



**Skagit Island-San Juan County
Farm Service Agency
October, 2010**

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Mount Vernon, WA 98273
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<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

Office Hours:
8:00 am to 4:30 pm

**Skagit-Island-San Juan Area
Committee:**

Kris Hansen
Todd Gordon
M. R. Buffum
Leonard Engle
Mark Wesen

Committee Meeting Date:
Tuesday of the 3rd full week of the
month (January 19th, 2010)

Office Staff:
Sandra Starbuck,
County Executive Director
~Ellen Medeiros, Program Tech
~Susan Shackelford, Program Tech
~Jennifer Beam, Program Tech
~Mark Turner, Farm Loan Manager,
FSA Lynden, WA (360) 354-5658

*"The U.S. Constitution doesn't
guarantee happiness, only the
pursuit of it. You have to catch
up with it yourself."
~ Benjamin Franklin*

County FSA Committee Elections

Ballots soon will be mailed for the 2010 FSA Committee elections. This year the election will be held in Local Administrative Area (LAA) 3. LAA3 is located in east Skagit County, and includes all land east of I-5, except the portion from I-5 east on Hickox Road, then south on Stackpole Road and continuing south on Bulson Road, to Starbird Road. Ernesto Roque was nominated to be on the ballot. Ernesto has farmed here since the early 80's, arriving from the Philippines. He has experience raising beef and other livestock, feeds and crops. Mr. Roque is an engineer by profession and involved in various undertakings, civic and otherwise in the US and Westward.

The deadline for returning your ballot or to have it postmarked is December 6, 2010. If you receive a ballot in error or if you should have received one and didn't, be sure to call our office.

2010 Fall Payment Cycle

Payments for the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) annual rental payments have been processed. There were a few payments that were not processed in the initial cycles and our office is working diligently with the State Office to take care of these errors. Some of the errors were due to software glitches, but a few others were caused by producers not having filed the proper paperwork, or not having filed it timely. It is extremely important that you keep us informed of any changes in your banking information. Additionally, be sure to inform us of any changes in your farming operation or entity members. If you did not receive a payment that you believe you should have received, call our office.

Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) News and Deadlines

November 20, 2010, is the deadline to purchase NAP coverage on perennial crops, including berries, fruit trees, asparagus, and also honey. Since November 20 falls on a Saturday, you will have until November 22, this year only. Spring planted crops have a deadline of **March 15, 2011**. There are no provisions which allow us to accept any late applications, so be sure to purchase your coverage by the deadlines for the crops.



Changes in Notice of Loss procedure

The National Office has issued a clarification with regards to filing a Notice of Loss on any crops. The clarification states that, during the growing season, any time there is a weather condition that you believe could adversely affect your crop, you need to file a notice of loss. You should file a notice of loss for **EACH weather related condition as applicable throughout the growing season** for that crop. The additional clarification states that a Notice of Loss must be filed by the EARLIER of the following:



- * 15 calendar days after the damaging weather or disaster occurrence or date damage to the specific crop acreage is apparent to the producer for low yield claims
- * 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.



This is going to affect all crops, but especially seed producers who may not know until sometime after harvest, that their crop did not meet the germination requirements of their contract, even though the yield may have been unaffected. Please be aware that the new clarification states you **MUST** file the Notice of Loss any time you believe a weather event has potentially impacted your crop. It will likely become common that you will have multiple Notices of Loss for the same crop.

Disaster Programs and Risk Management Requirements

To be eligible for any current disaster-type programs, producers must manage their risk. This means they must purchase, at minimum, Catastrophic Level (CAT) insurance for all insurable crops, and/or NAP coverage for all un-insurable crops produced. Federal Crop Insurance is available from private insurance agents – you can use the Agent Locator Tool located at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html> There are different disaster programs and we will notify you of any that apply in our area, when available.

Dates and Deadlines

Thursday, November 11 – Veteran's Day, Office Closed
Monday, November 22 – Final date to purchase 2011 NAP for fruit trees, berries, perennials and honey
Thursday, November 25 – Thanksgiving, Office Closed
Monday, December 6- Final date to return or mail Ballot for County Committee Election

Paper-Check Conversion – Over the Counter

In the upcoming months, FSA/CCC will move toward an electronic method to process incoming checks, allowing us to process collections faster. When you present checks either in person or through the mail, the checks will be converted into an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The funds will be debited from your account, usually within 24 hours of receipt. Please visit the following U.S. Department of Treasury website for details.

<https://www.pccotc.gov/pccotc/pcc/usingpcc/Legal%20Notices/legalnotices.htm>

Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)

The Secretary of Agriculture announced the resumption of the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) and the publication of the final rules of the program. The BCAP final regulation as published reflects policies developed as a result of more than 24,000 comments received on previous Federal Register notices and a proposed rule, and knowledge gained by implementing a portion of the program in 2009.

BCAP uses a dual approach to support the production of renewable energy. First, BCAP provides assistance for the establishment and production of eligible renewable biomass crops within specified project areas. Producers in those areas who enter into BCAP contracts may receive payments of up to 75 percent of the cost of establishing eligible perennial crops. Further, they can receive payments for up to five years for annual or non-woody perennial crops and up to 15 years for woody perennial crops. FSA will be accepting project area proposals and, after project area proposals have been approved, eligible producers may participate by enrolling at their FSA county office.

In addition, BCAP also assists agricultural and forest landowners and operators by providing matching payments for the transportation of certain eligible materials that are sold to qualified biomass conversion facilities. The facilities convert the materials into heat, power, bio-based products or advanced biofuels. We will be providing more information on BCAP as soon as the program kicks back into gear.

Popular Program Offers New Options – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP)

Private landowners have more flexibility to enhance salmon habitat as a result of recent additions to the program. CREP now offers additional conservation practices and provides for additional lands to be eligible. Signup for this enhanced CREP program is on a continuous basis.

CREP is a national voluntary program that in Washington improves habitat and water quality in salmon streams. Land enrolled in 10-15 year CREP contracts is removed from agricultural production and grazing. In return, producers receive annual rental payments, contract signing incentives and financial incentives of nearly 100 percent reimbursement for creating new wildlife habitat. Approved conservation practices can include livestock fencing and water quality improvements.

In addition to traditional riparian buffers, participants can now use 15-foot hedgerow buffers along smaller water courses, upstream grass filter strips, and wetland enhancements connected to salmon streams. In addition, orchards, vineyards and berry farms are now eligible for all CREP practices.

All CREP practices must be established according to USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) technical standards and specifications. NRCS and local conservation districts provide technical assistance on the design and installation of the practices.

Cropland eligible for CREP must have a history of being planted for at least four years between 1996 and 2001. Land, except wetlands, must be adjacent to eligible streams. In Washington, there are 10,000 miles of designated streams where riparian habitat is a significant limiting factor for salmon and steelhead species. Non-cropland must be eligible to be classified as "marginal pasture land" along salmon-bearing streams. Landowners may sign up for CREP with our office at any time.

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