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News Release

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USDA Authorizes Additional Flexibilities for Producers in Northern Great Plains

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2017 – On June 23 Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue authorized emergency grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres during the primary nesting season in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana in the counties meeting D2 or greater, as indicated by the US Drought Monitor. Since that time the drought has continued to deepen and the forecast is for hot, dry weather in the upcoming week in the northern plains. As such, the Secretary is authorizing emergency grazing of CRP for any county in which any part of its border lies within 150 miles of a county approved for emergency grazing of CRP.

In addition, for any county in which any part of its border lies within 150 miles of any county approved for emergency grazing of CRP, USDA will allow CRP contract holders who hay their acreage according to their mid-management conservation plan to donate their hay to livestock producers. CRP contract holders still have the ability to sell their hay with a 25-percent reduction in their annual rental payment as they've been fully authorized to do in the past.

Emergency haying is not authorized at this time. The Secretary will continue to monitor conditions and will consider expanding emergency authority if conditions worsen.

Eligible CRP participants can use the acreage for grazing their own livestock or may grant another livestock producer use of the CRP acreage. There will be no CRP annual rental payment reductions assessed for acres grazed.

A map displaying counties approved for CRP emergency grazing and the donation of hay under mid-contract management authority, will be available at:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/emergency-haying-and-grazing/index>

To take advantage of the emergency grazing provisions, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Center visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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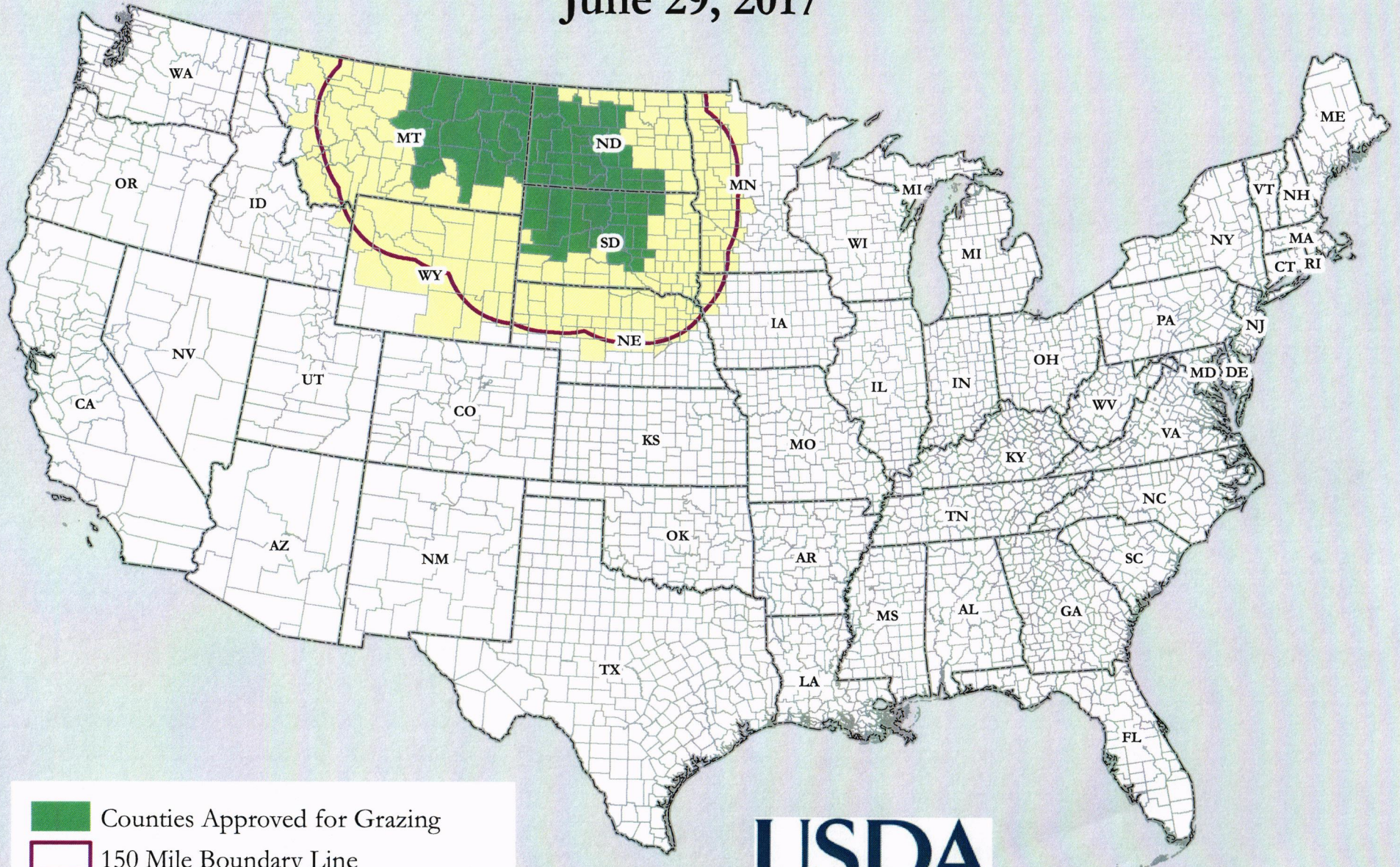
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
COUNCIL 2017-18




June 30, 2017

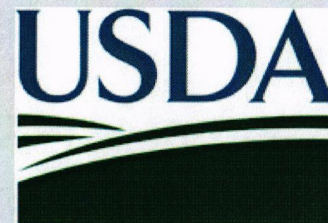
Exhibit 6

Counties Approved For CRP Emergency Grazing (2017)

June 29, 2017



-  Counties Approved for Grazing
-  150 Mile Boundary Line
-  Counties in 150 Mile Expanded Area



