

October 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Alaska State FSA Newsletter

Alaska State Farm Service Agency

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State Executive

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Alaska FSA State Directors News

Alaska Farm Service Agency was given a new program a couple weeks ago called Seafood Trade Relief Program or STRP for short. We welcome a whole new group of customers that catch a wide variety of seafood that many of us really enjoy. Our staff is working many extra hours to process all the STRP applications that have already come in.

Please know, that we are anxious to serve every eligible seafood producer as we work through everyone's application. We look forward to getting acquainted with you and learn more about the seafood business. Should you learn of a friend in the fishing business who has not applied for STRP benefits, please invite them to. The application materials are online at www.Farmers.gov/Seafood.

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Delta Junction, AK 99737

**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan
Manager**

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Southern County Office
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Ste 216
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**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan
Manager**

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

Committee Meetings:
Northern Co TBA
Southern Co Nov. 10, 10 am

Please contact your local FSA
Office for questions specific to
your operation or county.

Every one of us at FSA in Alaska are working together to print, organize, process and enter data for every application. When we ask you for additional documents, signatures, corrections or clarifications, please help us right away so we can help you. If we did not need it, we would not be asking. The sooner we get your file correct the sooner we can finish the processing of your application. Keeping track of one application with 6 or 7 documents is quite simple. Keeping track of several thousand applications with 6 or 7 documents is a different story. We have help with a national call center and an experienced jump team to assist in data entry and customer service activity.

With fall here and winter in the air many things are to be done on the farm. Cleaning and winterizing equipment to keep it from freezing, draining and winterizing irrigation lines, cleaning corrals and spreading the nutrients on the fields are common tasks. Continuous checks on storage barns and bins to keep moisture and temperature at proper levels is another. For gardeners finishing the harvest, gathering and storing garden hoses and maybe get in a fall rototill activity. I need the weather to start freezing before bringing in the last of my Bussell sprouts.

On the home front, some new dishes my family have been discovered this fall are with beets. This root crop was one of the more popular items at the farmers market. I remember eating them when I was young. Beet Borsche was the soup of the day at our Kiwanis club luncheon a couple months ago. Harvard Beets is another my brother recommended to me. I remembered them from when I was a kid. Both dishes were and are excellent. There are many recipes that have slight variations which make this vegetable so useful. I have really enjoyed the additions to our food choices at home. Trying something new and bringing back something from the past adds to the bounty and the gratitude I feel in this wonderful land.

USDA Reminds Farmers and Ranchers of Nov. 2 Deadline to Submit Your RTCP Receipts

The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Program (RTCP) signup ended on September 4, 2020. This program covered transportation expenses incurred from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020. If you applied for the RTCP program and have not turned all your receipts into the FSA office, now is the time to do so. Applicants will have until COB on Nov. 2, 2020, to provide supporting documentation. If you have any questions, contact your local FSA office.

For more information on RTCP, farmers and ranchers in the eligible areas can visit their FSA county office or the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport. To locate your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2

Signup for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) began on Sept. 21, 2020 and will continue through Dec. 11, 2020. CFAP 2 provides eligible producers with direct financial assistance due to market disruptions and associated costs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out our [brief video](#) about the program.

CFAP 2 is a separate program from the first round of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, now referred to as CFAP 1. Farmers and ranchers who participated in CFAP 1 will not be automatically enrolled and must complete a new application for CFAP 2. Details on how to apply can be found on farmers.gov/cfap/apply.

CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder

Many more commodities are eligible for CFAP 2 than CFAP 1. Interested in finding the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 payment rates for the eligible commodities you grow or raise? Our new, easy-to-use [CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder](#) makes finding payment rates specific to your operation simple. From yam to alpaca farmers – and everyone in between – the payment rate information you need is just a few clicks away. Try it today on your desktop, tablet, or mobile device.

Call Center

A call center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

Alaska FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2020 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 2, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 7, 2020.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters in the Northern County local administrative area (LAA 2) and the Southern County local administrative area (LAA 3), who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2021.

