

Spokane 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 Spokane Regional Office:

Parts of the west are experiencing severe drought conditions. The U.S. Drought Index lists abnormally dry conditions in Southeast Idaho, Southern Oregon, and Central Washington. Precipitation totals and snow water content in these areas were 57% - 72% of average as of April 9, 2010. The Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) SNOTEL measurements within the severe drought areas reveal one of the lowest in the last 50 years reflecting the fact that mountain snow packs were mostly 50 to 70% of average. While we have received no additional snowpack, recent unseasonably cool and wet spring weather has occurred that helped to mitigate conditions.

Idaho

Idaho irrigation conditions improved between April 1st and June 1st. NRCS Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) calculations updated on June 1 shows that shortages are still possible in the Big Lost and Little Lost basins. SWSI calculations on April 1st revealed potential irrigation concerns for Big Wood Snake below Heise, Oakley, Boise, Bear, Little Wood, Henrys Fork, and Owyhee and Salmon Falls basins. These basins now appear to be adequate for this irrigation season.

Oregon

The Klamath Basin is expecting water shortages. Measured precipitation in Klamath Falls since the beginning of this water year, October 1 through February 28, has only been about 45% of average. The reduced precipitation has resulted in extremely low inflows into Upper Klamath Lake (UKL). UKL is the primary source of water for 180,000 acres of irrigated agriculture. The low inflows into UKL have resulted in record low lake elevations and water storage. Upper Klamath Lake is currently 1.9 feet or 150,000 acre feet below the required lake elevations currently needed to begin irrigation deliveries around the first of April. The March 15th snowmelt runoff forecast from NRCS estimates that April through September inflows will be only about 310,000 acre feet, or about 60% of average. The low estimated inflows coupled with the current large storage deficit in Upper Klamath Lake have greatly curtailed surface water supplies available for irrigation this year.

The Lost River Drainage is also suffering under the effects of the drought. Precipitation on the east side measured at Gerber is 66% of average for this date. This limited precipitation has resulted in low inflows into both Gerber Reservoir and Clear Lake Reservoir. Currently, Gerber Reservoir, due to its limited carryover storage, will provide a 60 to 75% supply for the area that it serves, and Clear Lake, with no carryover storage, will provide no irrigation supply for the area it serves. Combined, the reservoirs provide irrigation water to 26,930 acres in the upper Lost River watershed. In response to these drought conditions, a drought declaration has already been issued by the Governor of Oregon.

Washington

Statewide, April through September forecasts vary from 94 percent of average for the Elwha River, to 61 percent for the Yakima River, to 43 percent for the Spokane River, according to the NRCS April Water Supply Outlook Report. The upper Yakima Basin April 1 snowpack was 63% based upon 10 snow course and SNOTEL readings within the Upper Yakima Basin. Precipitation was 71% of average for March, and 73% year-to-date for water.

Based on the review of revised data available as of June 1, 2010, the following counties by state were identified where the availability of water for irrigation is most suspect of having inadequate water for a full irrigation season this crop year, particularly, acreage depending strictly on streamflows:

Idaho: Butte
Oregon: Jackson, Klamath
Washington: Roza Irrigation District in Yakima County

Insured crops under an irrigated practice may be affected by the suspected lack of irrigation water in the identified counties. Irrigated crops for the applicable counties are identified on the actuarial documents and on our website at <http://www.rma.usda.gov>.

We will continue to track summaries of the streamflow forecast probabilities, basin area reservoir supplies, and SNOTEL data from the Water and Climate Center of NRCS and inform the Administrators Office of any deteriorating (or improving) conditions.

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 Spokane Regional Office.

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