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Montana FSA: August 2015 eNewsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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Emergency Haying and Grazing of CRP Acres Authorized in Nine Montana counties

Producers who wish to hay or graze their CRP contract acres must sign up and be approved in their local FSA office prior to any emergency haying or grazing activities

occurring.

State Committee:

Steve Carney, Chair Floyd Dahlman Kelly Flaherty-Settle Anita Matt Patricia Quisno

Montana USDA Directories:

Online Directory of FSA Offices

PDF of Montana FSA Directory

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Reasonable

Accommodations: People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

Nine Montana counties have been authorized for emergency haying and grazing use of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres due to drought. The following counties approved in July 2015 for emergency CRP grazing and haying: Cascade, Daniels, Glacier, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Pondera, Teton and Toole. The CRP emergency having and grazing authorization for 2015 was effective July 16. Having must be completed by Aug. 31, 2015 and grazing livestock must be removed from the CRP acres by Sept. 30, 2015. Producers who wish to hay or graze their CRP contract acres must sign up and be approved in their local FSA office prior to any emergency having or grazing activities occurring. There is no payment reduction for CRP acres used for having and grazing under these emergency provisions. To take advantage of the emergency having and grazing provisions, authorized producers can use the CRP acreage for their own livestock or may grant another livestock producer use of the CRP acreage. CRP participants can donate but are not allowed to sell the hay. For questions, contact your local FSA office and visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

CRP 1-Year Contract Extensions – Aug. 28 Deadline

Beginning June 22, 2015, certain CRP participants with CRP contracts that are scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2015, may extend all or part of the contract acreage for a 1year period at the same payment rate. The signup period for the 1-year extension ends Aug. 28, 2015. Contracts ineligible to be extended for 1-year are those contracts that will exceed a total of 15 years. Therefore, contracts that were approved for contract lengths of 14 years and 1 month up to 15 years will NOT be eligible for the 1-year extension. Furthermore, continuous CRP contracts are not eligible for the 1-year contract extension; only general signup contract holders are given the opportunity to extend their contracts. The next General CRP Signup begins Dec. 1, 2015.

Four regional Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) Farm Bill Meetings scheduled in September

NAP Meetings in Dillon, Billings, Miles City and Lewistown to Highlight 2014 Farm Bill Improvements and Upcoming 2016 Sales Closing Dates

Four regional producer meetings in Montana will be held in September to highlight important changes to the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill).

The meetings consist of presentations covering FSA's NAP program and the new buy-up coverage provisions. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occurs due to natural disasters. MSU Extension will present an analysis and explanation of the web-based NAP Buy-Up Decision Tool.

Producers are invited to the following public meetings

- Sept. 8: Dillon, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the USDA Conference Room (420 Barrett Street, Dillon)
- Sept. 9: Billings, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Big Horn Resort (1801 Majestic Lane)
- Sept. 10: Miles City, 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Sleep Inn (1006 S. Haynes Ave.)
- Sept. 10: Lewistown, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Yogo Inn (211 East Main Street)

The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP's basic catastrophic coverage to include buy-up coverage levels similar to buy-up provisions offered by crop insurance. Producers may elect additional coverage levels ranging from 50 to 65 percent of production, in five percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers who elect additional coverage must pay a premium in addition to the service fee. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for additional coverage. Beginning, limited resource, and underserved farmers are eligible for a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction.

2016 NAP SALES CLOSING DATES: The NAP sales closing dates for the 2016 crop year are: Sept. 1, 2015 for value-loss crops, Sept. 30, 2015 for annual fall-seeded crops, perennial forage and grazing, mixed forage crops, rye, speltz, triticale, wheat and garlic, Dec. 1, 2015 for honey and March 15, 2016 for all other crops.

For more information about NAP coverage, visit your local FSA office. For online resources, visit Montana FSA at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt, the NAP Page at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap, MSU Extension's Farm Bill website at http://www.montana.edu/farmbill and FSA's national Farm Bill website at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in a meeting should contact Jennifer Cole on 406.587.6786, or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339, and jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov by Sept. 7.

2014 and 2015 ARC-PLC Enrollment Deadline is Sept. 30

Enrollment into the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015 began June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015. For ARC-CO and PLC, the contract enrollment must be completed by those producers with an interest in the base acres of the farm. For ARC-IC farms, the contract enrollment must be completed by producers who have an interest in the planted acres of the covered commodities on the farm. Contract enrollment is a separate process from program election which was completed earlier this year. Contact your local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll your farms into ARC or PLC by the deadline of **Sept. 30, 2015.**

2016 Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy) Deadline is Sept. 30

July 1 to Sept. 30, 2015, dairy farmers can enroll in the <u>Margin Protection Program</u> (MPP) **for coverage in 2016**. The voluntary program provides financial assistance to participating dairy operations when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

Participating dairy producers have the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Participating farmers will remain in the program through 2018 and pay a \$100 administrative fee each year. Producers also have the option of selecting a different coverage level during open enrollment each year. Payments are based on an operation's historical milk production. An operation's historical production will increase by 2.61 percent in 2016 if the operation participated in 2015.