U.S. Drought Monitor Montana

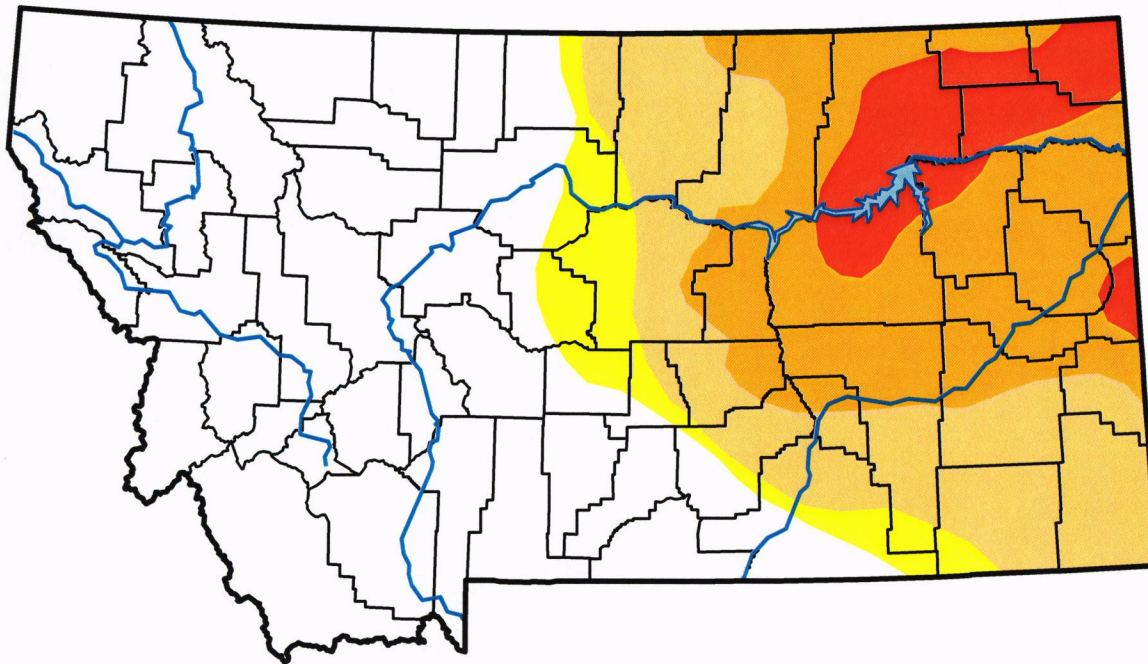
June 27, 2017

(Released Thursday, Jun. 29, 2017)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	52.28	47.72	42.11	25.17	6.77	0.00
Last Week <i>06-20-2017</i>	56.31	43.69	27.11	12.34	6.37	0.00
3 Months Ago <i>03-28-2017</i>	86.71	13.29	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <i>01-03-2017</i>	74.25	25.75	4.87	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year <i>09-27-2016</i>	55.14	44.86	25.49	5.86	0.33	0.00
One Year Ago <i>06-28-2016</i>	68.82	31.18	8.69	0.27	0.00	0.00



Intensity:



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

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NCEI/NOAA



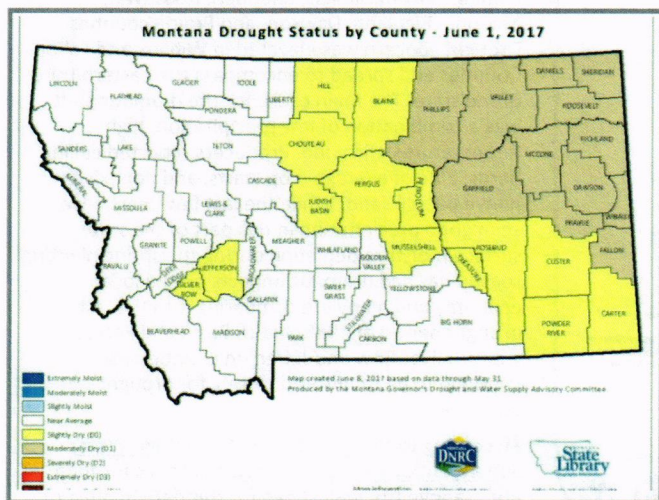
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Montana — Drought Indicators

Montana Drought Status by County

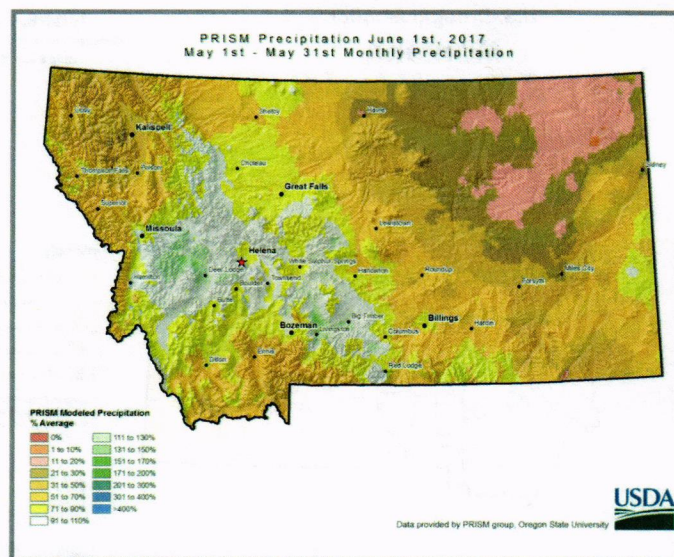
The Montana Drought Status by County is a monthly assessment tool used to monitor the moisture at a county level for the state. Temperature, precipitation, snowpack, reservoirs status, surface water gages, groundwater, crop reports, and field reports are compiled to create this map. To see a historical record go here: [https://mslservices.mt.gov/Geographic Information/Maps/drought/](https://mslservices.mt.gov/Geographic%20Information/Maps/drought/)

Do you have impacts to report? We need your on-the-ground reports and you can send them to amontague@mt.gov



Water Resources

The big news for May was low precipitation across the state. Areas saw as little as 11-20% of average precipitation during a month that typically is very wet. A few places in Richland, Roosevelt, and Daniels counties saw as little as 1-10% of average precipitation. The lack of rainfall impacted the ability of producers to plant and grow crops, especially in the northeast.



Montana — Short- and Long-term Outlooks

Weather and Drought Outlooks

For the next month there are equal chances of above, normal, or below average temperatures for the majority of the state. There is a 33% chance of above average temperatures for the south and southeast. Precipitation for the majority of the state holds a 33-40% probability of being above average.

Looking further out, the Jul-Aug-Sep period shows a 33% chance of above average temperatures for the most western and southeastern edges of the state, while the rest of the state has equal chances of above, below or normal temperatures. There is a 33-40% chance of above average precipitation for the eastern two thirds of the state.

Although there is less certainty when looking at predictions beyond the next three months, both temperatures and precipitation rates are expected to be above average.

Drought conditions are expected to increase in the northern plains and should remain closely monitored in 2017. Read the [National Drought Mitigation Center's Drought and Climate for May 2017 Report](#) to learn more.

Need a Forecast?
Visit your local National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office for the most up-to-date forecast at: <http://www.weather.gov>

Heard Around the State

The Northeast is exceptionally dry with many producers calling for emergency assistance. The Roosevelt County Commissioners submitted a request to Governor Bullock for a USDA Drought Designation. The Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee will consider drought declarations for several counties in the Northeast at its next meeting on June 20, 2017 from 9-11am. Watch it live here: <http://stream.vision.net/MT-gov/>

Partners

- Montana State Climate Office www.climate.umd.edu
- National Weather Service
 - Great Falls Weather Forecast Office www.wrh.noaa.gov/tfx/
 - Missoula Weather Forecast Office www.wrh.noaa.gov/mso/
 - Billings Weather Forecast Office www.wrh.noaa.gov/byz/
- Natural Resource Conservation Service, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mt/snow/
- Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology data.mbm.g.mtech.edu/mapper/
- Montana State Library mslservices.mt.gov
- United States Geologic Survey <http://wy-mt.water.usgs.gov/>
- Bureau of Reclamation, AGRImet www.usbr.gov/pn/agrimet/h2ouse.html
- National Agricultural Statistics Service [www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics by State/Montana/](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics%20by%20State/Montana/)

Stay Tuned and In Touch

The next Montana Drought Impacts and Outlook Summary will be released around July 15th. If you need information in the meantime, please reach out to any of the partners listed to the right or contact Ada Montague directly at amontague@mt.gov.

