

Billings Regional Irrigation Assessment for the 2010 Crop Year

In accordance with Section 6, Insurable Farming Practices, paragraph 40F, Irrigation Assessments, of the 2010 the Loss Adjustment Manual Standards Handbook (FCIC-25010), the Risk Management Agency Regional Office will assist in a clearinghouse capacity for information concerning regional irrigation assessments in order to identify areas, water districts, aquifers, reservoirs, and other water sources where inadequate irrigation water is suspected. The following is a listing of counties meeting the criteria as reported by the Billings Regional Office.

Recent Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) information shows Montana snow water contents were 112 % of average, and Wyoming has a snow water equivalent of 124% of average. Similarly, NRCS projects that in Montana stream flow will be 84 % of average, and in Wyoming that stream flow will be 80% of average.

Reservoir levels are generally good. Water supply in reservoirs is shown as 99% of average in Montana (range from 32%-143% of average); and 109% of average in Wyoming (Range from 64%-170% of average). Major reservoirs are in generally good condition, as the Corp of Engineers Missouri River Bulletin shows the yearly reservoir changes as Fort Peck Reservoir (MT), up 9.6 feet; Garrison Reservoir (ND), up 7.7 feet; and Oahe Reservoir (SD), up 3.1 feet. However, Buffalo Bill Reservoir (WY) is down 17.6 feet.

Many of the drainages originating in the mountains of western Montana and western Wyoming have a high probability of inadequate irrigation water supply. The distribution of the water supply is uneven. Snow pack levels are below average in much of the mountain areas of Montana and Wyoming. Given this information, it is suspected that there could again be a lack of irrigation water in Montana and Wyoming counties that rely on surface water runoff for their irrigation sources.

Note that due to recent precipitation, previously “dry” areas show near average surface run off.

Insured crops grown in Montana and Wyoming that may be affected by lack of irrigation water and inability to pump water include: Forage Seed (Alfalfa Seed), Forage Production (alfalfa hay), Barley, Oats, Wheat, Canola, Corn, Safflower, Dry Peas, Dry Beans, and Sugar Beets.

Based on the current snow pack totals and stream flow forecasts, parts of Montana and Wyoming are still considered abnormally dry to severe drought. The following counties were identified where the availability of water for irrigation is most suspect of having inadequate water for a full irrigation season:

Montana: Deer Lodge, Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Teton, Toole

Wyoming: Big Horn, Hot Springs, Lincoln, Park, Teton, Washakie

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.

This assessment is being provided for information purposes only. Approved insurance providers will make their own claim determinations based on the individual policyholder's agronomic situation relative to available irrigation water. This information is not a factual

determination on the part of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, the Risk Management Agency, or the Billings Regional Office.

Resources:

Drought Monitor, (see: <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>)

Montana Basin Wide Reservoir Summary (at:
http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/data/water/basin_reports/montana/wy2010/baremt5.txt)

Montana Surface Water Supply Index [(SWSI) see: <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Montana Summer Stream flow Outlooks... (See:
<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/releases/junsnow10.html>)

National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (see:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/regional_monitoring/cmi.gif)

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers - Civil Works - Missouri River Region - Water Management Information (see: <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/reports/showrep.cgi?4BULL0MR8>)

USDA NRCS Wyoming Basin Outlook Report – June 01, 2010
(See: <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/nrcs/snowpack/snowmap.html>)

Wyoming Surface Water Supply Index [(SWSI) see:
<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/nrcs/swsimap/swsimap.html>]

June 16, 2010