful for each and every one of you. Thank you for being participants in our programs and for taking the time to talk to us about your operations so we can get to know you better.

I hope you have time this November to take a moment and think upon the things you are grateful for and spend time with those dear to you.

Just a couple of quick reminders before I close out my message:

- Please vote. If you are in Local Administrative Area 1, be on the lookout for the county committee ballots in your mailbox. Harry Tavegia is your nominee this year. Ballots must be returned to the office or be postmarked by **Monday, December 4, 2023**.
- **Friday, December 1, 2023** is the deadline to sign up for 2024 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.
- **Wednesday, December 15, 2023** is the deadline to ensure you have signed and turned in your production for 2023 hay losses if you participated in the 2023 NAP program.
- Please join us at the Weston County USDA Service Center conference room for our annual customer appreciation open house being held **Thursday, December 21, 2023** from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.
- And a correction for the LDP deadline date for our participating wool producers. **Wednesday, January 31, 2024** is the deadline to turn in your wool production and paperwork if you want to receive benefits from the 2023 Loan Deficiency Program.

Something to ponder: When soap falls on the floor, is the soap dirty or the floor clean?

If you have any questions or concerns, always know you can reach out to me, my office staff, or our committee members.

Take care and stay safe!

Sherie Hilgenkamp
Weston County Executive Director

UPCOMING DEADLINES & IMPORTANT DATES

- **December 1, 2023:** Deadline to sign up for program year 2024 NAP coverage and pay the customer service fee.
- **December 4, 2023:** LAA 1 Ballots due at the county office or be postmarked by.
- **December 11, 2023:** Weston County Committee Ballot Counting at 1pm followed by business meeting.
- **December 15, 2023:** Deadline to submit an application for payment on program year 2023 hay losses.
- **December 21, 2023:** Open House at the USDA Service Center from 9am to 3pm.



- **December 22, 2023:** Deadline to order composting bins from WCNRD.
- **December 25, 2023:** Office closed for Christmas Day Holiday.
- **January 1, 2024:** Office closed for New Year's Day Holiday.
- **January 15, 2024:** Office closed for Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday Holiday.
- **January 30, 2024:** Deadline to request all ELAP assistance for 2023 calendar year losses.
- **January 31, 2024:** Final LDP availability date for Wool, Mohair, and Unshorn Pelts.

Also remember the following:

NAP Notice of Loss must be filed the earlier of 15 days of the disaster occurrence or when losses become apparent, or 15 days of the final harvest date.

LIP Notice of Loss must be filed 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. **Leases and/or Land Ownership changes including operational changes** must be reported within 30 calendar days of change to avoid late fees, repayment of funds issued and/or ineligibility for program participation. The deadline to submit changes for 2023 program year has closed. For the 2024 program year the deadline for all changes is August 1, 2024.

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections



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.

Ballots were mailed to voters in Local Administrative Area (LAA) 1 on November 6, 2023. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is **December 4, 2023**.

Eligible voters in Local Administrative Area 1, who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local FSA county office. Customers can identify which LAA they or their farming operation is in by using our new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Newly elected committee members will take office January 1, 2024.

The candidate in this year's election is:

Harry Tavegia is nominated in LAA 1, Weston County, to serve as a committee member for a 3-year term. Harry has lived in LAA 1 for 62 years and operated his ranch for over 40 years, producing cattle, hay, and grain. He has served on the Inyan Kara Grazing Association Board, served as Chairman of the Soil Conservation Board as well as being a former Chairman of our County Committee, of which he is a current member. Harry will fairly and equitably represent producers and ensure the farmers and ranchers of our community get the most out of Farm Programs. Harry is willing to serve if re-elected.

WCNRD Offers Conservation Cost-Share Program

Conservation Cost-Share

Are you planning a project that improves water quality and quantity, soil erosion, energy conservation, or wildlife habitat on your property? We have a cost-share program that can help cover 50% of the cost, up to \$7,500.

Call or stop in our office for more information, or download an application at www.westoncountynrd.org/conservation-cost-share/

This program covers a variety of projects, and we're always looking for new conservation ideas.

Projects we've covered in the past include wildlife habitat improvement, cover crops, streambank restoration and stabilization, living windbreaks and snow fences, fencing for rotational grazing, irrigation water management, development of water wells and pipelines, and solar water pumps.

Applications due March 4, 2024

This cost share provides incentives for landowners within the Weston County Natural Resource District Boundaries to implement natural resource conservation practices improving water quality and quantity, soil erosion, energy conservation or wildlife habitat. This program is also for those landowners who can't typically qualify for federal farm bill programs.

For more information, please visit our website at westoncountynrd.org/conservation-cost-share/.

FSA Offers Assistance for 2022 Losses through the Emergency Relief Program (ERP)



Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in calendar year 2022.

For impacted producers, FSA will be administering emergency relief to eligible producers through a two-track process:

- Track 1 will leverage existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating initial payments.
- Track 2 will be intended to fill additional assistance gaps and cover eligible producers who did not participate in existing risk management programs.

This two-track approach enables USDA to streamline the application process to reduce the burden on producers, proactively include underserved producers who have been left out of past relief efforts and encourage participation in existing risk management tools that can help producers handle future extreme weather events.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1

ERP 2022 Track 1 will provide assistance to producers who were impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms, and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar year 2022 using existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data already submitted to FSA.