Read the NOAA National Drought Overview at: <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/drought/201611#detailed-discussion>

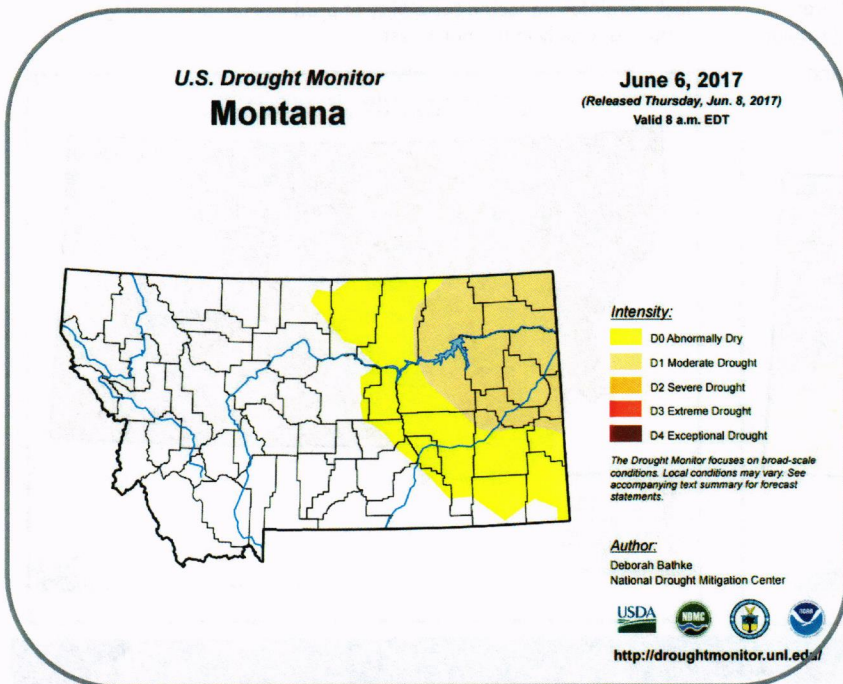
Montana — May 2017 Drought Conditions

Highlights for the State

May brought a sharp change in conditions in the eastern part of Montana. As early as April 30th reports of exceptionally dry conditions started coming in from Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt, McCone, Richland, Dawson, and Prairie counties. Drought concern was elevated in Wibaux and Fallon Counties and spread to encompass the eastern third of the state. The main cause for the dramatic shift was a combination of low precipitation, high temperatures and wind. Producers reported culling herds, 20% of average crop starts, and nonexistent native pastureland. While the last few years have seen good precipitation in this part of the state, surface moisture depletion during the spring planting season has had dramatic impacts on the local economy and many are comparing it to the last drought period of 1988. Judith Basin and Fergus, as well as Silver Bow and Jefferson counties also continue to be monitored closely for drought conditions.

According to the [June 1st NRCS Montana Water Supply Outlook Report](#), "Snowpack totals for June 1st are ... above [to] well above for this date in most of the Montana river basins, only a few low elevation ranges in the central part of the state continue to have below normal snowpack." Of particular concern are the Headwaters of the Missouri (77% of normal) and the Smith-Judith-Musselshell (64% of normal).

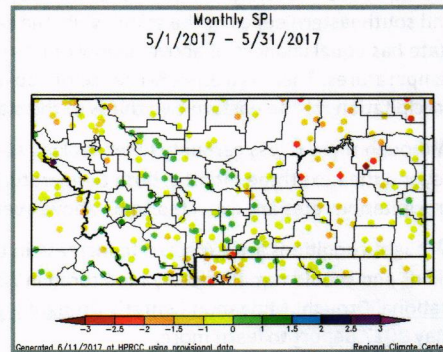
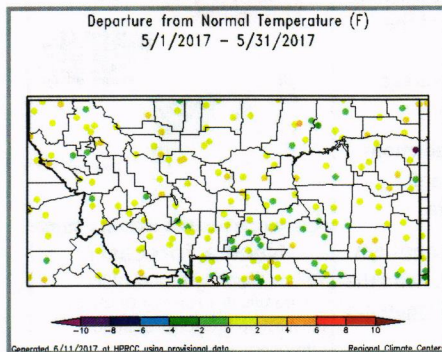
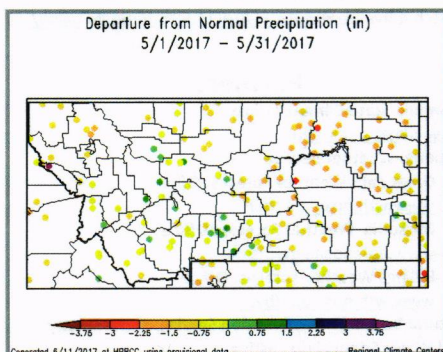
Reservoirs remain normal for this time of year.



The U.S. Drought Monitor, is a weekly map of drought conditions produced jointly by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The U.S. Drought Monitor website is hosted and maintained by the NDMC. <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

Montana — Climate Overview for Last 30 Days

Temperature and Precipitation Anomalies

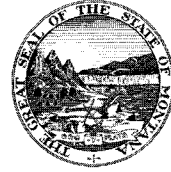


PERIOD	PRECIP	20 TH CENTURY AVERAGE	DEPARTURE	RANK	WETTEST/DRIEST SINCE	RECORD
May 2017	1.54"	2.42"	-0.88"	21 st Driest	Driest since: 2009	1937
1-month period	(39.12 mm)	(61.47 mm)	(-22.35 mm)	103 rd Wettest	Wettest since: 2016	1927
Ties: 1969						

May 2017 saw below average precipitation for most of the eastern half of the state for the period of record (1895-2017). May was the 21st driest in 122 years of record and the driest since 2009.

Temperatures over the 30-day period were slightly above normal across the state.

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Report from the Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee: June 2017 Response to Drought in Eastern Montana

The Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee met on June 20, 2017 and recommended the Governor issue an Executive Order declaring a Drought Disaster for the following areas:

Phillips, Valley, Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt, Richland, McCone, Garfield, Dawson, Prairie, Wibaux, Fallon, Carter, Custer, Powder River, Rosebud, Treasure, and Petroleum Counties, as well as the Fort Peck and Fort Belknap Indian Reservations.

Staff for the Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee reported conditions to the US Drought Monitor and recommended a degradation of conditions on the weekly Drought Monitor map produced.

