



Start here to find help if you were hit by floods

By JOY McCLAIN

REPLANTING decisions for those of you wracked by flooding are now behind you. But there's next year, and devastation left behind by the flood won't heal itself. Where do you go for help?

If you haven't already visited the Farm Service Agency, do so soon.

Sign-up for some conservation disaster relief programs may have already passed. However, by staying in touch with local FSA personnel, plus staff at your local soil and water conservation district and the Natural Resources

Key Points

- Check out general disaster assistance at FSA.
- IDEM to help producers work out temporary manure storage.
- Several Web sites can point you to help.

Conservation Service office, you'll quickly know if further aid comes along.

Here are other places that can help you if you were affected. Please note that since the aftermath of the flood crisis is still evolving, some details might have changed since this article went to press.

Check at agencies

Reporting the loss of equipment, crops, livestock, fencing and more at FSA is prudent. Some are already finding that "unintended consequences" of the flood are showing up weeks later. These include well pumps that go bad or polluted wells. It may help if you are on record as having flooding should unexpected damage impact your operation later.

You may also want to register with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. Ask FSA for help in contacting FEMA. Inquire about low-interest loans.

By now, you likely know if you were covered by flood insurance. If you weren't covered USDA is implementing the General Disaster Assistance program that will enable farmers to pick up insurance for a fee, with payment coming in 2009. Rules are still being developed. Stay in touch with FSA.

The Division of Soil Conservation, part of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, is serving as sort of a triage for farmers who suffered damage, notes Tammy Lawson, head of the division. Once her office is contacted, a field staff person can visit the farm to make an assessment and set priorities.

Through this division, you could receive help with personal loss, livestock issues, land restoration and bank stabilization. Lawson hopes her office

JUST A NIGHTMARE? Unfortunately the June flooding was real. On the positive side, many state and federal agencies offer help for agriculture and farm families.

can be the liaison between you and agencies that can help.

Livestock issues

If you have a livestock operation and won't have enough storage in your lagoon until fall due to the flood, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. IDEM is helping set up temporary storage options. Government leaders asked IDEM to do all they can to help flood victims without breaking the law.

The Indiana Board of Animal Health issued a cautionary statement to livestock producers about repercussions from organisms that may have been in the soil for years, only to be brought up in floodwaters. Their primary concern is anthrax.

Officials hope rains after major flooding helped wash possible organisms away. However, BOAH warns that it's possible alfalfa, fescue and other grazing materials could be contaminated. Contact your vet immediately if sick animals show up and you're not familiar with the symptoms. This threat is to animals, not humans.

Other reminders

Farmers aren't usually candidates for unemployment. However, in times of a major disaster, farmers might qualify for benefits. Contact your local Work Force Division office for

State offers aid through T-Cap

INDIANA State Treasurer Richard Mourdock recently established the Treasurer's Conservation Assistance Program, which will be known as T-Cap. The goal is to provide assistance to farmers who suffered damage to farmlands due to flooding.

T-Cap will be funded through \$50 million of state deposits designated as a source for low-cost loans to farmers, the treasurer says. They will be considered local monies by USDA, and could result in federal matching grants of more than \$200 million.

These low-interest loans can also be used to help pay your share of repair costs from USDA's Emergency Conservation and Emergency Watershed programs.

details. Deadlines may apply.

Remember that besides emergency conservation programs, the continuous Conservation Reserve Program is an option. It's ongoing, and provides cost-share and incentives for qualifying waterways, levees, and filter and buffer strips. Contact FSA and/or NRCS for details.

McClain writes from Greenwood.

Important contacts for flood aid

Indiana Disaster Assistance for Agriculture checklist:
www.emergency.in.gov/agriculture

T-Cap loan program from Indiana state treasurer:
www.state.in.us/tos/2829.htm

Questions about USDA programs:
www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field_offices.html

Assistance with Indiana State Department of Ag program:
www.in.gov/isda/2338.htm

Indiana Board of Animal Health:
www.boah.in.gov or call 317-227-0300

Indiana Department of Environmental Management:
www.state.in.us/idem; call 317-232-8603, main line; or the emergency hotline 24 hours a day, 888-233-7745

Division of Soil Conservation:
www.in.gov/isda/2328 or call 317-232-8770