

November 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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### Alaska FSA State Directors News

November is here and with a breath of fresh air, we have lots to look forward to with the coming Thanksgiving Holiday. Will your Thanksgiving meal be an Alaskan Grown meal in whole or in part? I have seen social media posts from people wanting to buy an Alaskan Grown turkey. For all the growers I am aware of, I think they will easily sell out. I was able to secure our Alaska Grown turkey at the Jr. Market Livestock auction in September.

The list of available Alaskan vegetables is still quite impressive. The storage vegetables can still decorate your table for a holiday meal. Potatoes, carrots, green beans, beets, onions, cabbage along with turkey and ham. The bounty provided by Alaskan farmers is inspiring. The Pilgrims in the first Thanksgiving ate all the local available foods. For us purchasing some more traditional foods from the store such as pumpkin, cranberries and yams is not

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

**Committee Meetings:**  
Northern Co Dec 10, 10 am  
Southern Co Dec 10, 1 pm

a bad thing, as those purchases help a farmer not in Alaska who is also trying to sell their crops.

A tradition my family enjoys this holiday is a reading of a Thanksgiving Proclamation from our past Presidents and founding farmers. This year I will share a proclamation of 1863 from President Abraham Lincoln which can be found here <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm> or in an online search. This was written during the civil war. As he considered the difficulties this nation faced during a great civil war, he still articulated much for the citizens of this nation to be grateful for. A short list is; "blessings of fruitful fields", "the axe has enlarged the borders", "and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metal, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore" and "population has steadily increased". These blessings are despite the civil war. This proclamation letter set aside a National day of Thanksgiving that became our holiday. The Continental Congress wrote several proclamations and George Washington wrote his first Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1789.

The difficulties faced by President Lincoln in his time were war, where the difficulties we face today are a pandemic. Lives were disrupted then, and lives are disrupted today. Family traditions have changed such as how weddings are celebrated, funerals conducted, and hospital visits limited. Gratitude has ever been expressed for an abundant harvest in reading many of the past Thanksgiving proclamations. The farmers in Alaska enjoyed many fruitful fields this past year and our harvest has been good. As a farmer, we might have experienced a harvest that was not the best one ever, the prices for product not the highest ever, the input costs not the lowest, difficulties at market that kept product from selling as planned, but we can still identify many things to express gratitude for.

I list blessings of a loving family, freedom to worship and to speak, relatively good health, a warm home, lots of food to eat, much of which we grow with abundance to share and the privilege of working in the Agriculture industry to serve all of you. May your Thanksgiving celebration be full of gratitude this year.

## 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>.

## 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](https://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.

## 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](http://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator). The application can be found at [www.farmers.gov/seafood](http://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](http://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## **Enrollment Begins for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021**

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The signup period opened Tuesday, Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

### **2021 Elections and Enrollment**

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

### **2019 Crop Year ARC and PLC Payments**

FSA began processing payments last week for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. In addition to the \$5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue additional payments by the end of November for 2019 commodities covered under ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and additional commodities that trigger PLC and ARC-CO payments for which rates have not yet been published.

Producers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat.

Oats and soybeans did not meet 2019 PLC payment triggers.

2019 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: crambe, flaxseed, long and medium grain rice, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, sunflower seed and temperate Japonica rice. Payment rates for these commodities will be announced at a later date.

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## **FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19**

### *Set-Aside Delays Loan Payments for Borrowers*

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans

who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://farmers.gov/sign-in).

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## 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](https://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](https://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](https://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 or Erin Sturdivant, Southern County Executive Director/Farm Loan Manager, at (907) 761-7754 or visit [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov).

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## **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](https://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](https://fsa.usda.gov), customers can access certain FSA programs and view FSA data, including maps, on [FSAfarm+](https://fsafarmplus.usda.gov). Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://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](https://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.

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