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## A Message from the Weston County Executive Director



As we approach the end of 2023, we are still going strong. Recently, the USDA shared news about starting payments for the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) and, due to the one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, the enrollment process for the 2024 Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC) safety net programs has begun and we also opened the availability of Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) and Loan Deficiency Program (LDP) for 2024.

We have important deadlines coming up for various programs, including disaster relief for the 2023 losses. Take a look at the list below to see if any of these deadlines apply to you. Reach out to us as soon as possible to set up an appointment and complete any necessary paperwork, if you haven't already done so.

And, for some holiday cheer: What do you call an elf who won the lottery? Someone welfy.

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

We wish you all the best as we move into 2024.

*Sherie Hilgenkamp*  
*Weston County Executive Director*

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### UPCOMING DEADLINES & IMPORTANT DATES

- **December 31, 2023:** FSA deadline for distressed farm loan borrowers to request assistance under Inflation Reduction Act Section 22006 provisions.
- **January 1, 2024:** USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday.
- **January 2, 2024:** FSA deadline to file an initial report of honey bee colony inventory.
- **January 15, 2024:** USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday.

- **January 30, 2024:** FSA application deadline to apply for Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) benefits for 2023 losses.
- **January 31, 2024:** FSA final LDP availability date for 2023 Wool, Mohair, and Unshorn Pelts.
- **January 31, 2024:** FSA application deadline to apply for Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program benefits for 2023 expenses.
- **February 2, 2024:** NRCS application deadline to apply to the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
- **February 2, 2024:** NRCS application deadline to apply to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP).
- **February 19, 2024:** USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday.
- **February 29, 2024:** FSA application deadline to apply for Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) benefits for 2023 losses.
- **March 4, 2024:** WCNRD application deadline to apply for Conservation Projects Cost-Share Program.

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.

**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.

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## Weston County Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announces the Weston County Committee Election is over and Harry Tavegia of Osage was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) #1. Harry will take office in January 2024 and will be joining the existing committee.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, which are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters elected by local producers.

County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members serve local producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure that underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers, such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) or contact the Weston County FSA Office at 307-746-2701 extension 2.

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## 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.

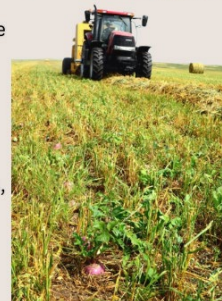
Call or stop in our office for more information, or download an application at [www.westoncountynrd.org/conservation-cost-share/](http://www.westoncountynrd.org/conservation-cost-share/)



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/](http://westoncountynrd.org/conservation-cost-share/).

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## USDA Makes Producer-Friendly Change to 2023 Notice of Loss Requirements for Two Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived certain notice of loss requirements for 2023 for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP) and [Livestock Indemnity](#)

[Program](#) (LIP). In an effort to streamline assistance to support access to critical 2023 natural disaster recovery assistance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is waiving the requirement to submit ELAP or LIP notices of loss within a pre-determined number of days for 2023. Instead, producers have the flexibility to submit 2023 notices of loss as soon as possible, once losses are realized, following a natural disaster event or no later than the established annual program application for payment deadlines for each program. FSA county committees are also being asked to re-evaluate 2023 ELAP and LIP late-filed notices of loss to determine if the waiver applies.

### **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish**

ELAP provides recovery assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish losses due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP covers grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres. ELAP also covers certain mortality losses for livestock including honeybees and farm-raised fish as well as honeybee hive losses. ELAP is designed to address losses not covered by other FSA disaster assistance programs.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for ELAP to file a notice of loss with FSA within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent for livestock and farm-raised fish and 15 calendar days for honeybees. Under this waiver, notices of loss are to be completed by the eligible producer and submitted to FSA no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred. Therefore, producers who incurred ELAP-eligible losses in 2023, will need to submit a notice of loss by Jan. 30, 2024.

### **Livestock Indemnity Program**

LIP provides disaster recovery assistance to livestock owners and contract growers who experience livestock deaths, in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. LIP also helps livestock owners who must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from certain loss conditions.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for LIP to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent. Under this waiver, producers are still required to complete and submit the notice of loss to FSA no later than the annual program payment application date, which is 60 calendar days following the program year in which the loss occurred. The LIP payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year.

### **2023 Disapproved Applications**

FSA county committees will review all notices of loss for both ELAP and LIP that were previously disapproved for the 2023 program year due to late filing and re-evaluate them to determine if the waiver applies. To receive ELAP and LIP benefits, producers will still need to file an application for payment by the established program deadline for the 2023 program year. Producers who are unsure about the status of their notice of loss or application for payment, should contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible.

