

July 2015



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Montana FSA: July 2015 eNewsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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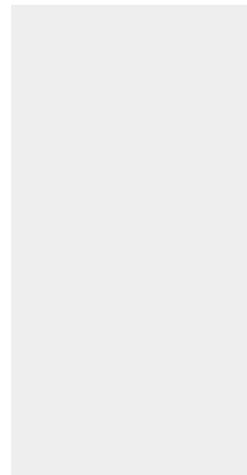
State Executive Director:
Bruce Nelson

State Committee:
Steve Carney, Chair

Complete your 2015 FSA Crop Certification by July 15th

In order to comply with Farm Service Agency (FSA) program eligibility requirements and avoid late-filed fees, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate, timely crop certification report **no later than July 15, 2015.**

The following 2015 acreage reporting dates apply for producers in Montana:



Floyd Dahlman
Kelly Flaherty-Settle
Anita Matt
Patricia Quisno

**Montana USDA
Directories:**

[Online Directory of FSA
Offices](#)

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Reasonable

Accommodations: People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

July 15, 2015: for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, and all Spring-Seeded Crops and any other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines

Other 2015 Reporting Deadlines:

- **Jan. 15, 2015:** Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed, Cherries
- **Jan. 2, 2015:** NAP Honey (or within 30 calendar days of the date colonies of bees are acquired, brought into, or removed from the county)
- **Nov. 15, 2014:** Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland & Forage (PRF) including Native Grass, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter – HRW), and all other Fall-Seeded Small Grains

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

IMPORTANT - Any crop (including grazing) reported after July 15, 2015 will be considered late-filed and late-filed fees may be assessed. Producers are encouraged to

**contact the local FSA county office
immediately to complete your 2015 acreage
report.**

Reporting Organic Crops

Producers who want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and selected the "organic" option on their NAP application must report their crops as organic.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage.

Producers must also provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional and buffer zone acreage.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Montana producers can report their organic crops to FSA for the 2015 Crop Year. However, organic rates and yields are not available for the 2015 NAP Crop Year. Organic rates and yields will be available for some NAP crops in the 2016 NAP Crop Year.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

County Committee Nomination Period Ends Aug. 3rd

The nomination period for local FSA county committees began on June 15 and will end on Aug. 3, 2015. Maps and descriptions of the Montana LAAs up for election this year are available [HERE](#).

It is important for county committees to reflect America's diversity. All eligible farmers and ranchers, including beginning farmers are encouraged to get involved in this year's elections. FSA has seen an increase in the number of nominations for qualified candidates, especially among women and minorities – a trend the Agency would like to see continue.

To be eligible to serve on a FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in an agency administered program, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the local administrative area where they are nominated.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. Organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. **Nomination forms for the 2015 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 3, 2015.**

FSA will mail election ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 9, 2015. Ballots will be due back to the local county office either via mail or in person by Dec. 7, 2015. Newly elected committee members and alternates will take office on Jan. 1, 2016.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm ownership or operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to 11 members that are elected by eligible producers.

2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Triggered in 15 Montana Counties

The 2015 Livestock Disaster Forage (LFP) Program triggered eligibility in 15 Montana counties based on the U.S. Drought Monitor report released today, July 9, 2015.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or fire on federally managed land. Eligible producers must own or lease grazing land physically located in a county affected by a qualifying drought during the county's normal grazing period.

The following counties have met the D3a criteria which means that qualifying producers with land in these counties will be eligible for three monthly payments:

- Beaverhead
- Deer Lodge
- Flathead
- Glacier
- Granite
- Lake
- Lewis and Clark
- Lincoln
- Mineral
- Missoula
- Pondera
- Powell
- Ravalli
- Sanders
- Silver Bow

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH FSA: Livestock producers who own or lease grazing land or pastureland physically located in the 15 counties should contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to begin the enrollment process. Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide supporting documentation for 2015 losses no later than Jan. 30, 2016. For questions, contact your local FSA office.