An online resource tool is available to help dairy producers decide which level of coverage will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The enhanced Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine their unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, mobile phone, or tablet, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Dairy operations enrolling in the program must meet conservation compliance provisions. Producers participating in the Livestock Gross Margin insurance program may register for MPP but this new margin program will only begin once their livestock dairy insurance coverage has ended. Producers must also submit form CCC-782 for 2016, confirming their MPP coverage level selection, to the local FSA office. If electing higher coverage for 2016, dairy producers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment or pay a minimum of 25 percent of the premium by Feb. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about MPP.

Marketing Assistance Loans – Lien Processing

FSA's lien process for Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) has recently changed in Montana resulting in the loan processing taking longer than it has in previous years. The turnaround time is approximately 10 days to get the Effective Financing Statement (EFS) filed and the loan disbursed. The UCC-1 application is filed within 24 hours. If you're interested in a MAL, please contact your local FSA office right away.

CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP) – Sept. 30th Deadline

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized approximately \$4.1 million in Montana for the transition of expiring CRP land from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a beginning, veteran or underserved farmer or rancher to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production. The veteran must also be a beginning farmer or rancher. TIP provides annual rental payments for up to two additional years after the date of the expiration of the CRP contract, provided the transition is not to a family member. Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis until funds are expended. Montana has approximately \$1.5 million remaining as of August 2015. Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers

and ranchers and CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of a CRP contract. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2016, the land may be enrolled in TIP from Oct. 1, 2015, through Sept. 30, 2016. Please contact your local county FSA office for complete program details.

MAL and LDP Policy Changes for Crop Years 2015-2018

The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs), with a few minor policy changes. Among the changes, farmstored MAL collateral transferred to warehouse storage will retain the original loan rate, be allowed to transfer only the outstanding farm-stored quantity with no additional quantity allowed and will no longer require producers to have a paid for measurement service when moving or commingling loan collateral.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2015 MALs and LDPs for wool as well as LDPs for unshorn pelts. MAL and LDP requests for all other eligible commodities will be accepted after harvest. FSA continues to accept MAL and LDP requests for 2014 crops with upcoming deadlines.

Before MAL repayments and LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution. Additionally, form CCC-902 and CCC-901 must be submitted for the 2014 crop year, if applicable. To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements. Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program Available in 15 Montana Counties

The 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) triggered eligibility in 15 Montana counties based on the U.S. Drought Monitor report released on July 9, 2015. LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffered grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or fire on federally managed land. Eligible producers must own or lease grazing land physically located in a county affected by a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county.

As of Aug. 6, 2015, the following 15 Montana counties have met the extreme drought (D3) criteria; qualifying producers with land in these counties will be eligible for four monthly payments: Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders and Silver Bow. Montana livestock producers who

own or lease grazing land or pastureland physically located in these 15 counties should contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to begin the enrollment process. Producers must complete an application and provide supporting documentation for 2015 losses by **Feb. 1, 2016.**

LFP provided almost \$60 million in disaster relief to more than 4,100 Montana livestock producers for the 2012 and 2013 crop years.

For more information, contact your local FSA office and visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Ongoing Notice of Loss Filing Requirements

NAP - Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, documents a producer's loss or damage to a crop or commodity due to an eligible cause of loss, as well as failed acreage and prevented planting. A CCC-576, Notice of Loss must be provided for prevented planting claims, within 15 calendar days after the final planting date established for the crop, and for low yield claims, the earlier of:

- 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent
- 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date established for the crop.

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office by the dates previously mentioned. An acreage report must be on file prior to the Notice of Loss being filed.

ELAP - Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program:

• Submit Notice of Loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1 after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred.

LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program:

Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

TAP - Tree Assistance Program:

 Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation is the later of 90 calendar days of the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent

Additional SAFE Acreage Available through CRP Continuous Signup

Montana received an additional 7,500 acres for enrollment in both the Prairie Pothole and Pheasants Winter Cover projects through the CRP State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) initiative. These enrollment opportunities through SAFE are offered on a continuous, non-competitive, first-come, first-serve basis.

The **Prairie Pothole-Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement SAFE area** includes the following counties: Blaine, Cascade, Chouteau, Daniels, Glacier, Hill, Liberty, Phillips, Pondera, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Teton, Toole and Valley. The purpose of this SAFE initiative is to expand habitats for

ground nesting ducks and other upland game bird species. The initiative also enhances or augments existing habitats by providing key nesting cover adjacent to duck brood water.

The **Pheasants Winter Cover Enhancement SAFE area** includes the following counties: Daniels, Dawson, McCone, Richland, Roosevelt, Sheridan and Valley. The purpose of this SAFE initiative is to provide and enhance habitat for ring-necked pheasants and other upland birds near existing permanent winter cover. It also expands habitat for ring-necked pheasants and other upland birds by converting eligible croplands to grassy cover and to improve water quality and reduce soil erosion within the project area.

