



September, 2008

Issue No. 3

## COVERED BRIDGE COURIER

### St. Joseph County FSA

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[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)  
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#### Hours

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

#### County Committee

Daniel Sharp, Chairman  
James Struble, Vice  
Chairman  
Timothy Wagner, Member  
Ann Kauffman, Advisor

#### Staff

Robert Avery, FA  
Gayle Britten, PT, FA  
Phillip DeYoung, FLM  
Michelle Fambro, PT  
Carol Fetterolf, PT  
Sharon Hoch, CED  
Dana Sherman, PT

### DATES TO REMEMBER IN 2008:

September 16 - Deadline to  
Purchase Buy-in Waiver for  
Disaster Programs

September 30 - Deadline to  
Enroll in 2008 DCP

September 30 - Deadline to  
Purchase NAP Coverage for  
Alfalfa, Mixed Forage, Rye  
and Mint

October 13 - Columbus Day  
Holiday - Office Closed

Ongoing - SAFE Program  
Enrollment

Ongoing - CRP Continuous  
Signup

Ongoing - Farm Storage  
Facility Loans

*Are you a spouse that  
owns land? Then notify  
our office, so you are  
able to participate in  
our elections and  
receive our mailings.*

### **BUY-IN DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 16th!!**

FSA will allow producers who would otherwise be ineligible for 2008-crop disaster assistance programs, to become eligible. Producers who were eligible to obtain at least catastrophic level crop insurance or non-insured crop disaster assistance, but did not, can "buy-in" to be eligible.

The 2008 Act requires producers who wish to participate in the new disaster programs to have crop insurance or non-insured crop disaster assistance (NAP) coverage for the land for which assistance is being requested, and for ALL farms in ALL counties in which they have an interest.

Since the 2008 Act was enacted after the application periods had closed for those programs, producers who did not have such coverage could not comply with this requirement in order to be eligible for the new disaster programs. However; the 2008 Act authorizes a waiver that allows producers to pay a fee, called a "buy-in" fee, to be eligible for this new disaster assistance.

Every producer whose crops, including grazing lands, are not fully covered by crop insurance or NAP may take advantage of this one-time opportunity. The buy-in fee is due no later than September 16, 2008.

Those who miss this opportunity will not be eligible for disaster assistance.

Producers are also reminded that the payment of the applicable buy-in fee does not afford the producer crop insurance or NAP coverage; it only affords eligibility for the 2008 disaster programs.

Producers who meet the definition of "Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource," or "Beginning Farmer or Rancher," do not have to meet the Risk Management Purchase Requirement, and, therefore, are not required to pay the buy-in fee.

The buy-in fee for 2008 eligibility only, for either the catastrophic risk protection insurance (CAT) or NAP is \$100 per crop, but not more than \$300 per producer per administrative county, or \$900 total per producer for all counties less any previously paid fees for CAT and/or NAP.

*The applicable buy-in form must be completed and applicable fees paid by September 16, 2008.*

Payment of the applicable fees will allow the producer to be eligible for benefits for losses under the forthcoming Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program, Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP), and Emergency Assistance Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

### **DCP DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 30TH**

Sign up for the 2008 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program, began on June 25, 2008 and will run through September 30, 2008. 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 the farm is wholly owned by a socially disadvantaged farmer or limited resource farmer.

**Many of you have reported your acres, but have not signed a DCP contract. You will not receive a payment for 2008, unless a contract is signed and leases are submitted by September 30, 2008.**

If you have not signed up yet, please call to make your appointment.



## **Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)**

Policy holders are reminded that they must submit a "Notice of Loss" (FSA-576) within 15 days of when the loss becomes apparent. If you have noticed that your crop yields might be affected by adverse weather conditions, contact the office so that we have the opportunity to inspect your crop, before harvest.

If you are not going to harvest all or part of a block, an appraisal will need to be completed on that block. This appraisal will be used in calculating your loss claim.

Remember, we need to know the amount of crop sold from previous years in order to establish your actual production history (APH). Your APH is used to calculate your loss payment.

**New 2009 NAP rates will increase to \$250.00 per crop, \$750.00 per county, and \$1,875.00 per producer for all counties.**

Late application provisions are in place to help accommodate NAP sales closing deadline dates for 2009 crops with 2008 sales closing dates.

September 30, 2008 is the deadline to purchase NAP coverage for alfalfa, mixed forage, rye and mint for the 2009 crop year.



## **NEW CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

On March 22, 2007, FSA announced a new initiative, State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), to allow states to address local wildlife conservation needs. SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. This cooperative conservation effort is based on locally developed conservation proposals that address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the state before the practice may be implemented.

Enrollment is available under continuous CRP signup criteria, and began July 1, 2008. Contracts run from 10 to 15 years.

