



# Branch County News

## Branch County USDA Service Center

**Branch County FSA**  
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517-278-2725 (phone)  
517-278-5176 (fax)  
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

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

**County Committee**  
Kevin Miller  
Wayne Barnes  
Leon Knirk  
Jill Bucklin

**Staff**  
Shelly Dickinson, PT  
Kelly Gruner, PT  
Jessica Mobley, PT  
Linda Snyder, PT  
Hope Gentile, CED



**ATTENTION:**  
This is the last newsletter for this year. Please feel free to contact the office if you have questions, and continue to look for news releases published in local publications for updated information regarding FSA programs.



The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is the USDA's largest private-lands voluntary conservation program. CRP helps agricultural producers convert environmentally sensitive agricultural land to achieve conservation benefits. Certain practices are available on a continuous basis, however, it has been 5 years since the last competitive general CRP signup took place.

**Producers can offer land for CRP general signup August 2 through August 27, 2010.**

To be eligible for CRP, the producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to the close of the CRP signup, August 27, 2010. Land must be cropland which has been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity four of the six crop years from 2002- 2007, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Alfalfa and other multiyear grasses and legumes grown in a rotation not to exceed 12 years may be eligible for this year.

- Benefits to CRP include:
- improved and increased wildlife habitat
  - improved water quality

- increased soil quality
- reduce soil erosion
- increase air quality

In return for planting long-term resource conserving covers, FSA provides CRP participants annual rental payments, maintenance payments, cost-share and technical assistance.

**Don't miss this opportunity!  
Contact Shelly or Linda and make your appointment today!**



## Welcome

I am pleased to introduce Shelly Dickinson. Shelly is a Hillsdale County native and a graduate of MSU. Shelly comes to us from the Gratiot County FSA office. She will be handling the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

**When you stop by the office, please introduce yourself and welcome her!**

**APPOINTMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED...your time is valuable, workload is high, staff is limited, so please call ahead! We really appreciate it.**

## **-Attention Landowners-**

FSA is finding that many of you are transferring your property into trusts.

Regulations require FSA to record revisions when land changes hands, even if it's from an individual to his or her trust. FSA requires proof of ownership to update farm records. This ensures that FSA program contracts list the correct landowner.

*If you're to the point of recording deeds in your trust's name, contact FSA immediately.*

Program payments may be delayed if information is not kept current.

## **Wetland Compliance**

If you plan on clearing, draining, or dredging land, or perform tile maintenance of any kind, you need to file an AD-1026 with our office before you begin. Failure to do so could result in the loss of USDA benefits.



## **NAP Coverage**

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) was designed to reduce financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop by providing coverage equivalent to catastrophic (CAT) insurance. Statute limits NAP to each commercial crop or agricultural commodity, except livestock, for which CAT is not available.

### **The application deadline date for the 2011 NAP coverage for small grains, fall speltz and forage crops is September 30, 2010.**

Producers who already have coverage on 2010 NAP crops may choose to continue coverage on the same crop or crops for 2011, if the applicable service fee is submitted by the application closing date. A new CCC-471, application for coverage is not required to be signed when applying for continuous coverage of the same crop or crops.

Producers who choose to add a new crop(s) or delete a crop(s) from previous year's coverage or changing crop shares must file a new CCC-471 with signatures and pay the applicable service fee.

Producers with NAP coverage must remember to complete the following to qualify for benefits:

- Timely file acreage reports and keep track of harvested production using acceptable methods. For example, bale weights or other means of determining quantities of hay are required.
- File a "Notice of Loss" within 15 days of when a loss is apparent, due to drought, hail, etc.

For more information on NAP coverage please contact Linda.

## **SURE SIGNUP – DEADLINE (9/30/10) ANNOUNCED**

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster that incurred in the crop years 2008 through September 30, 2011. To be eligible for SURE payments, a producer is required to obtain crop insurance on all crops in all counties or, if crop insurance is not available, to participate in the Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) except for grazed acreage. However, crop insurance or NAP coverage is no longer required for crops that are not of economic significance or those where the administrative fee required to buy NAP coverage exceeds 10% of the value of the coverage. Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher are exempt from the risk management purchase requirement.

The following are the conditions that trigger SURE payments:

- At least one crop of economic significance must suffer a 10% production loss due to an eligible disaster condition. A crop of economic significance is a crop that has contributed or would have contributed at least 5% or more of the total expected revenue from all crops on the farm;
- Producers in counties declared disaster counties by the Secretary of Agriculture, or in contiguous counties, or those who show proof of an individual loss of at least 50% are eligible to receive SURE payments for crop production or quality losses. Losses are measured with consideration to the whole-farm revenue, which includes crop insurance indemnities and commodity program payments, so that producers are not paid more than once for the same loss.