Enrollment Open for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Safety-Net Programs

USDA announced that eligible producers may now formally enroll in FSA's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015. The enrollment period began June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015.

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than previously enrolled under previously administered programs.

Nationwide, 96 percent of soybean farms, 91 percent of corn farms, and 66 percent of wheat farms elected ARC. 99 percent of long grain rice farms, 99 percent of peanut farms, and 94 percent of medium grain rice farms elected PLC. For data about other crops and state-by-state program election results go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Covered commodities under ARC and PLC include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

For more information please contact your local FSA office <https://offices.usda.gov>.

Ongoing Notice of Loss Filing Requirements

NAP - Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, documents a producer's loss or damage to a crop or commodity due to an eligible cause of loss, as well as failed acreage and prevented planting. A CCC-576, Notice of Loss must be provided for prevented planting claims, within 15 calendar days after the final planting date established for the crop, and for low yield claims, the earlier of:

- 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent
- 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date established for the crop.

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office by the dates previously mentioned. An acreage report must be on file prior to the Notice of Loss being filed.

ELAP - Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program:

- Submit Notice of Loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1 after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred.

LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program:

- Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

TAP - Tree Assistance Program:

- Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation is the later of 90 calendar days of the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent
- 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent
- 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date established for the crop.

CRP 1-Year Contract Extensions

Beginning June 22, 2015, certain CRP participants with CRP contracts that are scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2015, may extend all or part of the contract acreage for a 1-year period at the same payment rate. No general signup is scheduled for Fiscal Year 2015. The signup period for the 1-year extension ends Aug. 28, 2015. Contracts ineligible to be extended for 1-year are those contracts that will exceed a total of 15 years. Therefore, contracts that were approved for contract lengths of 14 years and 1 month up to 15 years will NOT be eligible for the 1-year extension. Furthermore, continuous CRP contracts are not eligible for the 1-year contract extension; only general signup contract holders are given the opportunity to extend their contracts.

CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP)

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized approximately \$4.1 million in Montana for the transition of expiring CRP land from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a beginning, veteran or underserved farmer or rancher to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production. The veteran must also be a beginning farmer or rancher. TIP provides annual rental payments for up to two additional years after the date of the expiration of the CRP contract, provided the transition is not to a family member. Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis until funds are expended. Montana has approximately \$1.6 million remaining as of early July 2015. Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers and ranchers and CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of a CRP contract. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2016, the land may be enrolled in TIP from Oct. 1, 2015, through Sept. 30, 2016. Please contact your local county FSA office for complete program details.

Changes to CRP "Early Land Preparation" Regulations

In August of 2014, FSA's regulations relating to "early land preparation" of expiring CRP acreage were revised to state that destruction of the CRP cover could **not** begin until after the end of the primary nesting season. Since the primary nesting season in Montana runs from May 15th through July 15th, this regulation meant that CRP cover destruction could not be initiated until July 16th.

Local FSA county committees have now received authority to authorize chemical destruction of expiring CRP cover as early as May 1st if the producer intends to plant the acreage to a fall-seeded crop. Note that only chemical destruction is authorized prior to July 16th. The acreage may not be hayed, grazed, or mechanically tilled prior to July 16th.

A payment reduction will be assessed on all contracts where "early land preparation" is approved. **The new regulations state that the CRP payment will not be earned from the date that cover destruction is initiated through the contract expiration date.** Therefore, if a producer chooses to begin cover destruction on May 1st, no CRP payment will be earned from May 1st through September 30th. For example, a CRP contract that normally generates a \$40/acre annual

rental payment, would have a payment reduction in the amount of \$16.77/acre. If that same producer waited until June 1st to begin cover destruction, the payment reduction would amount to \$13.37/acre.

CRP participants wishing to obtain approval for early land preparation activities must sign form CRP-IG prior to beginning cover destruction.

