

NEWS RELEASE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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EIGHT ADDITIONAL PA COUNTIES INCLUDED IN FEDERAL DROUGHT DISASTER DECLARATION

**22 Pennsylvania counties now drought disaster areas
Gov. Ridge again urges USDA to declare remaining PA counties as disaster areas**

HARRISBURG (Aug. 11) – Gov. Tom Ridge today renewed his calls for a statewide federal drought disaster declaration, as eight more Pennsylvania counties were included in another disaster declaration.

“Although this action will help more Pennsylvania farmers, we need the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to act on my request to declare all 67 counties as a federal drought disaster,” Gov. Ridge said. “Our 50,000 farm families need this federal assistance to begin to recover from this horrible drought.”

The Pennsylvania counties are: Adams; Bedford; Chester; Fayette; Franklin; Fulton; Lancaster; Somerset; and York. The counties became eligible for federal disaster assistance after the USDA declared Maryland a disaster area.

As a result, farmers in the contiguous Pennsylvania counties now are eligible for assistance through low-interest loans for crop damage and losses from the drought.

Yesterday, Bradford, Bucks, Delaware, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Philadelphia, Potter, Susquehanna and Tioga counties were included in a federal disaster declaration for New Jersey and parts of New York. On Aug. 2, Beaver, Fayette, Greene and Washington counties were included in a federal disaster area declaration for West Virginia.

To be eligible for federal disaster assistance, farmers must have realized at least a 30 percent loss for a single crop; be able to repay the loan and other loans; be unable to receive credit from another source; and have an adequate credit history.

Farmers in the designated areas have eight months from the date of loss to apply for loans to help cover losses.

“While the assistance farmers receive from the federal government will help them to rebuild, our farmers need more federal assistance to completely recover,” Gov. Ridge said. “I call again on Congress to pass legislation that will give Pennsylvania farmers grants – money they won’t have to repay.”

Other forms of assistance available to drought-stricken farmers from USDA includes:

- emergency Conservation Program, which offers emergency funding on a cost-share basis for farmers to implement water-conservation measures;
- federal crop insurance; and
- noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which provides compensation for crops not eligible for crop insurance.

Gov. Ridge signed a drought emergency declaration on July 20 for 55 Pennsylvania counties.

A drought emergency imposes mandatory restrictions on non-essential water use. However, those restrictions do not apply to agricultural irrigation for the production of food and fiber, and the maintenance of livestock and poultry.

For more information about the drought, visit the Department of Environmental Protection through the Pennsylvania website at www.state.pa.us or directly at www.dep.state.pa.us (choose Drought Emergency.)

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