On June 22, 2017 the US Drought Monitor map indicated severely degraded conditions from the previous week, including D3 or "Severe Drought" in Daniels, Garfield, McCone, Roosevelt, Sheridan and Valley Counties. (Attachment A)

As a result, a Secretarial Emergency Declaration was fast-tracked by the US Drought Monitor on June 22, 2017. A county containing any D3 (Extreme Drought) area on the US Drought Monitor Map will be fast-tracked for a Secretarial Emergency Designation, which allows emergency loans (EM) to be made available to producers suffering losses in those counties. Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office.

- Secretarial Designation:
 - Emergency Loan program: Producer is eligible if they have suffered a 30% loss in crop production or a physical loss to livestock, livestock products, real estate or chattel property. The producer can borrow up to 100% of the actual production or physical losses to a maximum amount of \$500,000.
- D2 on the drought monitor:
 - CRP Emergency Haying and Grazing: Producers may hay or graze their CRP acreage after receiving approval from FSA.
 - CRP Emergency grazing has been opened by the Secretary prior to the end of the primary nesting season. Producers may graze their CRP acreage after receiving approval from FSA. There is no payment reduction of their annual rental payment.
 - CRP Emergency haying has to be approved by the FSA State Office prior to the end of the primary nesting season. Producers may hay their CRP acreage after receiving approval from FSA and after the end of the primary nesting season. If the previous criteria are met, producers may hay their CRP beginning July 16th. There is no payment reduction of their annual rental payment.



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- LFP: Livestock Forage Program. County must be in a D2 status for eight consecutive weeks before producers receive one monthly payment.
- D3 on the drought monitor:
 - Emergency Conservation Program (ECP): County must be approved by the FSA state office before implementing ECP. Producers may submit an application for installing pipelines or water wells for livestock water facilities that have failed due to the drought.
 - LFP: Producers receive three monthly payments when the county has reached D3 on the drought monitor.

On June 23, 2017 the Governor sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture, the Honorable Sonny Perdue, requesting a Drought Disaster Designation per the request of the County Commissioners of Daniels, Roosevelt and Valley Counties in addition to the counties listed above and the Fort Belknap and Fort Peck Indian Reservations. (Attachment B) The Governor also issued an Executive Order triggering the following actions: (Attachment C)

- The Governor's EO made available "all necessary state government services, equipment and supplies under the Governor's declaration" to "further the efforts to protect natural and agricultural resources and economic interests."
- Motor carrier "hours of service" requirements were relieved to allow for transport of livestock, forage, water and agricultural implements.
- Directors of Montana Departments of Agriculture, Livestock, and DNRC "shall compel maximum employee assistance and cooperation with any agent of the USDA engaged in collecting information related to drought impacts to include soil conditions, loss of crops and forage, and impacts to livestock producers, for the purpose of securing timely economic assistance."
- Hay deliveries are expedited to the 19 counties and two Indian Reservations listed in the Executive Order.
- The Governor's Drought and Water Supply Advisory Committee will continue to monitor conditions and collect impact reports.

On June 23, 2017 Senator Tester wrote to Secretary Perdue as well encouraging the implementation of the USDA's Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program. He also urged the Secretary to approve emergency haying and grazing on CRP lands as soon as possible, noting that "while it's important to observe environmental safeguards, this is an extreme situation that requires all solutions to be on the table." (Attachment D)

On June 23, 2017 Secretary Perdue authorized emergency grazing on CRP lands in all drought impacted areas in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. The emergency grazing must be done through an approved modified conservation plan in cooperation with the NRCS. Unless conditions improve, CRP grazing will extend through September 30, 2017. (Attachment E)

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The following information was taken into account in determining there is an emergency drought:

- The above listed areas have experienced 5-25% of normal precipitation since the end of April. May was ranked Montana's 21st driest year in 122 years of record. Many of the National Weather Service stations in Northeastern Montana recorded the lowest precipitation levels ever for the period of record at each station.

April 1 - June 12 2017	Precip	Normal	% of Normal	Dry Rank
Glendive	2.04	4.56	45%	1st
Glasgow	1.13	3.86	29%	2nd
Sidney	2.08	4.24	49%	9th
Jordan	0.80	4.63	17%	NA
Circle	1.31	5.43	24%	1st
Fort Peck	0.59	4.10	14%	1st
Westby	0.56	4.01	14%	1st
Brockway	0.88	4.10	21%	1st
Saco	0.88	3.97	22%	1st
Port of Morgan	0.64	3.73	17%	2nd
Bredette	1.11	4.04	27%	2nd
Culbertson	1.00	4.03	25%	3rd

- Temperatures for the last thirty days (5/17/17 – 6/15/17) have been elevated across the state, with Phillips, Valley, Roosevelt, Richland, McCone, Dawson, Prairie, Garfield, Custer, Rosebud, Treasure, Carter, and Powder River seeing temperatures 1-4°F above normal for this time of year. The March – May timeframe saw elevated temperatures for the entire state, ranking it the 109th warmest in 122 years of record.
- While river flows remain normal across the state, economically Northeast and Eastern Montana are driven by dry land farming. As such, precipitation is critical for the spring planting months. The little rainfall received has evaporated due to high winds and high temperatures. The Evaporative Stress Index (ESI) as of June 11, 2017 had very high numbers for Northeast Montana. The Crop Moisture Index by Division for the week ending June 10, 2017 showed excessively dry conditions in Montana's three Northeastern climate divisions. The Crop Production Report for June 2017, released June 9, 2017, indicated that the forecast for winter wheat is down 26% from the 105.35 million bushels of crop produced last year. As a result, only 77.96 million bushels are anticipated this year.
- As for surface soil moisture and root zone soil moisture, 95-98% of all Mays since 1948 have been wetter than this year in the northern tier of Montana and the Northeast. The Northeast of



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Montana, and spreading into the entire east are in the 2nd to 10th percentile for wetness, while the rest of the state is fairly normal. The Total Column Soil Moisture Anomaly shows significant soil moisture depletion in eastern Montana.