General CRP Reminders

CRP participants are reminded to notify their local FSA County Office when there are ownership or operator changes on an applicable CRP contract. If there is a change in ownership, whether it is the result of a sale of land or death of a CRP participant, the successor to the CRP contract has 60 calendar days in which to complete the succession to the contract. It is very important that current CRP owners and/or operators inform their local FSA County Office timely of such changes so the County Office can update the CRP contract(s) so the annual rental payments can be issued to the correct participant.

Furthermore, CRP participants are to timely inform their local FSA County Office of any acreage that needs to be terminated from a CRP contract for activities such as oil well development, gravel pits, housing developments, and so on. CRP acreages that no longer provide approved vegetative cover must be terminated from the CRP contract and refunds of annual rental payments, SIP, PIP and cost-share payments may be required.

CRP participants are reminded that the period between May 15 and July 15 is the Primary Nesting and Brood Rearing Season (PNS). CRP acreages shall not be accessed during this time, as various types of wildlife are using the acreage to nest and/or raise their young. However, if weed control is necessary during this period, CRP participants must receive approval from the local FSA County Office prior to conducting spot-treatment. Only affected areas within the specific CRP field shall be accessed during the PNS to control weeds. All other maintenance activities shall take place outside of the PNS.

CRP Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds Initiative

Montana has 10,000 acres available to eligible offers on a first-come, first-serve basis; Pivot corners can now be installed under the initiative

The Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds Initiative is a practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) designed to convert marginally productive cropland along the borders of agricultural fields into grass buffers to create more habitats for upland birds. The continuous signup practice allows producers to create habitat for upland and grassland dependent birds. Upland birds include the northern bobwhite quail, pheasant, prairie chicken, mourning dove, wild turkey, finches, sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, meadowlark, bobolinks and other species.

In January 2015, USDA revised policy to now allow producers to enroll pivot corners under this initiative. Montana recently received 10,000 acres that may be enrolled under this practice. The acres are available to eligible producers on a first-come, first-serve basis through 10 or 15-year contracts.

This practice may be applied to pivot corners that meet the provisions of eligible land. The pivot corners must be installed around a cropped field. A connecting boundary is no longer required. There are no minimum or maximum size requirements.

Participants are eligible for annual rental payments, a signing incentive payment equal to \$150 per acre, cost-share for up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover and a practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of the total eligible cost to establish the practice.

Interested producers can submit offers to their local FSA office. For more information, visit your local FSA office and visit us online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Eligible Material Owners Can Apply for BCAP Beginning June 30

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) was re-authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. FSA began accepting applications June 30, 2015, from eligible material owners to harvest and deliver biomass to a biomass conversion facility to generate clean energy.

For 2015, FSA will implement \$11.5 million to assist with the cost of removing forest and agricultural residues harvested and collected directly from Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management public lands and agriculture land. Materials collected from public lands must be harvested or collected directly from the land and be a by-product of preventative treatments. Agricultural residues must also be harvested or collected directly from the land and not have an existing higher value product market.

To be eligible for the retrieval incentives, the biomass must be delivered to an FSA-approved biomass conversion facility. The approved facility in Montana is F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program also provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who produce new sources of energy biomass by growing eligible crops on contract acres within approved BCAP project areas. Funding for this portion of the program, known as Project Areas, will be announced later this summer.

For more further information regarding BCAP, contact your local county FSA office.

Enrollment for 2016 Dairy Margin Protection Program Started July 1

FSA today announced that as of July 1, 2015, dairy farmers can enroll in [Margin Protection Program for coverage in 2016](#). The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy operations when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

The Margin Protection Program gives participating dairy producers the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Enrollment begins July 1 and ends on Sept. 30, 2015, for coverage in 2016. Participating farmers will remain in the program through 2018 and pay a \$100 administrative fee each year. Producers also have the option of selecting a different coverage level during open enrollment each year. Margin Protection Program payments are based on an operation's historical production. An operation's historical production will increase by 2.61 percent in 2016 if the operation participated in 2015, providing a stronger safety net.