The following are this year's candidates who have been nominated in their LAA's to serve as a committee member. All candidates have agreed to serve if elected.

Northern County LAA-2 Area beginning where the Clearwater road intersects the AK Hwy NE to north line of Southeast Fairbanks census area, proceeding NE to Canadian border, then SE following Canadian border, where the Alaska Gateway Regional Educational Attendance Area (AKGREAA) line intersects the Canadian border, turning NW following AKGREAA line to the AK Hwy, then proceed NW on AK Hwy to Clearwater road.

Steven Helkenn resides in LAA-2 and has produced Hay, Oats, Barley and raises pigs and cattle for over 37 years. Steven has served on the FSA County Committee in the past and has lived and farmed the same farm for all these years.

Connie Plagerman resides in LAA-2, and has produced Hay, Oats and Bison for 11 years. The Plagerman Farm has been active member of Alaska Farm Bureau for years.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Northern County FSA Office at 10:00 a.m. on December 10, 2020.

Southern County LAA-3 Includes the Matanuska Borough.

Suzy Crosby moved from Montana to Alaska in 1983. Coming from a background in cattle ranching, she found that her real passion came in a smaller package – dairy goats! Suzy and her husband own and operate Cottonwood Creek Farm, where they have been operating a herd-share program and raising show-quality registered Alpine dairy goats since 2002.

Janet Dinwiddie grew up in Palmer the heart of Matanuska Valley. She was raised on her family's upick vegetable farm-Pyrah's Pioneer Peak Farm. Pyrah's has been operating for 40 years raising a variety of crops and hosting public events and festivals to help provide a gathering place for the community. After high school Janet graduated from Utah State University. Eventually Janet and her family came back to Alaska, to help run Pyrah's.

Michael "Mike" Williams has lived in Alaska for 37 years and is a 26 year resident of the Alaska Bush 40 miles northwest of Anchorage on Mt. Susitna. Mike and his family have been growing peonies and roots for the commercial flower market for the past 11 years. He is a past board member of the Alaska Farmland Trust and was the 2014 Alaska Farm Family. Mike brings a unique perspective of farming opportunities in the Alaska Bush and statewide. Mike's family is very involved in developing agriculture opportunities for military veterans.

Election Ballots will be Counted in Public at the Southern County FSA Office at 1:00 p.m. on December 10, 2020.

More information on county committees, such as fact sheets, can be found on the FSA website at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections> or at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/ak>.

USDA Supports U.S. Seafood Industry Impacted by Retaliatory Tariffs

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide approximately \$530 million to support the U.S. seafood industry and fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments. The funding will be provided through the Seafood Trade Relief Program and funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Background:

The Seafood Trade Relief Program funding will support the following seafood types:

- Atka mackerel
- Crab (Dungeness, King, Snow, Southern Tanner)
- Flounder
- Geoduck
- Goosefish
- Herrings
- Lobster
- Pacific Cod
- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Pollock
- Sablefish
- Salmon
- Sole
- Squid
- Tuna
- Turbot

Fishermen can sign-up for relief through the program from September 14, 2020 to December 14, 2020. Fishermen should apply through their local USDA Service Center. To find your local Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator. The application can be found at www.farmers.gov/seafood.

Call Center

A call center is available for fishermen who would like additional one-on-one support with the STRP application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

Some USDA Service Centers in Alaska will begin allowing in-person office visits by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business should call ahead to confirm the office's status and make an appointment before visiting. Visitors will be pre-screened based on health concerns or recent travel and must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors will be

required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office and work with our producers in person, by phone, by email, or by using other online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Learn about USDA's Disaster Assistance Programs

When disaster strikes, USDA is here to help. From hurricanes to wildfire, and from flooding to drought, USDA offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers and livestock producers recover.

To better assist producers, USDA has published a new brochure, [Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance](#). The brochure is a quick reference guide to available Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency disaster assistance programs.

