

July 21, 2008

Issue No. 2



# Hillsdale County FSA News

## Hillsdale County USDA Service Center

### Hillsdale FSA

588 Olds St. Bldg 2  
Jonesville, MI 49250  
Phone 517 849-9890 X 2  
FAX 517 849-9895

### Hours

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

### County Committee

Tom Schroeder, Chairman  
Sheryl Kies, Vice-Chair  
David Godfrey, Member

### Commodity Staff

Nina Draper, CRP  
Cindy Gabbard, Price Sup  
Angela Lanus, Crop Rept  
Pattie Nichols, Adm  
Jamie Horeni, DCP.  
Denise Wilt, Fm Records  
Judy Hostetler, CED

### Farm Loan Staff

Candice Alexander  
Deb Parkhurst, Fm Loans  
Crystal Hepker, FLO  
Russ LaFollette, Loan Mgr

### Web Sites

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>  
<http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>  
<http://www.usda.gov>



## 2008 Annual Direct Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) Information.

### Sign up for the 2008 DCP *began and will run through 9-30-08.*

The 2008 Farm Bill provides a continuation of the DCP program for 2008. The base acres that were in effect in 2007 will be in effect for 2008 and payments will be computed on 85% of the base acres. The Direct payment rates are:

- Corn - \$.28/bu.
- Soybeans - \$.44/bu
- Wheat - \$.52/bu

One change is that the new Farm Bill prohibits direct payments to farms if the base acres are 10 acres or less, unless you are a socially disadvantaged farmer or limited resource farmer.

**Phone 849-9890 – Ext. 113, Jamie, for an appointment to sign up. Indicate to Jamie whether you want the advance payment of 22% or not.**

Prior to sign-up:

- Report any farm changes - report any farming operation changes so that we can keep your record current. This includes changes in landownership or operators.
- If the land in your operation hasn't changed, do you have a signed lease from the landowner?
- A signed rental agreement or the landowner's signature on the DCP Contract is required.
- All farmers who produce a crop on the base acres are entitled to share in the DCP payment. Landowners who do not have an interest in the crop are not eligible to receive a DCP payment.

- Plan to update your payment limitation documents and other program eligibility records if you haven't.
- Reconstitutions – changes that require farm reconstitutions should be reported as soon as possible so we can update your records. Farm divisions should be considered when you do not have a firm lease. We cannot enroll a farm with changes pending, so please let us know of your changes well before your appointment to signup.

## Supplemental Disaster Assistance Programs for 2008

The 2008 Farm Bill appropriated for Supplemental Disaster Programs

- SURE – Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm Raised Fish (ELAP)
- Livestock indemnity Program (LIP)

For producers to be eligible they must purchase at least the CAT level of crop insurance for all insurable crops and/or NAP coverage for non-insurable crops. Sales closing dates have passed for 2008. However, farmers may obtain a waiver for 2008 only; by paying an administrative fee of \$100 per crop not to exceed \$300 for the county or \$900 total for all counties. This buy in fee is non-refundable and must be paid no later than **September 16, 2008.** Contact office for more details.



## Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (Safe for Short)

Hillsdale County has been approved for plantings of Diverse Grassland habitats to restore ecosystems for grassland dependant wildlife such as Bobolinks, eastern box turtles, hog-nosed snakes, grasshopper sparrows, karner blue butterflies, barn owls, short eared owls, upland sandpipers, western meadowlarks, etc. Historically, oak savanna and prairie dominated much of the lower peninsula. Remnant natural areas are surrounded by agriculture and urban land uses, resulting in severe habitat fragmentation. Almost all of the original tall grass and wet prairies have been converted to farmland. Savannas are native grasslands with scattered trees or shrubs. By requiring planting of oaks within short-grass plantings, this will increase the availability of acorns as a food source for many species of wildlife. Requirements are as follows:

- Habitat blocks are a minimum of 30 acres in size
- Linear corridors a minimum 200' wide and at least 10 acres in size.
- Grassland types must be a minimum of 30% short prairie grass such as little bluestem, Canada wild rye and a max. of 70% tall grass prairie such as big bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass
- Other seed mixes may be allowed based on the unique soil type and/or topography.

With almost 4000 acres expiring this year from CRP, those participants may want to check these practices. ***These practices will take the place of a general CRP sign-up this year.***

## Conservation Reserve Program Mowing Maintenance

Producers that have covers established, will need to follow the maintenance requirements in your plan. Check for weeds early this summer and request permission to **spot mow** or spray to control weeds, especially before they go to seed. Thistles are a problem and it is better to spray them rather than mow.

**CRP Regular mowing** may take place between August 1 and August 20. This short time span is to allow adequate re-growth for winter cover & not to disturb the ground nesting wildlife during the primary nesting season of April 1 thru July 31.

