United States Department of Agriculture

Risk Management Agency

Billings Regional Office

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Attachment 1 – 2007 Billings Regional Irrigation Assessment

The Billings Regional Office has completed our Regional Irrigation Assessment of surface irrigation supplies (as specified on pages 72-73 of the 2007 LAM, Section 6, Paragraph 40, D, E, and F).

Recent Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) information shows Montana snow water contents are 68 percent of average, and Wyoming has a snow water equivalent of 60 percent of average. Similarly, NRCS projects that in Montana stream flow will range from 62 to 74 percent of average, and in Wyoming that stream flow will be 61 percent of average.

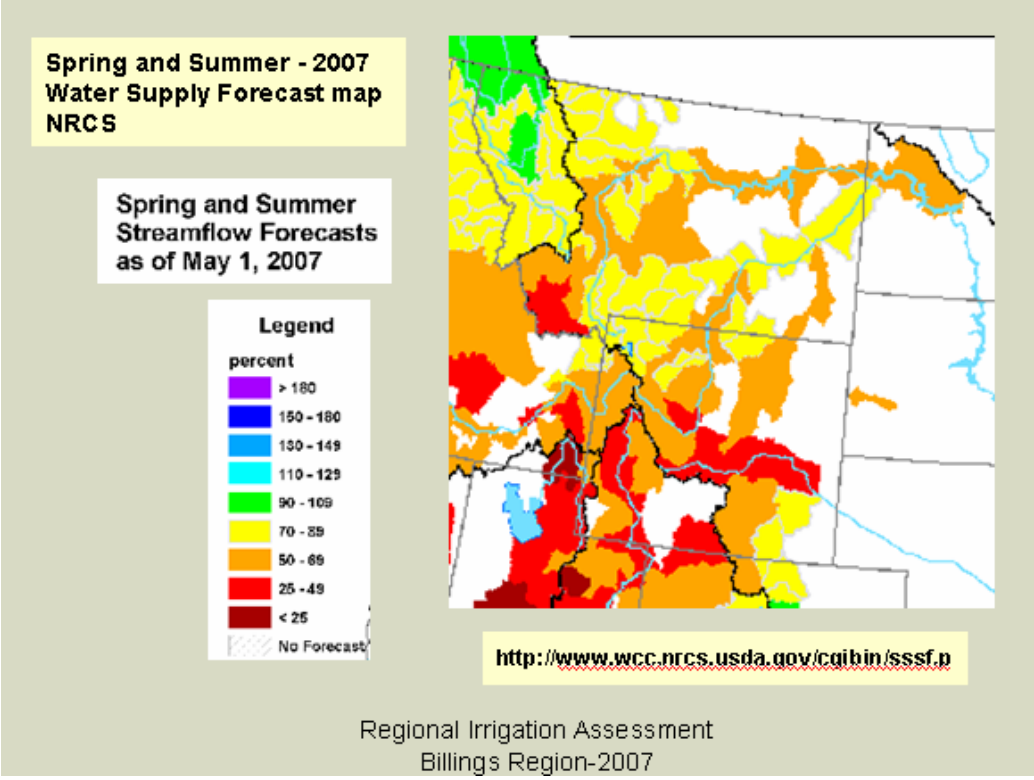
The ongoing western South Dakota drought and low reservoir levels have left some Missouri River drainages with a high probability of inadequate irrigation water supply. Snow pack levels are below average in the balance of Montana and Wyoming. Some counties have received rain and snow in the past week to alleviate some of the drought "symptoms." One area in North Central Wyoming previously received above average snowfall (Big Horn, Powder, and Tongue Rivers in WY). However, melting of snow pack has been accelerated by warm spring temperatures. Given this information, it is suspected that there could be a lack of irrigation water in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming counties that rely on surface water runoff for their irrigation sources. The low levels in the Fort Peck and Oahe Reservoirs, leaves some irrigation systems "high and dry."

Insured crops grown in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming that may be affected by lack of irrigation water and inability to pump water include: alfalfa hay, barley, oats, wheat, canola, corn, safflower, dry peas, dry beans, and sugar beets.

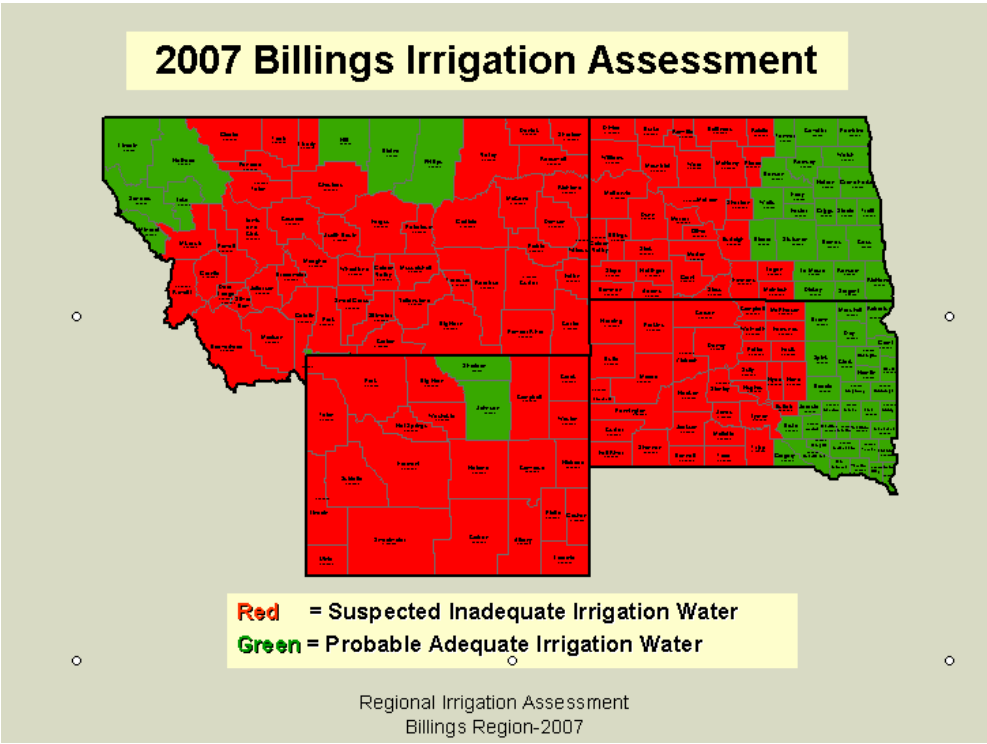
However, based on the current snow pack totals and stream flow forecasts, parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming are still in a drought. The three major reservoirs on the Missouri River are still near all time low levels. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that reduced stream flows could result in reduced irrigation allotments and receding water levels will leave some irrigation systems short of water. In some cases water may be unavailable.

A map showing of counties suspected of having high probability of inadequate irrigation water supply is attached.

Following are the forecasted USDA NRCS the spring and summer stream flow (also see: http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/):



Summaries of irrigation related information will be monitored and will advise the Administrators office of significant changes in the situation. Insurance providers are encouraged to notify the RO of changes to irrigation supply impacting this assessment.



If there are further questions or comments feel free to contact our office.