

NEWS RELEASE



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USDA Sets Up Temporary Service Center for Bartholomew County

INDIANAPOLIS, June 18, 2008—The USDA Service Center in Columbus, which serves Bartholomew County landowners, was inundated with flood waters on Saturday, June 7 in the same waters that flooded the Bartholomew County Hospital and Cummins Engine. The files, desks, chairs, computers, copiers, scanners, phones and the other office equipment were covered with flood water that left a coating of silty slime on everything as it receded.

Before the flood the Service Center housed two USDA agencies, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), plus the Bartholomew County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The organizations administer USDA benefits and conservation programs, and do millions of dollars worth of business with Bartholomew county landowners every year.

“Leaders of all three organizations met in Columbus three days after the event to plan the recovery of services to local landowners,” says Jane Hardisty, state conservationist for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. “We are setting up a temporary office in North Vernon, our closest office site to Columbus. We can connect to our computer and phone networks there, which are critical to our operations. We’ll operate from there until we can resume operations in Columbus.”

“And, we found a contractor who specializes in salvaging important documents from flood situations,” says FSA State Executive Director Kenny Culp. “So it looks like we can save the contract files on loans, commodity payments, crop insurance and the like, plus the original conservation plans, a lot of engineering plans and other critical documents. The document recovery will save us and Bartholomew County farmers a lot of time and grief.”

“For now, Bartholomew County farmers who need to contact us can call the same Columbus phone numbers. The phone lines have been forwarded to our temporary North Vernon site,” says Culp. “We are also available by way of email at the same email addresses as before.”

The temporary location of the Columbus USDA Service Center is in USDA offices at 2600 N. State Hwy 7, North Vernon, Indiana.

Phone numbers are:

Farm Service Agency – (812) 378-1280, Ext. 100

Natural Resources Conservation Service – 812-378-1280, Ext. 3

Bartholomew County Soil & Water Conservation District – 812-378-1280, Ext. 3

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