USDA also has an online resource available to help dairy producers decide which level of coverage will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The enhanced Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine their unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on

price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, mobile phone, or tablet, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Dairy operations enrolling in the program must meet conservation compliance provisions. Producers participating in the Livestock Gross Margin insurance program may register for the Margin Protection Program, but this new margin program will only begin once their livestock dairy insurance coverage has ended. Producers must also submit form CCC-782 for 2016, confirming their Margin Protection Program coverage level selection, to the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. If electing higher coverage for 2016, dairy producers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment or pay a minimum of 25 percent of the premium by Feb. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy and www.fsa.usda.gov/mt for more information, or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the Margin Protection Program. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans

Farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by Sept. 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available this fiscal year. Eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay. New farmers and ranchers, military veterans, and underserved farmers and ranchers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers and ranchers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and women. For more information about farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Emergency Loans

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

- [Cumulative Disaster Designation Map for 2014](#)
- [Cumulative Disaster Designation Map for 2015](#)

For questions about eligibility and/or to apply for an Emergency Loan, contact your local FSA office to schedule an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

Producers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

Local Offices Issue Receipts for Services Provided

FSA reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. From December through June, FSA issued more than 327,000 electronic receipts. The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form – serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter. To learn more about FSA, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/mt or to find your local USDA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Montana FSA: Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

DEADLINE POSTER: A printable pdf version of FSA deadlines is available [HERE](#) and on the Montana FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

- **May 15 to July 15:** Primary Nesting and Brood Rearing Season
- **June 15 to Sept. 30:** 2014 & 2015 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment Period
- **June 15 to Aug. 3:** Nomination Period for County Committee Elections. Request Nomination Forms from FSA at the local USDA Service Center or obtain online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections>.
- **June 22 to Aug. 28:** Request one-year extension for CRP contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015
- **June 30 to Sept. 4:** 2015 BCAP Application Period for eligible material owners to harvest and deliver Biomass
- **July 1 to Sept. 30:** Registration/Coverage Election Period for 2016 Margin Protection Program – Dairy (MPP-Dairy)
- **July 15:** 2015 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, and all Spring-Seeded Crops and any other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines
- **July 15:** Final 2014 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Production Reports Are Due
- **July 16:** CRP Summer/Fall Managed Haying and Grazing Begins (with County Committee Approval of Request)
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline to Request a Reconstitution or Farm Transfer for 2015
- **Aug. 3:** Deadline to Submit County Committee Election Nomination Form (FSA-669A) to FSA (or postmarked)
- **Aug. 28:** Deadline to request a one-year extension for CRP contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015
- **Sept. 1:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Value-Loss Crops
- **Sept 4:** 2015 BCAP Application Deadline for Foresters and Farmers to Submit BCAP-11s

- **Sept. 30:** 2014 and 2015 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment Deadline
- **Sept. 30:** Deadline for 2014 Certification of Benchmark and Actual Year Yields for ARC-IC Farms
- **Sept. 30:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic.
- **Sept. 30:** Last day of the Registration/Coverage Election Period for 2016 MPP-Dairy Program
- **Nov. 2:** 2015 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline
- **Nov. 9:** County Committee Election Ballots will be Mailed to Eligible Voters
- **Nov. 12:** All Hay Bales Must be Removed from CRP
- **Nov. 16:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland & Forage (PRF) including Native Grass, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter – HRW), and all other Fall-Seeded Small Grains
- **Nov. 16:** Deadline for 2015 NAP Production Reports for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic.
- **Dec. 1:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Honey Producers
- **Dec 1 to Feb. 26, 2016:** CRP General Signup Period
- **Dec. 7:** Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to FSA at the local USDA Service Center

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).
