



January 2008

FSA UPDATES

Chittenden/Washington
County
USDA Service Center

Chittenden/Washington County FSA

802 865-7895 x4
800 910-2035 x4 (VT only)
802 865-7947 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/VT

Hours

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

County Committee

Donald Pouliot LAA-1
Claude Lapierre LAA-2
Deborah Conant LAA-3
Elwin Neill, Jr. LAA-4
Michelle Gardner LAA-5

Upcoming County Committee Meeting

Dates

February 27, 2008
March 28, 2008
April 21, 2008

Staff

Lawrence Parker x102
Eileen Powers x106
Pearl Wells x100
Bradford Parker x103

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Caroline Alves x203
Tate Jeffrey x119
Michel Lapointe x118
Danny Peet x202
Norman Smith x117

Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District

Jessica Andreoletti x104
Anna Farmer x204



County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Donald Pouliot! Don was elected to represent farmers from Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Milton, S Burlington, Westford and Winooski on the county committee. Don was elected to his first term replacing long serving member John Rowley, Jr. We'd like to thank John for his 10 years of service. The *election results* for Local Administrative Area # 1 are:

Donald Pouliot — Elected to the county committee (COC),
Richard Parizo — 1st alternate to COC.

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

The committee members held their organizational meeting on January 16th. Deb Conant was reelected COC Chair and Claude Lapierre was reelected vice-chair.

Emergency Loans Available

Farmers in a both Chittenden and Washington counties who suffered significant damage due to severe weather in 2007 may be eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency. These loans carry an interest rate of 3.75 percent.

- **Production Losses.** Eligible farmers can also use emergency loan funds to recover a portion of losses on growing crops that were destroyed.
- **Physical Losses.** Eligible farmers can use emergency loan funds to repair or rebuild essential farm buildings, clean debris or prepare land for replanting, and to replace live stock, supplies and harvested crops, on hand or in storage, that were lost.

Foreign Investors Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA.

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.

Power of Attorney

If you're too busy getting work done around the farm to come into your local FSA office to conduct business and complete your paperwork, here's a solution. Retain an agent to act on your behalf for programs and transactions authorized under the 2002 Farm Bill and most other FSA administered programs. This can be done by completing an FSA-211, Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or on-line at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Forms obtained and completed outside USDA Service Center offices must be notarized. To find out more, call the office.

Controlled Substance

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.



Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office staff if their account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases their bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

Spousal Signatures

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager or Officer for more details and assistance in applying.

Applications for FSA Loans

Farmers and ranchers who intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your loan is processed and approved as early as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Failure to

apply early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact your local FSA farm loan manager or officer for more details and assistance in applying.

Youth Loans

Remember FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact your local FSA office for more details

Customer Statement

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to gather financial records and start thinking about filling out a 1040. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their Customer Statement. The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that's at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It allows USDA customers to view their participation, application and payment status in various commodity and conservation programs; information on farm loans; and conservation plan and land unit information.

Ag Census Forms Due Feb 4th

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) began distribution of the 2007 Census of Agriculture last month and completed forms are due by **February 4, 2008**. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online via a secure web site at <http://agcensus.usda.gov/>.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches



and the people who operate them. According to NASS, *the Census of Agriculture provides information that is not available elsewhere*. The last Ag Census was conducted in 2002.

The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

Policy-makers use Census data for decisions concerning agricultural and rural programs. Community planners use Census information to target delivery of local services. Companies rely on Census data when determining where to locate their operations. And farmers themselves look at Census data when deciding to make changes in their production strategies.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree. Generally, program participants have four choices – an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation, appeal to State Committee and appeal to the USDA National Appeal Division (NAD).

Civil Rights Complaint Process

Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.

Payment Limitation/Eligibility

USDA payments and benefits are subject to producer eligibility and limitation provisions as defined by law. Documents and forms to determine eligibility and limitations once completed are reviewed on an annual basis. It is the producer's responsibility to report changes in the farming operation which may affect payment eligibility and payment limita-

tions. The following payment limitations apply to DCP for each contract year under the current Farm Bill: For all covered commodities, except peanuts: \$40,000 for direct payments and \$65,000 for counter-cyclical payments. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program has a \$450,000 payment limitation total for fiscal years 2002 – 2007. The Conservation Reserve Program's annual limit is \$50,000 per person. Additional payment limitations apply to other programs. Entities such as corporations, limited partnerships, trusts and estates are required to provide names, addresses, and ID numbers of their members.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement (CREP) Weed Control

Participants are reminded that as part of your agreement to participate in CREP, you are required to control the growth of noxious weeds on the CREP acres. The conservation plan for your CREP acres outlines specific instructions on the control of weeds.

Please remember that you are part of the larger agriculture community and any lack of control on your part may have an adverse impact on your neighbor(s). Please make an effort to be that good neighbor and control your weeds.

Attention Producers, Landowners

Do you intend to clear timber areas to create or to expand existing crop areas?

- Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field?
- Are there any areas on your farm(s) that you are considering cropping that have not been cropped in recent years?
- Is there a wet spot in a field that you want to drain to make cropping easier?
- Are you disturbing a wildlife habitat area of any type?
- Are you doing anything different on your farm(s) this year?

These are Highly Erodible and Wetlands provision questions that need to be considered each year by producers to assure that they may remain eligible for USDA benefits. If



you have any question or concern that something you plan to do on your farm could jeopardize your eligibility for benefits, please contact your NRCS representative before you begin work.

Selected Interest Rates for January 2008	
Farm Operating - Direct	4.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct	5.125%
Limited Resource - Farm Operating	5.00%
Limited Resource - Farm Ownership	5.00%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment Beginning Farmer or Rancher	4.00%
Emergency	3.75%
Farm Storage Facility	3.625%

Dates to Remember	
Feb 4	Ag Census Due
Feb 18	Washington's Birthday Office Closed
Feb 27	COC meeting

Visit our Web site at
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/VT>

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