

April 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Washington State FSA April Newsletter

Washington State Farm Service Agency

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USDA Service Centers Taking Precautionary Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

USDA Service Centers in Washington State will continue to be open for business by phone appointment only and limited field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. These agencies include Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our producers by phone, and using online tools whenever possible.

All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service

State Executive Director:
Jon Wyss

Center to schedule a phone appointment. In the event a Service Center is closed, producers can receive assistance from the closest alternate Service Center by phone.

State Committee:
Katlenia Vejraska, Chair
Maureen Harkcom, Member
Jesus Limon, Member
Robyn Meenach, Member
Bruce Nelson, Member

Producers can find Service Center phone numbers at farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/wa

NRCS and FSA continue to look at the flexibilities to deliver programs on behalf of producers, just as they have in past situations, such as natural disasters. Farmers and ranchers are resilient and agencies at USDA Service Centers will continue to deliver the farm safety net programs and resource conservation programs that keep American agriculture in business today and long into the future.

Online 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. Online NRCS services are available to customers through the [Conservation Client Gateway](#). 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.

For the most current updates on available services and Service Center status visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Centers are encouraging visitors to take proactive protective measures to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

CRP General Signup Results Announced

USDA announced that 3.4 million of the 3.8 million acres offers in general CRP signup 54 were accepted, or 89%. In Washington, 277,533 of the 283,374 acres offered were accepted on 1,368 contracts, or 98%. County Offices have mailed letters to most producers notifying them of the status of their offer. For accepted offers producers have 30 days to contact the office and confirm if they still want to proceed with the offer. If you do not respond within 30 days, the offer will be rejected. The notification can be by telephone, letter, email or fax.

Once you confirm you want to proceed with the offer, FSA will provide NRCS with the information in your offer. NRCS will work with you to develop a conservation plan about the cover establishment, enhancement or maintenance for you offer. The plan must be signed by NRCS and all signatories to the CRP contract. NRCS must provide the completed conservation plan, with all required signatures, no later than September 11 so FSA

can approve the contracts by September 30. All offers accepted in this signup will have an October 1, 2020 start date.

CRP Grassland Signup

Farmers and ranchers may apply to enroll grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup beginning March 16 through May 15. Through CRP Grasslands, participants retain the right to conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land. Timing of haying may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds, but grazing generally will not be. Participants will receive an annual rental payment and may receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices such as cross fencing and livestock water developments. The CRPG rental rate for each county is listed below. CRPG rental payments are subject to the same payment as regular CRP.

The duration of the CRPG contract is either 10 or 15 years. FSA will rank applications using a number of factors including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland, and predominance of native species cover, and cost. The 2018 Farm Bill set aside 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment within the overall CRP acreage cap. Contact your local office for more information on CRPG and how to make an offer by May 15.

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|----------|------|--------------|------|-------------|------|
| Adams | \$3 | Grays Harbor | \$35 | Pierce | \$35 |
| Asotin | \$4 | Island | \$35 | San Juan | \$35 |
| Benton | \$19 | Jefferson | \$35 | Skagit | \$72 |
| Chelan | \$19 | King | \$65 | Skamania | \$35 |
| Clallam | \$35 | Kitsap | \$35 | Snohomish | \$87 |
| Clark | \$49 | Kittitas | \$19 | Spokane | \$6 |
| Columbia | \$4 | Klickitat | \$4 | Stevens | \$6 |
| Cowlitz | \$35 | Lewis | \$35 | Thurston | \$25 |
| Douglas | \$6 | Lincoln | \$6 | Wahkiakum | \$35 |
| Ferry | \$3 | Mason | \$35 | Walla Walla | \$20 |
| Franklin | \$6 | Okanogan | \$3 | Whatcom | \$42 |
| Garfield | \$4 | Pacific | \$35 | Whitman | \$5 |
| Grant | \$6 | Pend Oreille | \$3 | Yakima | \$19 |

Timely Report Your Crop Acreage

As we enter the spring season, we begin planning the plantings of our spring seeded crops. There is much that producers must consider when weighing their planting options each year. The Pacific Northwest is unique in that we utilize fall planted crops as a means of getting a jump start on our annual plantings. Producers have several questions to consider as they patiently wait for fall crops to begin to grow. Is the stand adequate to provide me with my expected yield? Is the crop damaged or lost? Am I going to have to replant? Do I need to contact my Insurance Company and report the loss? Do I need to contact the FSA office?

Each of these questions and several others may need to be asked. How you react to each scenario you are faced with will vary. Hopefully the following information will provide you with the information necessary to assist you in making sound decisions.

