



United States Department of Agriculture
Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services
Risk Management Agency

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TO: Kenneth D. Ackerman
Administrator

FROM: Douglas M. Hagel /s/ *Douglas Hagel*
Director

SUBJECT: Regional Irrigation Assessment for Billings Region

This Regional Irrigation Assessment is being provided in accordance with instructions in the Loss Adjustment Manual, FCIC-25010. The Regional Office Director is required to share information about areas suspected of having inadequate water for irrigation with insurance providers operating in the region.

Drought conditions continue to prevail over a fairly large portion of Montana and a small area of Wyoming. The following counties are being identified as counties where the availability of water for irrigation is suspect: **Glacier, Golden Valley, Meagher, Musselshell, Teton, Valley and Wheatland counties Montana and Crook and Weston counties in Wyoming.**

Some areas in these counties depend primarily on surface water as a source for irrigation from lakes, rivers and reservoirs. Possible affected crops grown in the above listed counties include canola, corn, safflower, dry peas, barley, oats, forage, and spring wheat.

The Upper Musselshell Water Users Association has reduced water allotment by 50%, but even with that restriction they predict that the system will be out of water in 20 days. The Milk River streamflow forecast for May - July is only 20% to 49%.

The Green River and Bear River areas in southwest Wyoming depend on direct diversion, therefore, there could be inadequate irrigation water because of low runoff. The Black Hills area (Crook and Weston Counties) is extremely short on snowpack, 22% of normal. Since most irrigation in that area relies on direct diversion, there could be irrigation shortages.

We know of no other restrictions currently being considered for these areas. However, because drought conditions continue to prevail throughout much of Montana and surface water is a primary source for irrigation in this area, all of the counties identified above should be suspect as far as availability of water for irrigation is concerned.



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