### **Supporting Documentation**

Accurate records and loss documentation are critical following disaster events and are required when filing notices of loss with FSA. Acceptable loss documentation includes:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented, if possible, by photographs or video records of ownership and losses.
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type, and weight - important to document prior to disposal.
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition.
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition.
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal.
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.
- Number of gallons of water transported to livestock due to water shortages.

### More Information

The improvements to ELAP and LIP build on others made since 2021. This includes ELAP benefits for above normal costs for hauling feed and water to livestock and transporting livestock to other grazing acres during a qualifying drought. FSA also [expanded eligible livestock](#) under ELAP, LIP, and the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program, and increased the LIP payment rate for beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals less than 250 pounds and most recently beef calves over 800 pounds. Learn about USDA disaster assistance programs on [farmers.gov](#).

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine [disaster protection and recovery](#) program or loan options. For more information about FSA programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## Assistance for Distressed Farm Loan Program Borrowers

The Inflation Reduction Act provided \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct and guaranteed loans and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk.

Since October 2022, USDA has provided approximately \$1.5 billion in immediate assistance to more than 25,000 financially distressed direct and guaranteed FSA loan borrowers.

FSA is currently accepting and reviewing individual requests for assistance from borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their direct FSA loans and those who missed a recent installment or who are unable to make their next scheduled installment.

FSA direct loan borrowers with qualifying farm loans who are unable to pay their upcoming installments or have already missed a recent installment payment can request a cash flow analysis from FSA using a recent balance sheet and operating plan to determine their eligibility. This assistance is currently limited to installments due Aug. 1, 2022, through Jan. 15, 2024.

Assistance is also available for borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures between Feb. 28, 2020, through Oct. 18, 2022, to avoid delinquency on their loans, such as monetizing long term or essential assets, incurring additional non-FSA debt, or deferring other essential payment, resulting in reduced farm and household viability.

All requests for assistance must be received by **Dec. 31, 2023**. For more information, or to submit a request for assistance, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center or visit [farmers.gov/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance](#).

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## FSA Announces Start of Signup for 2024 Ag Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Safety Net Programs



USDA Farm Service Agency has announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the *Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

## 2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

[Read the full news release here.](#)

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact the Weston County FSA Office at 307-746-2701 extension 2. Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment [online with level 2 eAuth](#).

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## Tax Resources for USDA Program Participants

Navigating filing taxes can be challenging, especially if you are new to running a farm business, participating in disaster programs for first time, or trying to forecast the farm's tax bill. Receiving funds from USDA through activities such as a conservation program payment or a disaster program is considered farm income that includes a tax liability for farm businesses. USDA technical assistance is free and creates no tax implications.

At the end of the tax year, USDA issues tax forms 1098 and 1099 forms for farm loans, conservation programs administered by the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service including the Conservation Reserve Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program, crop disaster payments, and the Market Facilitation Program. USDA also issues tax forms for recipients of assistance for distressed borrowers, including through Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act.

If you have received tax forms related to your operation, USDA cannot and does not provide tax advice but wants you to be aware of options that may help manage your tax liability. USDA has partnered with experts to provide resources to help you make the right tax decisions for your operation. Monthly webinars are available for registration and to view on demand at <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/taxes>.

The [Tax Estimator Tool](#) is an interactive spreadsheet that producers can download to estimate tax liability. It is for informational and educational purposes and should not be considered tax or legal advice. Producers may need to work with a tax professional to determine the correct information to be entered in the Tax Estimator Tool.

We encourage you to visit <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/taxes> for more information on how to find and work with a tax preparer as well as instructions on how to request copies of USDA documents and links to other helpful tax resources.

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## 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](mailto:eilish.hanson@usda.gov)

### County Executive Director:

Sherie Hilgenkamp  
[sherie.hilgenkamp@usda.gov](mailto:sherie.hilgenkamp@usda.gov)

### Program Technicians:

Jennifer Jones  
[jennifer.jones4@usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.jones4@usda.gov)

Kayla Pederson  
[kayla.pederson@usda.gov](mailto: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](mailto:paul.eitel@usda.gov)

### Acting District Conservationist:

John "Morgan" Elsom  
[john.elsom@usda.gov](mailto:john.elsom@usda.gov)

### NWTF Co-Operative Forester:

Austin Sommerville [austin.sommerville@usda.gov](mailto:austin.sommerville@usda.gov)

### WCNRD:

Caleb Carter, Manager  
[ccarter.wcnrd@gmail.com](mailto:ccarter.wcnrd@gmail.com)

Erin Darlington-Whitcher, Office Administrator  
[westoncountynrd@gmail.com](mailto:westoncountynrd@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:**  
January 16, 2024 at 10 AM at the Weston County  
USDA Service Center

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