Reporting failed acreage. If you are insured, you will want to contact your crop insurance agent as soon as possible and report the losses. Depending on your level of insurance and/or coverages will depend on which options are available to you. You will want to follow their guidance to ensure you do not jeopardize your coverage.

You should also consider filing a failed acreage report with FSA. FSA differs from RMA in how we record and maintain failed acreages and the replacement crop you plant after the failed crop. Failed acreage credit must be sought by a producer before the crop acreage is destroyed, or disposition of the crop.

If you plant spring wheat in replacement of winter wheat that failed, FSA will only record the crop intended for harvest (Spring/Winter). FSA does not recognize winter wheat that fails when it is replanted to spring varieties.

If you follow failed winter wheat with another crop, you must elect which crop to maintain history for. To maintain your wheat planting history, you must file form FSA-576 within 15 calendar days of when the loss became apparent, and before destroying or planting the acreage to another crop, along with all supporting documentation to request the crop be reported as failed. The County Committee is required to review each request for approval. Any crop subsequently planted on the failed acreage will not be eligible for additional FSA assistance other than Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) when planting a MAL eligible crop. To file a failed acreage credit request, contact your county office for assistance.

You may also experience difficulties in getting your spring crops timely planted. **Prevented Planted** acreage and credit must be submitted no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date for the applicable crop. To file a prevented planting claim, contact your local FSA office and file form FSA-576 along with documentation supporting your intent to plant prevented crop. FSA will make a farm visit to verify the condition claimed on your request.

Another planting option that producers work with are **Cover Crops**. Cover crops and the benefits of planting cover crops have gained strong interest among agricultural producers. Cover crops fulfill a variety of farming objectives when put into practice. Cover crops include grasses, legumes, and forbs, for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. Although cover crops are primarily used for erosion control, soil health improvement, and water quality improvement, they must be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage, or cutting. The cover crop may be grazed, hayed or foraged, provided the primary use is a conserving cover. It is critical that you distinguish whether the crop is being used primarily for cover, grain, grazing or forage. To be an acceptable cover crop, the crop must be properly terminated according to USDA Cover Crop Termination Guidelines. Acreages

reported as cover crops must be updated upon termination to ensure all cropland on the farm is recorded per program requirements.

Crop acreage is not required to be reported as **organic**; however, a producer may choose to report organic. Producers participating in NAP that want to use the organic price, must report the crop acreage as organic. The buffer zone acreage must be included in the reported organic crop acreage of the unit that it buffers, either transitional or certified organic, and reported on the same basis.

Producers must provide a current organic plan, organic certification (written certificate), or documentation from a certifying agent indicating and organic plan is in effect. Your organic plan and written certification must provide the following information:

- Name of person(s) certified
- Address
- Telephone number
- Effective date of certification
- Certificate number
- List of commodities certified
- Name and address of the certifying agent
- A map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic crops, including the buffer zones.

Crop acreage reports cannot be accepted by FSA prior to the crop being planted or reported as prevented planted. FSA encourages producers to file their acreage reports as soon as practical after planting is complete. You should be prepared to provide the; crop, type, irrigation practice, intended use, planted acreage, planting date and crop shares for each field or crop. If you are uncertain of the acreage planted, you may consider requesting a measurement service from FSA after planting is complete. Your paid requests for measurement service must be made prior to the final **acreage reporting date** (ARD) for the crop. In Washington State all spring seeded crops and perennial forage crops have an ARD of July 15, 2020.

With the heightened concerns associated with COVID-19 (Corona Virus), making prior arrangements to provide the county office all the information necessary to record your acreages, is extremely important. FSA is working to develop methods for you to file acreage data remotely, but we are not there yet. Please contact your county office at your earliest opportunity and establish an appointment to provide you acreage data.

Report Damage or Loss of NAP Covered Crops Immediately

If spring weather causes damage to or loss of your NAP covered crops, you must report this to your local FSA county office timely.

NAP notices of loss can be initiated by phone, email, or fax, but must be submitted in writing, to your local FSA county office for weather related events or adverse natural occurrences that cause damage to or loss of the NAP covered crop. To report crop damage or loss you must complete, sign, and file the loss portion of form CCC-576 with your FSA office by the earlier of either of the following:

- **15 calendar days** after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop or commodity first becomes apparent or

- **15 calendar days** after the normal harvest date.

Please note, producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA **within 72 hours** of when a loss becomes apparent. The initial notification can be made by email, fax, or phone.

While FSA county offices are closed to the public as a health and safety precaution against the spread of COVID-19, offices will take initial NAP notice of loss notifications via phone, email, or fax. Offices will assist producers in completing the official CCC-576 Notice of Loss Form as best as possible, sending the form to producers via email, fax, or mail for final review and signature. The completed and signed CCC-576 should then be returned to the county office as soon as possible via email, fax, or mail.

