

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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July 1, 2021

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Secretary Vilsack:

I write today to urge you to expeditiously use your Secretarial authority to identify all counties throughout the state of Montana as primary natural disaster areas. As we continue to see record-breaking temperatures from Libby to Glendive, it is imperative that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) aid Montana communities in accessing critical resources, such as the Livestock Forage Program, Emergency Conservation Program, and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program, to respond to continued severe drought conditions on the ground.

Currently, the USDA has identified the following counties as drought disaster areas: Big Horn, Carbon, Powder River, Fallon, Richland, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Wibaux, Phillips, Valley, Petroleum, Garfield, McCone, Prairie, Rosebud, and Custer. However, this footprint must be expanded.

With approximately 91 percent of Montana facing abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions as of June 22, conditions at this point in 2021 are substantially worse than at the same time last year when approximately 52 percent of the state faced similar conditions.

In evaluating weekly drought conditions, we anticipate conditions will worsen and impact the entire state. Specifically, the Montana Drought Forecast Report projects we will see below-normal precipitation throughout the state and a 40 to 50 percent chance of above-normal temperatures across much of Montana.

Relief is needed as swiftly as possible, particularly for our agricultural producers, who are seeing impacts to forage and stock water availability due to drought conditions.

When identifying all of Montana counties as primary natural disaster areas, I also urge you to allow for the emergency haying and grazing on all of Montana's participating Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage. With current conditions, Montana livestock owners are in dire need of forage for their herds. Because we expect record-breaking heat and associated drought, it is imperative that Montana can take advantage of viable acres of CRP land.

I request your prompt consideration and approval of this request. If you or your staff have any further questions, please contact Delila Bruno, Division Administrator of Montana Disaster and Emergency Services, at (406) 324-4766.

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