## CRP-Mid Contract Management

Means having NRCS determine if any actions are needed on your part to improve the CRP cover. CRP cover may benefit from light disking, grass-specific herbicides, interseeding with legumes or wildflowers, or prescribed burning. Cost share is available for these actions.

## Common Land Unit (CLU)

The Hillsdale FSA staff is continuing to work on correcting the CLU maps and updating Farm Records. We are making good progress and appreciate your patience during this long and detailed process. Some records are accurate and need very little adjustment, however others need considerable adjusting. We are making the corrections on a farm by farm basis. All landowners and operators will receive new maps in July or August. We are close to mailing new maps.

***Watch your mail for these new maps so that you can review the field boundaries and then contact us if the boundary line is not correct.***

## New Employees

USDA welcomes two new employees to the FSA family. Denise Wilt started May 12, 2008 for the Farm Program Area. She will be working on Farm Records, Recons, and assisting with DCP. Crystal Hepker started June 23, 2008 for the Farm Loan Program Area. She will be handling farm and operating loans for borrowers.



## 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. Dept of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling any FSA Office.



### **Special Accommodations**

Special Accommodations will be made for the physically handicapped, visually impaired or hearing impaired upon request. If accommodation is required, contact Judy Hostetler, CED at (517) 849-9890.



### **Deadline to Report Crop Acreages Extended to August 15, 2008.**

Acreage reporting time is here. Please remember that filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs. Producers are required to report their planted crops and acres to FSA in order to maintain eligibility for several program benefits:

- Direct Counter-Cyclical Program
- Commodity Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Annual Rental Payments
- Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Payments

**The deadline to report fall-seeded small grains and all spring seeded crops is August 15, 2008.** Crop reports on Form FSA-578, Report of Commodities must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. We have mailed out a list of all the farms our records show the producer is associated with. In addition we mailed the aerial photocopies out. We ask producers to write what crop is planted in each field, including alfalfa, or grass and idle land. If partial fields are planted, indicate the acres of each parcel. If sharing, indicate percent and with whom. The planting dates are needed for RMA. Mail back or drop the photos off to our office a minimum of three days prior to any appointment. After they are dropped off, we load them into the computer and prepare the FSA-578 for signing. Producers can make an appointment to stop in and sign them or have them mailed to them for signing and then return them to the office by the deadline. This process helps shorten the time the producer spends in the office.

### **Measurement Service Rate Changes**

Measurement Service Fees for farm visits have changed to a minimum of \$46.00 for the first hour and \$8 for every 30 minutes after the first hour. The rate includes time for travel and paperwork completion. This will also be the fee for late acreage reports. This fee is by farm so producers will especially want to report their acreage by the deadline date to avoid these fees. This includes CRP acreage reports.

### **FSA Farm Loans**

FSA makes both direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers who can not obtain commercial credit from a bank or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. The loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. If you're having trouble getting commercial credit, check with the county office staff about eligibility, as well as maximum loan amounts, rates, term and use of proceeds.

### **Loans Available for Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged**

FSA is authorized to assist beginning farmers and members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmers as a person whom: Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years. Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm. Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA. Does not own a farm in excess of 30% of the county's median size.

### **Youth Loans**

FSA can make loans to youths to establish and operate income producing projects in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, and similar organizations.

**The maximum loan size is \$5,000.** To qualify:

- Be between 10 and 20 years old
- Live in a town of less than 10,000
- Be unable to obtain a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income producing project in a supervised program of work.

Applicants must also be capable of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. Contact Russ LaFollette or Crystal Hepker at Ext. 107 or Ext 105

### ***Unauthorized Disposition***

Loan grain is not to be disposed of through feeding, selling, or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization. The financial penalties for this are severe. Always call the office before any loan grain is fed or sold.



### **Appointments Recommended**

We recommend you call to make an appointment before coming to the office to conduct business. This will enable us to prepare any necessary paperwork and research issues before your appointment. We realize how important your time is, and this will reduce the amount of time that you have to wait in the office.

### ***Remember to practice farm safety!***

*Judy Hostetter, CED*

**Farm Changes—Remember to notify our office of any farm changes:**  
**Changes in land ownership, new leased acreage, dropped leased acreage;**  
**Changes in banking accounts that will affect your *direct deposit*;**  
**Development of land removed for houses.**

### **Important Dates to Remember**

Aug 1 Begin Critical Feed Use of CRP.  
Aug 12 COC Meeting Date  
Aug 15 Deadline to report all crops

**Real Estate for Sale** Visit the following web site for government owned farms, houses, lots & buildings.  
<http://www.resales.usda.gov>

### **Bank Account Changes**

All FSA payments are to be made by direct deposit unless there is a financial hardship to prevent it. Producers need to notify us when accounts change to prevent delay of payments

### **Congratulations**

We would like to congratulate Mack Francoeur on his new position as the Farm Loan Manager in our Alpena Service Center. We wish him the best.

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