### **Payments available:**

- Up to 100% cost share for preparation and establishment of the diverse grasslands.
- A one-time signing bonus of \$100 - \$150 per acre.
- Annual rental payments for enrolled acres including an annual maintenance payment (based on 3 predominant soil types)

## *Diverse Grassland Planting*

A diverse grassland planting consists of a mixture of planted short or tall native grasses and wildflowers reminiscent of the short and tall grass prairies that once were common in southern Michigan. A subset of the short grass planting is a savanna, which includes scattered clumps of planted oak trees. This SAFE project is intended to re-establish the diverse grasslands that have nearly been eliminated from the Michigan landscape, and provide food and cover for a variety of birds, mammals and insects that are dependent on these systems. Native grasslands are considered one of the most threatened plant communities in Michigan.

To be eligible for this SAFE practice, the land must be located in the SAFE project target area that includes 18 counties in the southern lower peninsula of Michigan. The land must have a cropping history (cropped 4 out of the 6 years from 1996-2001) and be either a block of 30 acres or greater in size or, if a linear habitat, be a minimum of 200 feet wide and 10 acres or greater in size. Landowners with previously existing CRP enrolled acres may enroll additional contiguous acres that meet the above criteria under SAFE agreements.

The diverse grassland planting must include a short grass prairie component that includes planting of clusters of oak trees, and may include a tall grass prairie component. Between 30% and 100% of the total acres must be planted to short grass prairie. In addition, native oak trees must be planted on at least 10% but not more than 30% of these short grass prairie acres at a rate of 4 trees per acre. In all cases, oak trees will be planted on at least 2 acres.

Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health or diversity or to control pests that will damage the cover or adjacent lands. Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited. Livestock must be barred from the planting. All Diverse Grassland SAFE contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. Cost-share is provided to complete mid-contract management activities.



## **REMINDERS**

Please remember to report any changes to our office, as they occur. We do not receive information from the Land Resource Office, so if you report land ownership changes to them, it is not relayed to us.

- **Report any farm changes** - report any farming operation changes so that we can keep your records current. This includes changes in land ownership 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 by 9/30/08.
- 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 necessary.
- **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 as soon as possible.

It is not too early to start thinking about the 2009 signup. If your land owners go South for the winter, try to get your updated leases before they leave. You can also bring in any new land ownership documentation, address changes, updated banking information, etc. This will allow us to update your records and get your payments out to you much more quickly.

## **FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS**

FSA offers low cost government loans for storage facilities. The 7-year loans are available for the purchase and installation of eligible storage facilities, permanently affixed drying or handling equipment or remodeling existing facilities. All farm storage facility loans are secured by a promissory note and security agreement. For loans exceeding \$50,000 or where a borrower's aggregate outstanding loan balance exceeds this amount, a lien on real estate will be required. The maximum amount that may be borrowed is 85 percent of the net cost of the storage or handling equipment, up to \$100,000 for each borrower. A minimum down payment is also required.

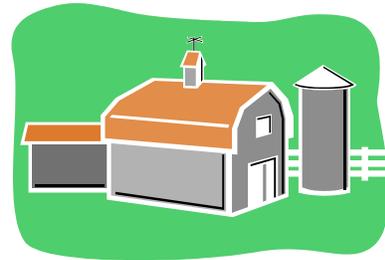
This is a lengthy process, so please notify us well in advance of when you will need the extra storage. The interest rate for September, 2008 is 3.625%.



## **LOAN REMINDERS**

If you have an outstanding commodity loan, make sure you continually monitor the storage structure to make sure it is secure and free of leaks **and** the commodity to make sure it is still in good condition.

**If you need to move the commodity, or are planning to feed or sell some loan commodity, make sure you request authorization BEFORE you take any action.**



## **CROP DISASTER PROGRAM 2005-2007**

The Crop Disaster Program for crop years 2005-2007, provides benefits for losses suffered in 2005, 2006, or 2007.

Producers must choose only one year to receive benefits. Only producers who purchased crop insurance or Non Insured Crop Assistance Program coverage for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits. Losses must have exceeded 35%. The payment rate is set at 42% of normal price. Producers who have already received benefits for 2005 or 2006 can file an application for 2007 losses. If losses were greater in 2007, additional benefits will be paid.

The CDP now provides benefits to farmers who suffered **quality** losses (as well as quantity losses) from natural disaster and related conditions to 2005, 2006 or 2007 crops. Contact the office for further details.

**Note: Only crops covered by an insurance or NAP policy are eligible**





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
 ST JOSEPH COUNTY FARM SERVICE AGENCY  
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IMPORTANT DEADLINES  
 INSIDE. PLEASE READ!!!

**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.

**Real Estate for Sale** Visit the following web site for government owned farms, houses, lots & buildings.

<http://www.resales.usda.gov>

**Thinking of Tiling or Clearing Land?**

Don't forget the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Provisions. Bringing new land into production by **clearing trees, excavation, improving drainage by tiling or dredging are potential violations of the HEL/WC rules.** Before you begin any land conversion project, please come into the county office to file form AD-1026. Natural Resources Conservation Service will make an evaluation of your land to determine how to manage the wet areas of your land most efficiently. Checking ahead of time will help keep you eligible for USDA benefits.

**Non-Discrimination Statement**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs 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, audiotape, 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, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Revised: 6/8/2005

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please contact Sharon Hoch at 269-467-6336, EXT 2.