- According to the Vegetation Drought Response Index (VEGDRI), much of eastern Montana is experiencing pre-drought stress. Moderate to severe drought is occurring in Dawson, McCone, Garfield, Valley, Daniels, Roosevelt, Richland, Wibaux, Prairie, Fallon, Carter, Powder River, Custer, and Rosebud counties. Cascade, Judith Basin, and Fergus counties are also experiencing pre-drought stress and some localized moderate drought. Areas south of Butte also show pre-drought to moderate drought.
- According to the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC), the onset of the drought in Eastern Montana came very quickly. The May 2017 Drought Impact Summary from the NDMC stated, "At month's end, drought areas were limited to the central Dakotas." However, by mid-June conditions had changed dramatically catching many by surprise. The NDMC's newly developed Quick Drought Response Index (QuickDri) showed that from May 28 to June 11, 2017, drought had developed quickly with soil temperatures reaching 70°F, topsoil moisture levels at 56% of normal, only 23% of emerged wheat being listed as good to excellent, cattle being sold, both yearlings and cow-calf pairs, indicating that producers are culling their herds, winter wheat being cut for hay instead of harvesting and the implementation of burn bans in North Dakota. Fort Peck Indian Tribe instituted a Disaster Declaration for the reservation (Attachment F). From May 14 to June 11, 2017 pasture range lands listed as in poor or very poor condition increased by 18% across the state. The US Drought Monitor indicated in its summary report for the week of June 13, 2017 that, "the central Plains and Midwest have abruptly become dry and warm during the past several weeks, raising concerns of rapid top soil moisture loss and declining crop conditions."
- SNOTEL sites in the Sun-Judith-Musselshell sub-basins continue to show below average snow accumulation with 29% of average Snow Water Equivalent (SWE). Above Fort Peck only 14% of SWE remains, while from Ft. Peck to Garrison 19% of SWE remains.
- The weather and climate outlook for the next few months indicates the potential for ¼" of rain in the next seven days. This amount of rain is unlikely to relieve any of the drought impacts being felt right now.
- Several field reports were sent from various producers and agency personnel from Northeast Montana:
 - On June 2, 2017 Department of Emergency Services received the following information from County Commissioners in Phillips, Sheridan, and Roosevelt Counties: "Because topsoil moisture was adequate when crops were planted, emergence is good. However, the first few weeks of June are critical, especially for wheat. If the proverbial 'million dollar rain' does not come by mid-June, some declarations could be forthcoming. Especially in Sheridan and Daniels Counties, recent changes in cropping patterns from wheat to pulse crops and some '75 day' corn cultivars, means this is not a 'business as usual' drought like we've experienced in the past. Whereas total acreage for such crops



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in NE Montana was very limited during previous drought years, it's higher now. My personal knowledge of such things is limited but research shows that crops such as dry peas and lentils that are planted early in the growing season complete a lot of their growth before the hot temperatures of summer set in. So, perhaps even more than wheat, they are dependent on late spring early summer rains. Those rains haven't come yet and with each passing day there's a growing (no pun intended) concern."

- The Roosevelt County Commissioners have since sent a request to Governor Bullock requesting assistance with a USDA Drought Disaster Designation (see attached).
- The Ft. Peck Indian Community declared a drought emergency on June 12, 2017. (Attachment F) The declaration reported that 2" of rain has fallen since January of 2017.
- As of June 23rd, 2017 the Ft. Belknap Indian Community was still waiting to get a quorum to declare a drought emergency. 2.56" of rain has fallen since January 1, 2017 for the weather station 2 miles SW of Ft. Belknap.
- The Chippewa- Cree on the Rocky Boy Reservation may also be considering a drought declaration. A total of 2.20" of rain has been recorded at Big Sandy near the Rocky Boy Reservation since January 2017.
- On June 2, 2017 the state's NRCS Field Offices had the following to report:

Dawson County

- The crops are really getting hurt and in some areas spring wheat hasn't come up at all.
- The winter wheat is not doing much, but I did hear that one producer's winter wheat had head out and wasn't very tall.
- The range grasses are not growing and I have had producers selling livestock because they want to have some grasses to get through the season.
- There will be No dryland hay this year.
- One of our insurance agents was in just now and she said that she is getting a lot of calls about nothing coming up.

Garfield County

- I've spoken to people in several parts of the county, and we are in a D2, Severe Drought in Garfield County.

Sheridan County

- It is extremely dry here in Sheridan County, and won't be long before crops and hay are a total loss at this rate.
- Plentywood, MT had 4th driest May on record (since 1947) with 0.4 inches.
- Medicine Lake, MT had driest May on record (since 1911) with 0.1 inches.

Roosevelt County

- Looking at Tuesday's USDA NASS Montana Crop Progress Release, which you probably have, the Roosevelt Co. weather stations; Culbertson, Wolf Point and Bredette are at 40 to 50 percent of normal growing season ppt.
- Spring seeded crops are at a critical point and need good moisture very soon, which is not predicted. Some damage has already occurred, but with good moisture, soon, most could still have a reasonable yield.
- Dryland range, pasture, winter wheat and hayland are to the point where production has been greatly reduced, and the plants are now maturing and

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making seed, so even if we were to get good moisture they will not come back to normal production this year.

- Today it's 95 degrees, windy, and more predicted.

Prairie County

- Prairie County is a pretty much a mirror of Dawson for drought.
 - There has been little growth in the rangeland. There are green spots but most of it is short and gray/blue/brown.
 - We have had NAP calls concerning spring planted dryland crops that are not expected to make it. On a personal note, I have a small field of barley hay and peas that was very nice to start with but has gone backward for the last 10 days to 2 weeks.
 - We are expecting claims from all of our NAP forage producers as I believe there will be little or no dryland hay cut in Prairie County.
 - At this point it will take a substantial amount of precipitation to make a difference. I have heard some producers are starting to sell off pairs also.
- The Ft. Peck Indian Community declared a drought emergency on June 12, 2017. (Attachment F) The declaration reported that 2" of rain has fallen since January of 2017. As of June 23rd, 2017 the Ft. Belknap Indian Community was still waiting to get a quorum to declare a drought emergency. 2.56" of rain has fallen since January 1, 2017 for the weather station 2 miles SW of Ft. Belknap. The Chippewa- Cree on the Rocky Boy Reservation may also be considering a drought declaration. A total of 2.20" of rain has been recorded at Big Sandy near the Rocky Boy Reservation since January 2017.
 - The DNRC Regional Office in Glasgow reported that this is the 2nd driest spring on record, but the numbers don't say it all. Last year they had 10" of rain since January, this year they only got 2.6". In addition, there's been relentless wind with gusts over 30 mph. May was exceptionally dry with ½" of rain that evaporated quickly due to the wind. The Milk and Missouri irrigators are struggling too with the dry conditions.
 - The Montana State Extension Service in Valley County sent a report indicating that drought had contributed to poor crop emergence and replanting issues in the county. Precipitations levels below ½ an inch in two months were cited as a major contributing factor to the poor growing conditions. In addition to the lack of soil moisture, winds averaging in excess of 20 mph have occurred every day since early March. The combination of high winds and low precipitation led to the top six inches of soil and deeper are moisture depleted. In addition, soil erosion is beginning to effect conventional tillage fields. Many of the crops planted May 20 – June 12 have failed to emerge or have had spotty emergence. Replanting is ill-advised at this time until more moisture comes, which could happen too late in the growing season. She does not recommend growers replant at this time. Currently seeded crops may emerge if given sufficient moisture, and could have enough growing season to mature if received prior to June 15. For pulse crops the temperatures after May 15 are too excessive during flowering to allow for good crop production so yields would be vastly reduced. For small grains the maturation period is 140 days from seeding (under optimal conditions) so if seeded today, the crop would not mature until October 30th. In Valley County, the first frost date is September 19. Crops that may be hayed instead of harvested would not be ready to swath until at least the first of October for optimal protein and forage quality.

