



Capitol LINK

CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE & AGRI-BUSINESS

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Special Drought Resource Edition

By Jordan Lamb -- DeWitt Ross & Stevens

Persistent drought conditions in the State of Wisconsin have triggered a series of responses from the Walker Administration, state governmental agencies and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Numerous agencies are providing assistance and are taking emergency steps to try to alleviate some drought-related pressures that Wisconsin farmers are currently facing. The following is a brief summary of currently available programs and sources of additional information related to drought issues. For comprehensive information and resources relating to the 2012 drought and heat wave, please visit www.ready.wi.gov.

DATCP – Wisconsin Farm Center

The Wisconsin Farm Center provides one easy phone number to call. By calling the toll-free number or emailing, DATCP can reach out to collaborating partners to get the best help available. Farmers can contact the Wisconsin Farm Center toll-free at 1-800-942-2474 or by email at farmcenter@wisconsin.gov. Office hours are weekdays, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Wisconsin Farm Center offers valuable resources for farmers and their families year-round. The staff and network of volunteers provide: financial analysis, farm mediation, information and referrals to community resources, beginning and minority farmer assistance, rural electric power services and transition planning.

For a continuing update on the situation, check the Wisconsin Crop Progress Report each week at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Wisconsin/Publications/Crop_Progress_&_Condition.

Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Network

The State has created the Farmer-to-Farmer Network as a way to encourage less-affected Wisconsin farmers to replant crops and make them available for feed by posting on the UW-Extension website <http://farmertofarmer.uwex.edu/>.

The Farmer-to-Farmer list is free of charge to both buyers and sellers. Users can list or search for hay, alfalfa haylage, corn silage, high moisture corn, corn grain, or other forages. All transactions and negotiations are handled directly between buyers and sellers.

For hay, forages and corn: <http://farmertofarmer.uwex.edu/>

For pasture rental: <https://farmertofarmer.crowdmap.com/>

Agricultural Emergency Transportation Permits for Hay

The WisDOT has been directed to issue free Agricultural Emergency Permits that allow the transport of heavier loads of hay bales along most state roadways. Permits may be issued until June 30, 2013, to transport overweight loads of hay during daylight hours on non-posted state and local highways under certain conditions. Call the DOT at 608-266-7320 to apply for a permit. For more information on permit requirements, go to <http://walker.wi.gov/Default.aspx?Page=fc5dfec4-66bc-46e9-806a-f95f3aa53ab3>.

Loan Guarantees

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) will offer drought relief assistance. In response to Governor Walker's declaration of a state of emergency for all 72 Wisconsin counties, WHEDA has begun accepting applications for its Drought Relief Guarantee Program.

The Drought Relief Guarantee Program is a financing product that will provide a 90 percent guarantee on agricultural loans up to \$15,000 for three years. In addition, WHEDA will provide interest reduction payments to lender partners allowing for lower interest rate loans for drought-affected farms.

To use the Drought Relief Guarantee Program, eligible farmers must be expected to lose 40 percent or more of their crops due to drought conditions. Loan proceeds can be used for fertilizer, seed, fuel, pesticides, tillage services, crop insurance, water delivery and animal feed.

For more information and eligibility requirements about WHEDA's Drought Relief Guarantee Program, please visit www.wheda.com.

Land Available for Harvest and Grazing

Conservation Reserve Program Lands: Lands classified D0-D4 ("abnormally dry" through "exceptional drought") can be used for grazing immediately in these counties: Columbia, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Kenosha, Lafayette, Racine, Rock, Sauk and Walworth. Haying can begin Aug. 2 in those counties. In other Wisconsin counties that are classified as being abnormally dry or in drought, haying and grazing can begin Aug. 2. ***Do not begin haying or move cattle onto CRP acreage until you contact your local FSA office.*** [Click here to contact your local FSA office.](#)

Wetlands Reserve Program Lands: Haying and grazing is authorized where it is consistent with conserving wildlife habitat and wetlands. ***Do not begin haying or move cattle onto WRP acreage until you contact your local FSA office.*** [Click here for more information.](#) [Click here to contact your local FSA office.](#)

State Lands: About 11,500 acres of state-owned lands have been opened to haying and grazing on a first-come, first-served basis, until Aug. 10 for prairie grasses and Aug. 30 for cool-season grasses. Farmers participating in the program will be required to sign an agreement specifying that the hay taken from state-owned property will be used for livestock and not sold. Areas authorized for harvesting do not include nor in any way affect land to be used for or previously sold under hay sale agreements with the department. For more information, go to the DNR's web site: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/droughtHay.html>.

Farmland Preservation Lands: Farmers in counties with drought disaster declarations and those bordering them may be able to chop corn and remove crop residues even if their land under soil erosion standards because they participate in Farmland Preservation. Talk to your county land conservation department first. [Click here for more information.](#) [Click here to find your county conservation department.](#)

CREP Lands: Farmers in Dane, Iowa, Green and Lafayette counties may be able to hay or graze on CREP lands this growing season. Contact your county conservationist for details. [Click here to find your county conservation department.](#)

Emergency Crop Irrigation from Lakes and Rivers

The State of Wisconsin has authorized permits for emergency crop irrigation from lakes and rivers. To be considered for an expedited permit to divert water for crop irrigation, fill out the DNR's [Emergency Withdrawal form](#) [PDF, 10KB] and then contact the Water Management Specialist based on the county where your property is located using DNR's [Permit Intake & Contacts page](#). Or, call the DNR Waterway and Wetland Permitting Hotline at 920-662-5452.

Emergency withdrawal permits will be considered if:

- You are the riparian owner of the land, and diverted water used on your land is next to the waterway or contiguous to land next to the waterway.
- The withdrawal is for crop or agricultural irrigation.
- There is surplus water to be withdrawn.
- The withdrawal will not cause adverse effects on the environment.

Be aware that in most cases, especially in the southern part of the state, the water levels or flows of the water body may already be too low to support any amount of withdrawal. UW Extension has created an [Emergency Irrigation Considerations](#) page to help you determine if an emergency withdrawal permit will benefit you.

For more information, go to the DNR's web site:

http://dnr.wi.gov/waterways/water_levels_crossings/irrigation.html

Expedited Review of High Capacity Well Permits

Applicants for emergency high capacity well approvals can submit an application and request an expedited review. Submit Form 3300-256 available on the DNR's web site at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells/HighCapacity.html>.

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