

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

July 25, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write today to urge you to expeditiously use your Secretarial authority to identify Montana counties impacted by drought as primary natural disaster areas. With abnormally low snowpack and hot, dry conditions in northwest Montana, it is imperative that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) aid Montana communities in accessing critical resources, such as the Livestock Forage Program, Emergency Conservation Program, and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program, to respond to continued severe drought conditions.

Specifically, I ask the USDA identify the following counties as drought disaster areas: Flathead, Lincoln, Glacier, Toole, Sanders, Lake, Pondera, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, and Sheridan. Each of these counties is currently facing moderate to severe drought conditions.

In evaluating weekly drought conditions, we anticipate conditions will continue to worsen. The Flathead River in northwest Montana is currently flowing at approximately one-third of its July average. Additionally, Flathead Lake sits more than two feet below its full pool level. As a result of sustained dry, hot weather forecasted through the fall, officials project an above-normal fire season for northwest Montana.

Relief is needed as swiftly as possible, particularly for our agricultural producers, who are seeing impacts to forage and stock water availability due to drought conditions and low water levels.

I request your prompt consideration and approval of this request. If you or your staff have any further questions, please contact Delila Bruno, Division Administrator of Montana Disaster and Emergency Services, at (406) 324-4766.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Greg Gianforte, written in a stylized, cursive script.

Greg Gianforte
Governor