



United States Department of Agriculture

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services  
Risk Management Agency

April 20, 2001

TO: Phyllis Honor  
Acting Administrator

FROM: Dave P. Paul /s/ *Dave Paul*  
Director

SUBJECT: Regional Irrigation Assessment for Spokane Region

This Regional Irrigation Assessment is 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 regional insurance providers.

Much of the west is experiencing severe drought conditions. The U.S. Drought Index lists abnormally dry conditions throughout the Pacific Northwest. Precipitation totals and snow water content in many areas are 42% - 68% of average as of March 19, 2001. The Natural Resources and Conservation Service SNOTEL measurements within the severe drought areas reveal the lowest snow water content in the last 20 years, with many of the sites approaching the lowest levels since 1977.

We have reviewed and continue to track summaries of the streamflow forecast probabilities, basin area reservoir supplies, and SNOTEL data from the Water and Climate Center of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Based on the review of data available as of March 1, the following counties are identified where the availability of water for irrigation is most suspect:

Idaho:

Ada, Adams, Benewah, Blaine, Boise, Bonner, Boundary, Butte, Camas, Canyon, Clearwater, Custer, Elmore, Gem, Gooding, Idaho, Jerome, Kootenai, Latah, Lewis, Minidoka, Nez Perce, Payette, Shoshone, Valley, Washington.



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Oregon:

Harney, Jackson, Klamath, Lake, and Malheur.

Washington:

Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Grant Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Yakima.

The U.S. Department of Ecology has already issued letters to about 300 growers who hold irrigation rights along the Columbia River that their water rights could be interrupted if water flows drop below an Ecology target. The water right holders affected by the Ecology restrictions include 68 permits in Benton County, 48 in Chelan County, 82 in Douglas County, 73 in Okanogan County, four in Grant County, two in Ferry County, four in Stevens County, 13 in Franklin County, eight in Kittitas County, and seven in Klickitat 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>

Current projections are for continued dry conditions and further deterioration of the irrigation water supply. The most recent U.S. Drought Monitor (3/20/01) indicates virtually all counties in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington fall into a moderate or severe drought designation. As additional information becomes available we may call additional irrigation assessments. We encourage insurance providers to notify the Spokane Regional Office immediately of any other counties or areas of suspected irrigation water shortages.

If you have questions, please call our office at 509-353-2147.