Eligible crops and trees included in Track 1, include crops and trees for which federal crop insurance or NAP coverage was available and a crop insurance indemnity or NAP payment was received, except for crops intended for grazing.

Qualifying natural disaster events include: wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze, smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought, and related conditions.

For ERP 2022 eligibility, “related conditions” are damaging weather and adverse natural occurrences that occurred concurrently with and as a direct result of a specified qualifying disaster event. They include:

- Excessive wind that occurred as a direct result of a derecho;
- Silt and debris that occurred as a direct result of flooding;
- Excessive wind, storm surges, tropical storms, and tropical depressions that occurred as a direct result of a hurricane; and
- Excessive wind and blizzards that occurred as a direct result of a winterstorm.

For “qualifying drought”, ERP 2022 assistance is available if any area within the county in which the loss occurred was rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a drought intensity of:

- D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks; or
- D3 (extreme drought) or higher level of drought intensity.

FSA will send pre-filled Emergency Relief Program (ERP 2022) applications directly to producers who suffered 2022 crop losses due to wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible natural disaster events. Funding for ERP 2022 is limited and significantly less than estimated losses. To ensure the fair, equitable and efficient delivery of program benefits to help as many disaster-impacted producers as possible, with the limited funds available, FSA has designed program payment factors to ensure payment outlays stay within statutory funding levels.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2

ERP 2022 Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist producers who suffered a loss in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year.

The revenue-based track provides an alternative method to establish revenue in cases where there has been a change to operation capacity, circumstances where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, or for crops that are used within the operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop.

Qualifying disaster event means: wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought, and related conditions occurring in calendar year 2022.

For ERP 2022 eligibility, "related conditions" means damaging weather and adverse natural occurrences that occurred concurrently with and as a direct result of a specified qualifying disaster event.

For "qualifying drought", ERP 2022 assistance is available if any area within the county in which the loss occurred was rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a drought intensity of:

- D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks; or
- D3 (extreme drought) or higher level of drought intensity.

Producers applying for Track 2 must submit FSA-524, Emergency Relief Program (ERP) 2022 Track 2 Application, certifying their benchmark year revenue and disaster year revenue.

Additional Required Forms

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. Producers can apply for ERP 2022 starting October 31, 2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have the required forms on file.

Please contact your local FSA county office for a list of the required forms and/or to confirm the status of your forms.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops.

More Information

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and through your local [FSA county office](#).

WCNRD Composting Project



Composter Sale

Interested in purchasing a compost bin? The District is participating in a group purchase program, organized by Recycling Connections. The program is a nationwide annual bulk order of Home Composter bins, which are only available through organizations like WCNRD.

The bins are made from 100% recycled material and have a capacity of 17 cubic feet. The bin is easy to assemble, has two sliding doors that allow access to finished compost, and comes with a copy of "The Composting Cookbook".

For more information on the bins, scan the QR code.

Call our office to place an order or look for an order form in the next Conservation Clamor
307-746-3264x4

In-District Cost: \$75
Out-of-District Cost: \$95

Orders are due by December 22nd.
Bins are expected to arrive mid-April.

<https://bit.ly/bin-info>

FSA Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture operation. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of 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. The data gained from these

disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

Save Time - Make an Appointment with NRCS and FSA Offices

Producers are encouraged to call ahead to schedule an appointment. Appointments ensure maximum use of your time and ensure staff is available to tend to your important business needs. To contact your agency, use the information below.



Weston County USDA Service Center

FSA Office

1225 Washington Blvd., Ste. 2
Newcastle, WY 82701

Phone: 307-746-2701 ext. 2
Fax: 855-415-3437

Farm Loan Manager:

Eilish Hanson
307-696-4459
eilish.hanson@usda.gov

County Executive Director:

Sherie Hilgenkamp
sherie.hilgenkamp@usda.gov

Program Technicians:

Jennifer Jones
jennifer.jones4@usda.gov

Kayla Pederson
kayla.pederson@usda.gov

FSA County Committee:

Randy Oleson, Chairman
John Riesland, Vice Chairman
Harry Tavegia, Member

NRCS Office

1225 Washington Blvd., Ste. 3
Newcastle, WY 82701

Phone: 307-746-3264
Fax: 866-574-1366

District Conservationist:

Paul Eitel
paul.eitel@usda.gov

Acting District Conservationist:

John "Morgan" Elsom
john.elsom@usda.gov

NWTF Co-Operative Forester:

Austin Sommerville austin.sommerville@usda.gov

WCNRD Manager:

Caleb Carter
ccarter.wcnrd@gmail.com

WCNRD Board:

David Tysdal, Chairman, Rural Supervisor
Tucker Hamilton, Vice Chairman, Rural Supervisor
Emily Hartinger, Secretary/Treasurer, Rural Supervisor
Gene Norman, Urban Supervisor
Tom Streeter, At-Large Supervisor

Next County Committee Meeting:
December 11, 2023 at 1pm

WCNRD Board Meetings are held 3pm the second
Tuesday of the month at the Weston County USDA
Service Center