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Additionally, nitrate concentrations under drought conditions in small grain crops cut for hay is a serious concern. From a livestock perspective, range and pasture grasses have gone dormant and forage availability is declining rapidly. Livestock producers have contacted her office looking for hay as early as May 22nd and some have begun to feed reserved hay to their cattle on pasture. Livestock ponds and watering holes are completely dry or have developed water quality issues due to the lack of precipitation. Cattlemen are contemplating the sale of their livestock in the face of insufficient summer forage and winter hay.

- A Farm Service Agent out of Custer County sent in a report that appraisal data from 2015-2017 show grazing, grass and small grain losses. The drought impacts are going to hit this area harder and it should be represented better on the US Drought Monitor.
- The Montana Department of Agriculture received a phone call from a rancher in Dawson County southeast of Glendive indicating that she was very concerned she and her fellow ranchers are having to reduce her sizes because of poor pasture conditions and low expected hay production as well. She also said some of the dryland farms in the area are losing crops as well.
- A producer in Dawson County sent in a statement indicating that drought conditions are severe. Their spring grasses didn't come up for the most part and they were in a drought before the rest of the area was even worrying about drought. Until Jun 9th they had only received about ½" of precipitation for the entire year. Due to a very dry fall, their pastures had been grazed down and the only new grasses to come up this spring were in creek bottoms. They sold a semi-load of cows on May 26th and have been fencing every little bit of grass area they can find to lease just to feed their livestock. Their crops went in the ground in a very timely manner but have not grown. They farm to raise grains for cattle and some cash wheat. They have nothing to hay and have used all hay reserves and have purchased more. They are concerned because no grazing + no hay + no grain + no feed = no income. There is a Conservation Reserve ground adjoining theirs owned by people who live out of the area. The neighboring property owners are willing to let them graze it, but this is the only feed available and it is a tinder box of dry fuel for a fire which they greatly fear. The worst part, according to the producer, is that this land lies just to the northwest of their two ranch houses, barns and corrals. That is the direction from which the prevailing winds blow. They request that the CRP lands be opened immediately so they can both feed their cattle and diminish the fire hazard.
- A banker and producer operating in Roosevelt, Dawson, Richland and McCone Counties wrote a statement indicating that the drought conditions in eastern Montana have not been seen since 1988. The crop yield potential and forage growth/availability will be reduced to a small percentage of normal. The region is past the time frame where precipitation would be beneficial to save or increase yield potential on developing crops, forage fields, and pastureland. The effects include reduced dryland hay production to 0-15% of normal tonnage; native pastureland growth is nonexistent and starting to brown; livestock reservoirs, streams, and creeks are either dry or nearly dried up; winter wheat is a complete loss; spring seeded crops (wheat, durum, peas, chickpeas, lentils, barley, etc) are starting to mature at 20% of normal plant size; potential yields will be limited to less than 20% of average at best. These conditions, the statement reads, are the direct result of receiving minimal precipitation since April 1, 2017. Multiple National Weather Service reporting stations in Eastern Montana are reporting the last 90 days as the driest



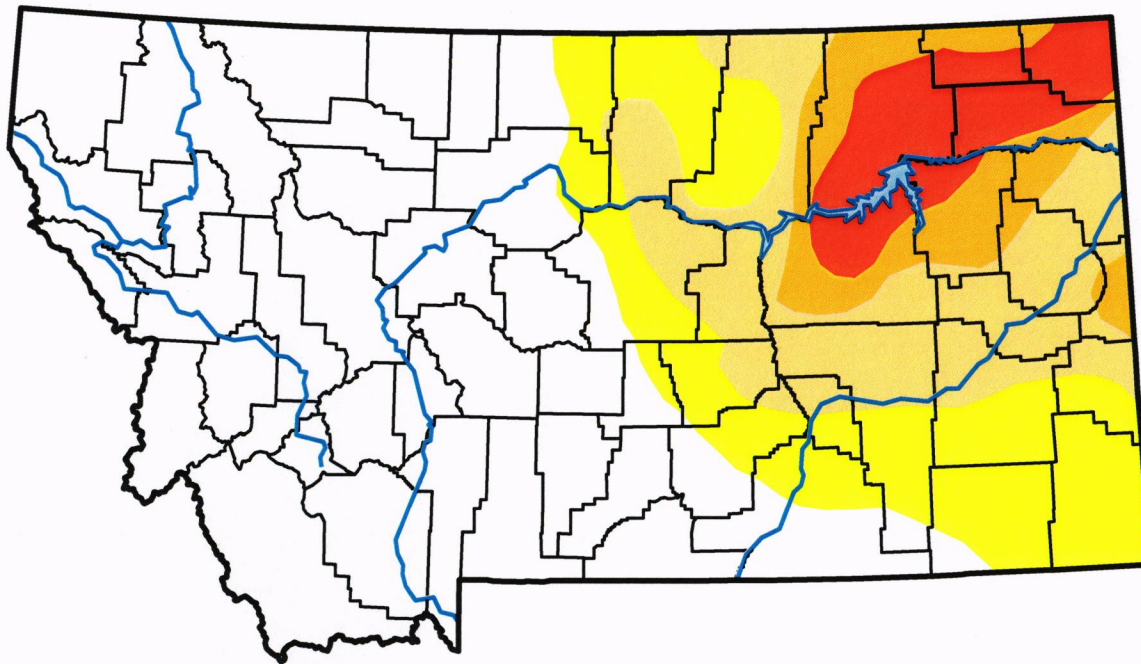
June 28, 2017

on record. He calls for the programs created to aide in drought conditions to be made available. There is no need to delay for further impacts.