As the 2020 crop year progresses, it is imperative that a notice of loss is filed (for all affected NAP covered crops) within the timeframe noted above for each weather-related event or adverse natural occurrence. This will ensure FSA is notified that your NAP covered crop or crops have been damaged or lost. If the loss event is approved, remember to provide your crop production to your local FSA county office within 60 days after harvest or request an appraisal within 60 days of the normal harvest date so that the payment portion of form CCC-576 can be filed timely.

When a covered crop is lost or damage is significant, replanting is required if feasible and the final planting date has not passed. When you determine that the crop will be destroyed, abandoned, or not taken to harvest as intended, you must report this to your local FSA office so a field visit can be conducted by a certified loss adjuster. Once the crop appraisal has been completed, the loss adjuster will release the field and you can destroy the covered crop acres and replant to a different crop or harvest the acres for a different use.

Remember, failure to timely notify your FSA county office of NAP covered crop damage or loss will result in denial of NAP payment benefits. Destroying NAP covered crop acres or harvesting for a different use without a loss adjuster appraisal will result in those acres being determined ineligible for NAP payment benefits.

If you have any questions about NAP policy requirements, contact your local [county FSA office](#) for more information.

Deadlines for Commodity Loans and LDPs Approaching

Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) provide financing and marketing assistance for feed grains, soybeans, and pulse crops. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is triggered.

FSA is still accepting requests for 2019 MALs and LDPs for certain eligible commodities after harvest. The final date to request a MAL or LDP for 2019 corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, rice, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, and sunflower seeds is **May 31, 2020**. At this time, with FSA county offices closed to the public as a health and safety precaution against the spread of COVID-19, initial MAL or LDP requests can be made via phone, fax, email, or mail. If a MAL or LDP is requested, FSA county offices will assist producers in completing the official CCC-666 Commodity Loan Request or the CCC-633EZ LDP Agreement and Request, sending the form

to producers via email, fax, or mail for final review and signature. The completed and signed forms should then be returned to the county office as soon as possible via email, fax, or mail.

To be eligible for a commodity loan the crop must have been produced, mechanically harvested, and be in a storable condition. Loan applicants must be in compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements. Acreage reports for all cropland on your farms must be on file, and you must retain beneficial interest in the commodity until the loan is repaid or Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) takes title to the commodity. Producers are responsible for maintaining the quantity and quality of the commodity pledged as collateral for a farm-stored or warehouse-stored loan. Commodity loans mature nine months after the month the loan is approved and funds have been disbursed.

Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) have triggered for chickpeas and lentils. LDP's are direct payments made in lieu of a marketing assistance loan when the CCC determined value, which is based on the current local price, is below the applicable loan rate. For chickpeas and lentils, the local prices and loan rates are set at a national level. The payment is the difference between the price and loan rate times the eligible quantity. Pulse crop LDP rates are updated on a weekly basis.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form [CCC-633EZ, Page 1](#) on file at their local FSA office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. For chickpeas and lentils, page 2 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested. Payments are processed after page 2 has been submitted and approved.

In order to receive a MAL or LDP, all related application forms must be completed and submitted to your local FSA office prior to loss of beneficial interest. Additional eligibility requirements must be met before payments can be paid. This includes a 2019 FSA-578 acreage report for all crop acres, a CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income Certification, a CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan, an AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Certification, and a direct deposit form or waiver.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, please contact your local [county FSA office](#).

2020 ARCPLC ENROLLMENT ENDS JUNE 30TH

The enrollment period for 2020 ARCPLC continues until June 30, 2020. While some producers were able to enroll for both 2019 and 2020 at the same time, the majority of farms have not been enrolled for 2020. Producers may be able to make one appointment to complete spring acreage reporting and 2020 ARCPLC enrollment at the same time! If you are unsure whether you have completed your 2020 ARCPLC enrollment, contact your County Office. Please don't miss this important deadline for 2020 ARCPLC.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before a project is approved.

For all FSA programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions, such as site preparation or ground disturbance are approved. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP), Farm Storage Facility

Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Important Dates and Deadlines

April 1, 2020 – Beginning of the Primary Nesting Season for CRP. Activities on established CRP stands are prohibited April 1 through July 1 unless specifically authorized by FSA on a contract by contract basis. This restriction does not apply to contracts where the cover is being established at this time.

May 15, 2020 – Deadline to signup for CRP Grasslands.

May 31, 2020 – Final date to request a MAL or LDP on 2019 corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, rice, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, and sunflower seeds.

June 30, 2020 – Deadline to enroll in 2020 ARC/PLC.

August 21, 2020 – Deadline to submit completed and signed offers to re-enroll land in continuous CRP and CREP.

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).