The brochure gives a short description of each program and lets you quickly identify which program(s) are available for each natural disaster event.

Also, on farmers.gov, you can learn about USDA disaster assistance programs that might be right for you. With the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), you answer five questions about the natural disasters that have impacted your operation to find out which USDA programs offer assistance.

The Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance brochure can be [downloaded here](#) and is located on farmers.gov/recover. To learn how to apply for disaster programs, contact your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

USDA Offers Secure New Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online

USDA offers new services for producers to securely conduct business virtually.

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA's Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed,

documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer's personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit farmers.gov/mydocs to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

To learn more about program flexibilities and Service Center status during the coronavirus pandemic, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

Farmers and ranchers can use the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will receive information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

For more information, contact Lloyd Wilhelm, Northern County Executive Director/Farm Loan Manager, at (907) 895-4242, lloyd.wilhelm@usda.gov, or Erin Sturdivant, Southern County Executive Director/Farm Loan Manager, at (907) 761-7754 erin.sturdivant@usda.gov or visit farmers.gov.

New to Farming Because of the Pandemic? USDA Can Help!

Are you new to farming because of the pandemic? USDA can help you get started – everything from helping you register your farm to getting financial assistance and advice. Our team members, based at USDA Service Centers across the country, are hearing from people who are interested in more space and working the land, and we want to let you know we can help.

Get Started with USDA

First, you want to make sure your farm is registered. If you purchased land, it might already be established with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) with a farm number on file. If not, FSA can help you register your farm.

To obtain a farm number, you'll bring an official tax ID (Social Security number or an employer ID) and a property deed. If you do not own the land, bring a lease agreement to show you have control of the property to your FSA representative. If your operation is incorporated or an entity, you may also need to provide proof that you have signature authority and the legal ability to enter contracts with USDA.

Access to Capital

USDA can provide access to capital through its farm loans, which is a great resource when producers aren't able to get a loan from a traditional lender. Loans can help with purchasing land or equipment or with operating costs, and FSA even offers microloans, which are especially popular among producers with smaller farms. For more information, [check out our Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

Conservation Practices

We can help you make conservation improvements to your farm, which are good for your bottom line and your operation. We'll help you develop a conservation plan as well as apply for financial assistance that'll cover the bulk of the costs for implementing. To learn more about some of the conservation practices that we help producers with, [check out our Conservation at Work Video Series](#).

If you purchase land, and you don't want to farm all of it, you can look at either a conservation easement or managing for native shrubs and grasses through either the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Easements are long-term, while a CRP contract is 10-15 years. These are good options for lands with land that is not optimal for production or sensitive lands like wetlands and grasslands.

Additional Resources

Depending on your farm, you may want to look at crop insurance. The USDA's Risk Management Agency provides crop insurance to help you manage risks on your farm. There are [many types of insurance products available](#) for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

Your local communities also have great resources for farmers including conservation districts, Rural Development, cooperative extensions, and different farming groups. To get started with USDA, contact your local USDA service center. To find your local service center, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

USDA Service Centers Resuming Office Visits in Some Locations While Taking Precautionary Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

Some USDA Service Centers in Alaska will begin allowing in-person office visits by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business should call ahead to confirm the office's status and make an appointment before visiting. Visitors will be pre-screened based on health concerns or recent travel and must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors will be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office and work with our producers in person, by phone, by email, or by using other online tools.

Online services are still available to customers, including our [new Box and OneSpan functionality](#) that enable customers to sign and share FSA and NRCS documents with USDA Service Center staff in just a few clicks. Producers can get started with a simple username and password for Box or, for OneSpan, a quick identity verification. Additional services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Through the [FSA website](#), customers can access certain FSA programs and view FSA data, including maps, on [FSAfarm+](#). Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

For the most current updates on available services and flexibilities due to COVID-19, or to find contact information for your local Service Center farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings and/or events should contact Lloyd Wilhelm, Northern CED, at (907) 895-4242, Erin Sturdivant, Southern CED, at (907) 761-7754 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).

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