- A producer from Prairie County indicated that it is drier there than he has ever seen it in his 41 years of ranching in the area. He reported a total of 1.41" of precipitation fell since January 1, 2017. He reports no snow fell last winter, reservoirs are dry, springs are drying up and grass is short. There will be no hay this year, and he is selling down his cow herd. The grasshoppers are numerous. He doesn't quite know how they will get through this, but a cool, wet summer would certainly help.
- A producer from McCone County indicated that they have had 0.6" of rain in the last two and a half months. She has no crop, no hay and no grass. Everything is brown and it looks like October. She has had crops seeded since the 10th of May but nothing has sprouted or emerged. What has come up is stressed. She requests that CRP lands be opened up and that disaster benefits made available so they can keep their cows and ranch.
- According to the US Drought Monitor Discussion Group, cattle producers are selling off cattle in Dawson, Richland, McCone, Roosevelt, Prairie, Wibaux, and Fallon counties due to concerns over available forage. Forage growth in northeastern Montana was limited and dryland crops were suffering from the lack of rain. Ranchers in the Eastern Hi-Line region of Montana have begun selling cattle, due to poor pasture growth from lack of rain, and wheat growers need rain to salvage their crop. Pastures, hay land and crops were all desperate for moisture, leaving farmers praying fervently for rain. The spring rain ended just after mid-April leaving young crops just emerging and without a developed root system to reach deeper to find moisture. Farmers were haying about two weeks early since plants were not growing, and a second cutting is very unlikely to happen.
- The vice president of the Garfield County Conservation District reported that they've had 1/2" of rain since April 1st, 2017. The nearest town of Cohogen had 1.01" of moisture since January 1, 2017. It looks like the 1st of August. All the winter wheat was put up for hay. If you dig in the soil you can find all the seeds and fertilizer planted there six weeks ago. Nothing has germinated. He has 700 acres in hay and the loss assessment is almost total. Typically they get 0.7 tons/acre. The grasses are getting grazed down by the cows and once its gone nothing grows to replace it. People are selling cow-calf pairs, which is a total loss for them when they do this. He was born and raised on his ranch and has been ranching it himself since 1985. He is 56 years old. This is the worst drought he has ever seen. He says opening up the CRP lands would help. He said that the nesting period calculated for the area is too long. By July 15th all the nesting birds are long gone. Duck Creek, which runs through his property, is dry in June for the first time ever. Garfield County Bank declared it the driest since 1905. Wheat production is down and along with it calf weights. This means a major economic impact for producers, Montana, and potentially the country if North Dakota is also struggling. There is no hay from here to Bismark. They've had 35/50 mph winds blowing every day for 60 days straight. They dug some post holes on their property and it was bone dry 3 feet down.

U.S. Drought Monitor Montana

June 20, 2017
(Released Thursday, Jun. 22, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	56.31	43.69	27.11	12.34	6.37	0.00
Last Week <i>06-13-2017</i>	64.27	35.73	20.55	10.02	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago <i>03-21-2017</i>	86.71	13.29	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <i>01-03-2017</i>	74.25	25.75	4.87	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year <i>09-27-2016</i>	55.14	44.86	25.49	5.86	0.33	0.00
One Year Ago <i>06-21-2016</i>	71.10	28.90	8.02	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:

David Miskus
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

B

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

June 23, 2017

Sonny Perdue, Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I have received a request for a Drought Disaster Designation by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture from the Commissioners of Daniels, Roosevelt and Valley Counties due to the rapid onset of drought. In addition, the Fort Peck Tribal Council has declared a drought disaster for the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the counties of Hill, Blaine, Phillips, Sheridan, Richland, McCone, Garfield, Dawson, Prairie, Wibaux, Fallon, Carter, Custer, Powder River, Rosebud and Petroleum Counties and the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation are experiencing similar conditions.

These areas have only received 5 to 25 percent of normal precipitation since the end of April. May was ranked Montana's 21st driest month in 122 years of records. Many of the National Weather Service stations in Northeastern Montana recorded the lowest precipitation levels ever.

As of this week, Daniels, Garfield, McCone, Roosevelt, Sheridan and Valley Counties are eligible for a Secretarial Designation based on their designation on the drought monitor as being in "D3 – Extreme Drought." I request that the other jurisdictions mentioned above also be included in a Designation.

I am forwarding a copy of this letter to the State Farm Service Agency office so they may begin the process of compiling the necessary damage assessment information.

Your prompt review and approval of this request will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

Cc: Hill County Commissioners
Blaine County Commissioners
Phillips County Commissioners
Valley County Commissioners
Daniels County Commissioners
Sheridan County Commissioners
Roosevelt County Commissioners
Richland County Commissioners
McCone County Commissioners
Garfield County Commissioners
Dawson County Commissioners
Prairie County Commissioners
Wibaux County Commissioners
Fallon County Commissioners
Carter County Commissioners
Custer County Commissioners
Powder River County Commissioners
Rosebud County Commissioners
Petroleum County Commissioners
Fort Peck Tribal Council
Fort Belknap Tribal Council
Ben Thomas, Montana Department of Agriculture
Mike Honeycutt, Montana Department of Livestock
Major General Matthew T. Quinn, Department of Military Affairs
Delila Bruno, Disaster and Emergency Services
Amy Webbink, Montana State Farm Service Agency
Cheri Kilby, Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator

c

**STATE OF MONTANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 5-2017**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER DECLARING A DROUGHT EMERGENCY TO EXIST WITHIN
CERTAIN COUNTIES AND INDIAN RESERVATIONS IN THE STATE OF MONTANA**

WHEREAS, since on or about April 1, 2017, a widespread and sustained abnormally dry weather pattern has created worsening drought conditions in eastern and central Montana due to a lack of soil moisture and precipitation, including moderate to severe conditions in nineteen Montana counties and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and Fort Belknap Indian Reservation;

WHEREAS, projected short and long-range weather forecasts are not expected to alleviate these drought conditions, which currently indicate soil moistures between five and twenty-five percent of normal in affected regions;

WHEREAS, these drought conditions continue to cause significant and widespread damage to agricultural crops, including livestock forage, forcing Montana's farmers and ranchers to suffer economic hardships;

WHEREAS, fuel moistures across forest and range acreages in northeast Montana, including those acreages enrolled in conservation reserve programs, are approaching record low levels, increasing the probability of fire warranting the pre-positioning of fire severity suppression resources in northeast Montana due to high fire danger;

WHEREAS, in response to these conditions and continued economic losses incurred by citizens in their communities, elected officials from Daniels, Dawson and Roosevelt counties and the Fort Peck Tribes have petitioned the Governor of the State of Montana to seek a Drought Designation from the United States Secretary of Agriculture in order to foster federal financial relief and allow for haying and grazing of conservation reserve program lands;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Mont. Code. Ann. §§ 10-3-104 and 10-3-302, the Governor has authority to declare an emergency when there is an imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or manmade causes including drought, and may suspend the provisions of any agency rule, requirement, or standard if strict compliance would prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the emergency;

WHEREAS, the availability and use of all necessary state government services, equipment and supplies under this declaration will further the efforts to protect the natural and agricultural resources and economic interests of the people of the State of Montana; and

WHEREAS, relieving “hours of service” requirements for commercial motor carrier vehicles in Montana, provided for in Mont. Code Ann. § 61-10-154 and A.R.M. § 18.8.1502, will assist Montanans by reducing restrictions on the transport of livestock, forage, water, and agricultural implements.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, STEVE BULLOCK, Governor of the State of Montana, pursuant to the authority vested in me under the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, Title 10, Chapter 3, Mont. Code Ann., and under other applicable statutes, do hereby declare a drought emergency as defined in Mont. Code Ann. §§ 10-3-103 and 10-3-302, to exist within Blaine, Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, Hill, McCone, Petroleum, Phillips, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Valley, and Wibaux Counties and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, and order as follows:

1. The Directors of the Montana Departments of Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources and Conservation shall compel maximum employee assistance and cooperation with any agent of the United States Department of Agriculture engaged in collecting information related to drought impacts to include soil conditions, loss of crops and forage, and impacts to livestock producers, for the purpose of securing timely economic assistance;
2. The Director of the Montana Department of Transportation may temporarily suspend “hours of service” regulations, as provided in A.R.M. 18.8.1502 (incorporating by reference 49 C.F.R. part 395), as they apply to drivers of commercial vehicles while transporting livestock, forage, water, and agricultural implements.

