

NRCS Assistance and Response to Drought Conditions in Wisconsin

The extended and widespread drought this summer in southern Wisconsin is causing major crop and forage losses for Wisconsin farmers. NRCS is working to adjust program contracts, apply waivers and modifications in light of the weather-related hardships.

In anticipation of crop failures, forage and feed shortages, seed and other input price increases, pasture damage, and other consequences of the drought, we are directing our staff to work with farmers to provide guidance on repairing practices, re-seeding, and modifying contracts, and any other actions we can take to assist Wisconsin farmers during this time.

For more information, producers and landowners can visit the NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov or their local NRCS office.

Some of the steps NRCS is taking:

- Initiate compliance plan variances and waivers to accommodate change in rotations or tillage due to weather
- Reschedule new practices and construction starts
- Forages - Coordinate with partners to identify sources of emergency forages
- Seeking additional funding to repair damaged or failed practices
- Work with CRP landowners who are planning to graze or hay CRP acreage
- Allow producers to modify current EQIP contracts to allow for grazing, livestock watering, and other conservation activities to address drought conditions.
- Authorize haying and grazing of Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement areas in drought-affected areas where haying and grazing is consistent with conservation of wildlife habitat and wetlands.

Additional Key Resources for Drought Information:

- Wisconsin Farm Crisis Center 1-800-942-2474
- Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture Drought Information Center
http://datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Drought_2012/index.aspx
- U.S. Drought Monitor - Wisconsin (new maps posted every Thursday)
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>
- USDA Farm Service Agency Information on emergency loans, crop loss, CRP grazing and haying
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/wi>
- Wisconsin Emergency Management Drought 2012 - Information, links and resources
<http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/drought/>
- University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension - Drought Updates
<http://fyi.uwex.edu/drought2012/>
- USDA National Drought Assistance Information
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE