



Standing with Southeast Missouri Farmers

Drought Relief In Sight

The Show-Me State needs rain. This summer's drought is Missouri's worse since the late 1980s, with some parts of the state receiving only 25% of normal rainfall. Federal and state agricultural officials recently estimated that 40% of Missouri's corn is poor to very poor and 33% of the soybeans are listed as poor to very poor. More than 80% of the state's pastures are in poor to very poor condition, forcing many ranchers to begin using their winter feed supplies. Ranchers are also suffering loss of livestock due to heat stress.

Natural disasters like droughts are impossible to prevent, but they are possible to prepare for. In July, Governor Matt Blunt requested that the Missouri Farm Service Agency conduct damage-assessment reports to determine the severity of the drought. The initial findings stated that 109 of Missouri's 114 counties had farmland with significant crop damage or had lost at least 30% of their crop.

Governor Blunt declared those counties to be natural-disaster areas; all counties in the 27th Senate District, with the exception of Scott County, were included on the list. Being declared a natural-disaster area makes agricultural producers in that area eligible for emergency low-interest loans, federal grants, tax breaks and other resources to help overcome drought-related difficulties. I joined Governor Blunt and Representative Peter Myers in urging the FSA to reconsider Scott County's assessment. As expected, the FSA's findings concluded that Scott County did indeed qualify for federal assistance. Governor Blunt then added Scott County to his request for a natural-disaster declaration from USDA Secretary Mike Johanns.

Even with the recent rain, the drought remains crippling. In the way of help, the USDA has sent more than \$1 million to Missouri counties coping with destroyed pastures and crops. Disaster-relief aid will not reverse the damage, nor will it erase the hardships of the past few months, but it *will* begin to alleviate some of the financial troubles that our farmers and ranchers are facing. Those who work yearlong to put food on the tables of every Missourian deserve our neighborly support as they try to get through this challenging dry season.

To contact your local FSA to find out what programs are available to help you, the numbers are as follows:

PERRY COUNTY—Perryville (573) 547-6531

SCOTT COUNTY—Benton (573) 545-3593.

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY—Charleston (573) 649-9930

MADISON COUNTY—Greenville (573) 224-3410

BOLLINGER COUNTY— Marble Hill (573) 238-2671

CAPE GIRARDEAU COUNTY— Jackson (573) 243-1467

More information about the drought can be found online at www.dnr.mo.gov/geology/droughtupdate.htm.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

Thank you for your time.

Senator Jason Crowell represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.