In addition, baled livestock feed with a destination within the nineteen drought-affected counties or Indian Reservations listed in this Order shall be allowed to be transported during daylight hours and at night two hours before sunrise and two hours after sunset, in vehicles up to 12 feet in width and 15 feet in height and that exceed the statutory limits of weight by 20 percent, provided that the manufactures’ rated capacity for the vehicle, axle or tires is not exceeded, on all highways in the state except those that are part of the federal aid interstate system.

Commercial vehicle carriers, while under this Order, may not require or allow fatigued drivers to operate a motor vehicle;

3. The Directors of other Departments of the State of Montana shall fully cooperate with these efforts; and
4. The Governor’s Drought and Water Supply Committee shall continue to assess drought conditions and impacts and make recommendations regarding further actions that would protect the welfare of the citizens of the State of Montana.

This Order is effective immediately.

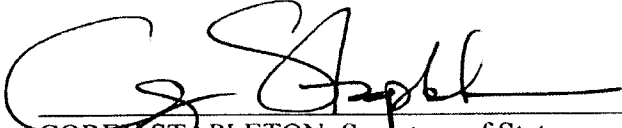
GIVEN under my hand and the GREAT SEAL of
the State of Montana this 23rd day of
June, 2017.

(SEAL)



STEVE BULLOCK, Governor

ATTEST:



COREY STAPLETON, Secretary of State
~~BY: JEFFREY HENDSON, DEPUTY~~

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SENATE HARK BUILDING
SUITE 311
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2644

INTERNET:
<http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

United States Senate

June 23, 2017

D

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

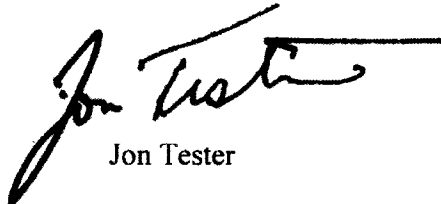
Today I write to urge you to work with agricultural producers in Montana who are facing severe drought disaster conditions. The U.S Drought Monitor, in recent days, designated six Montana counties at the second highest drought intensity level, extreme drought. The counties include Garfield, McCone, Daniels, Sheridan, Valley, and Roosevelt. The extreme drought is also impacting the Fort Belknap and Fort Peck reservations. Droughts place an incredible strain on the livelihoods of producers, our rural communities, and our food supply. We must act quickly to mitigate the disaster and prevent long-term damage.

The extreme drought designation, along with USDA's approval, allow producers to be eligible for the Livestock Forage Program, Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program. I ask you to prioritize approving applications to these programs for producers in the extreme drought designated areas. Swift approval will help producers minimize losses and protect their herds and crops.

Additionally, I urge USDA to approve emergency haying and grazing on CRP land as soon as possible. While it's important to observe environmental safeguards, this is an extreme situation that requires all solutions to be on the table.

Montana producers work hard each year to raise livestock and produce a good crop. Unfortunately, sometimes Mother Nature has other ideas. That's why emergency disaster programs are vital to rural America and to our food security. Thank you for your efforts to help Montana producers get through this difficult period.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BILLINGS
(406) 723-3277

GREAT FALLS
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 443-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA
(406) 729-3003

**USDA Authorizes Emergency Grazing in Drought-Stricken
Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota**

WASHINGTON, June 23, 2017 – Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today authorized emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. All or parts of these states are experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions – indicated as categories D2 and D3 on the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#).

“Due to reduced availability of forage, ranchers in the hardest hit locations have already been culling their herds,” said Perdue. “Without alternative forage options like grazing CRP lands, livestock producers are faced with the economically devastating potential of herd liquidation.”

CRP is a voluntary program administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land and, when needed, provide emergency relief to livestock producers suffering the impacts of certain natural disasters.

Emergency grazing is authorized to begin immediately and extends through Sept. 30, unless conditions improve. Producers must work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop a modified conservation plan that is site specific, including the authorized grazing duration to reflect local wildlife needs. FSA State Committees will monitor emergency grazing implementation at the local level to mitigate adverse impact on nesting areas and established CRP vegetation.

“If the drought continues and pasture recovery becomes less likely, feed supplies will decline, the quality and quantity of hay is reduced and stock water becomes scarce – considerable stressors for both the livestock and our producers,” said Perdue. “If opening up grazing lands reduces even some of these stressors for these ranchers, then it’s the right thing for us to do.”

Eligible CRP participants can use the acreage for grazing their own livestock or may grant another livestock producer use of the CRP acreage. There will be no CRP annual rental payment reductions assessed for acres grazed.

To take advantage of the emergency grazing provisions, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Center visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

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RESOLUTION No. 28-1966-2017-06

**TRIBAL GOVERNMENT
Administrative**

**DISASTER DECLARATION
Drought 2017**

WHEREAS, the Fort Peck Reservation is experiencing a severe draught and has received less than 2" of rain has fallen since January 1, 2017, and

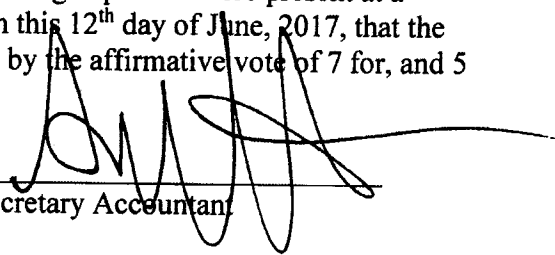
WHEREAS, the prolonged period of dry weather and lack of moisture has had an adverse economic impact on agricultural producers, the economy, and members of the Assiniboine and Sioux Nations, and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that in accordance with the Constitution and By Laws of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes a disaster is occurring on the Fort Peck Reservation.

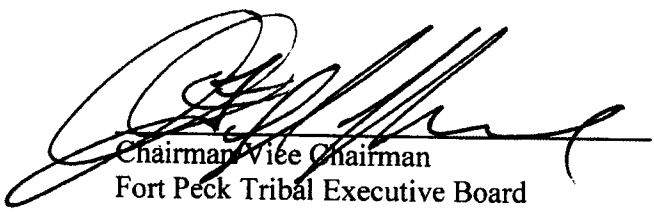
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be filed with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, FEMA Region VIII, Montana Disaster & Emergency Division, the Governor's Office, and other interested parties as directed by the Tribal Chairman or his designated representative.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned Secretary Accountant of the Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation hereby certify that the Tribal Executive Board is composed of 12 voting members of whom 11 constituting a quorum were present at a Recessed Special Meeting duly called and convened on this 12th day of June, 2017, that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted at such meeting by the affirmative vote of 7 for, and 5 absent.


Secretary Accountant

APPROVED:


Chairman/Vice Chairman
Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board