Branch County **did** have a Secretarial Disaster declaration for 2008; therefore, producers who obtained crop insurance or NAP coverage on all crops of economic significance will be eligible to apply for SURE. Contact Jessica for an appointment today.

**The deadline to apply is  
September 30, 2010.**



## Wind Turbines

There are many questions from owners who could potentially have wind turbines on their land. FSA regulations call for an approval process which allows wind turbines on land under CRP contract. However, several steps must be taken to receive approval. 1) A request must be placed with the FSA office. 2) FSA will perform an environmental review, which requires approval by a grading authority. 3) If the environmental review is confirmed, the COC can authorize the installation of the turbine.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Access roads, transformers, substations, and other ancillary equipment will *not* be allowed on CRP contract acreage. By rule, this land is split from the contract and terminated, with the contract holder repaying all previous payments plus interest plus liquidated damages. Also, if the construction of the turbine causes damage to the CRP cover that is to remain under contract, the cover must be reseeded at the contract holder's expense.

Contact FSA with questions regarding the construction of turbines on land enrolled in FSA programs.

### Civil Rights - Discrimination Process

As a participant or applicant for programs activities operated or sponsored by USDA you have a right to be treated fairly. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, or marital or familial status, you may file a discrimination complaint.

The complaint should be filed with the USDA Office of Civil Rights within 180 days of the date you became aware of the alleged discrimination. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD), USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Save the Date!

**What:** *Financial Benefits of Conservation Easements*

**When:** Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm

**Where:** Coldwater Township Hall,  
319 Sprague Road Coldwater

**Cost:** FREE!

**Who should attend?** Landowners, financial planners, accountants, attorneys, appraisers, foresters, developers, and others interested in the benefits of private land conservation.

**Sponsors:** Branch and Calhoun Conservation Districts, SWMLC, Potawatomi RC&D, USDA-FSA and the I69 Heritage Route

**What:** *Agricultural Farm Field Day*

**When:** September 8<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00-9:00pm

**Where:** Henri Miller Farm  
Saint Joseph County

RUP Credits Pending

**Sponsors:** Branch and Saint Joseph County Conservation Districts, MSUE, Potawatomi RC&D, SWMLC, USDA-FSA, & MAEAP

### Acreage Spot Check Determinations and Notification

Each year the Farm Service Agency completes spot checks of acreage reports. Acreage reports are an integral part of farm program participation. Acreage spot checks are completed to ensure accurate acreage reports are used in farm program computations.

FSA will conduct spot checks on a selected number of farms in each state. All acreage determinations will be completed using the FSA Geographic Information System official acreages.

After farms are spot checked, a Notice of Determined Acreage will be sent to the farm operator. Producer notifications will be issued by FSA as spot checks are completed. Questions concerning determined acres should be directed to your local FSA office for further explanation.

## Successor-In-Interest

Many FSA programs will allow payments to be made to heirs or successors when a program participant passes away. Additionally, contracts in programs such as CRP must be revised to reflect the successor(s) to a deceased participant's interest.

In the event of an FSA program participant's death, it is important that FSA be notified. Entities and joint operations that participate in FSA programs also need to notify FSA if a shareholder or member passes away.

FSA benefits are reported to IRS and maintaining current, accurate records about participants is vital to ensuring that those payments are reported correctly.



### Commodity Loans

Branch County Producers are reminded that commodity loans are available for 2010 corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, barley, and grain sorghum at the following loan rates:

Corn	\$1.90
Soybeans	\$5.02
Hard Red Wheat	\$2.85
Soft Red Wheat	\$1.84
White Wheat	\$2.04
Oats	\$1.38
Barley	\$1.82
Grain Sorghum	\$3.33

### Fraud Leads to Disqualification

Producers found to have committed crop insurance fraud are ineligible for a number of programs administered by FSA and CCC. Any person found to have committed fraud will receive a notice and will have an opportunity for a hearing on the record. The person may be disqualified from receiving any benefits under a number of programs for a period of up to 5 years. Other sanctions may also apply.

### FARM LOANS

Interested in getting a FARM LOAN? Call Russ Lafollette at 517-849-9890, for information on the following types:

- \*Beginning & Limited Resource Farmers
- \*Rural Youth Loans
- \*FSA Farm Loans
- \*Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

### Dates to Remember

August 27	Final date to apply for CRP General Sign-up 39
September 1	COC meeting
September 6	Office Closed for Labor Day
September 8	Agriculture Farm Field Day
September 20	Financial Benefits of Conservation Easements
September 30	NAP Sales Closing Date for Fall Crops
September 30	Final date to apply for SURE
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

Visit our Web site at:  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/mi](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mi)

### Farm Safety

Summer is an exciting and hectic time on Branch County farms. **Be careful.** Branch County FSA employees care about our customers.

Remember to do all your safety checks prior to operating machinery or climbing into a grain bin!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information ( Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of Discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.