Montana also has the **Montana Sagebrush-Grassland Restoration Area** including Beaverhead, Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Fallon, Fergus, Garfield, Golden Valley, Madison, Musselshell, Petroleum, Powder River, Rosebud and Treasure counties. Currently there are 1,600 acres available for enrollment. The purpose of this SAFE initiative is to improve habitat for sage grouse and other sagebrush obligate through a conservation practice to establish permanent native grasses that include Big Sagebrush.

Other CRP continuous sign-up initiatives include the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI), the Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative, and Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds Initiative.

Conservation Incentives for Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands

USDA recently announced conservation incentives for working grass, range and pasture lands as part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). FSA will accept applications on an ongoing basis beginning Sept. 1, 2015, with those applications scored against published ranking criteria, and approved based on the competiveness of the offer. The end of the first ranking period will be **Nov. 20, 2015.** Additional details about this program will be announced this month.

CRP Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds Initiative

Montana has 10,000 acres available to eligible offers on a first-come, first-serve basis; Pivot corners can be installed under the initiative

The Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds Initiative is a practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) designed to convert marginally productive cropland along the borders of agricultural fields into grass buffers to create more habitats for upland birds. The continuous signup practice allows producers to create habitat for upland and grassland dependent birds. Upland birds include the northern bobwhite quail, pheasant, prairie chicken, mourning dove, wild turkey, finches, sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, meadowlark, bobolinks and other species.

In January 2015, USDA revised policy to now allow producers to enroll pivot corners under this initiative. Montana has 10,000 acres that may be enrolled under this practice. The acres are available to eligible producers on a first-come, first-serve basis through 10 or 15-year contracts. This practice may be applied to pivot corners that meet the provisions of eligible land. The pivot corners must be installed around a cropped field. A connecting boundary is no longer required. There are no minimum or maximum size requirements. Participants are eligible for annual rental payments, a signing incentive payment equal to \$150 per acre, cost-share for up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover and a practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of the total eligible cost to establish the practice.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans

Farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by **Sept. 30, 2015**, to take advantage of the funding available this fiscal year. Eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay. New farmers and ranchers, military veterans, and underserved farmers and ranchers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers and ranchers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and women. For more information about farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Emergency Loans – Secretarial Disaster Designations in Montana

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas (See Map Below of 2014 and 2015 Montana Designations by County). Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

- Cumulative Disaster Designation Map for 2014
- Cumulative Disaster Designation Map for 2015

For questions about eligibility and/or to apply for an Emergency Loan, contact your local FSA office to schedule an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council's 4th Annual Conference in Polson Aug. 20-21

The Rocky Mountain Intertribal Agriculture Council Technical Assistance Program will host the 4th Annual conference, Aug. 20-21, 2015, at the KwaTaqNuk Resort in Polson, Montana. Several key speakers will provide information on a variety of subjects including: Farm Bill Update/USDA Programs – FSA and NRCS, Farm to School, Montana Department of Veterinary Services, Small Irrigation Systems and Montana Department of Agriculture. Reservations can be made at local hotels: the KwaTaqNuk Resort (Best Western), (406) 883-3636, the Port Polson Inn 406-883-5385, Flathead Lake Inn (406) 883-6266 and the Bayview Inn (406) 883-3120. For more information, contact Anita Matt at (406) 644-3321 or anita@indianaglink.com.

Montana FSA: Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

DEADLINE POSTER: A printable pdf version of these deadlines is available <u>HERE</u> and on the Montana FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

SIGNUP PERIODS:

- June 15 to Sept. 30: 2014 & 2015 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment Period
- June 22 to Aug. 28: Request one-year extension for CRP contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015
- June 30 to Sept. 4: 2015 BCAP Application Period for eligible material owners to harvest and deliver Biomass
- **July 1 to Sept. 30:** Registration/Coverage Election Period for 2016 Margin Protection Program Dairy (MPP-Dairy)
- Dec 1, 2015 to Feb. 26, 2016: CRP General Signup Period

DATES AND DEADLINES:

- Aug. 28: Deadline to request a one-year extension for CRP contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015
- Sept. 1: 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Value-Loss Crops
- Sept 4: 2015 BCAP Application Deadline for Eligible Material Owners to Submit BCAP-11s
- Sept. 30: 2014 and 2015 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment Deadline
- Sept. 30: Deadline for 2014 Certification of Benchmark and Actual Year Yields for ARC-IC Farms
- **Sept. 30:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic
- **Sept. 30:** Last day of the Registration/Coverage Election Period for 2016 MPP-Dairy Program
- **Nov. 2:** 2015 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline
- Nov. 9: County Committee Election Ballots will be Mailed to Eligible Voters
- Nov. 12: All Hay Bales Must be Removed from CRP
- Nov. 16: 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland & Forage (PRF) including Native Grass, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter – HRW), and all other Fall-Seeded Small Grains
- **Nov. 16:** Deadline for 2015 NAP Production Reports for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic
- Dec. 1: 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Honey Producers
- **Dec. 1:** CRP General Signup Begins
- Dec. 7: Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to FSA at the local USDA Service Center

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