



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Sen. Mayer Announces USDA Approval of Federal Disaster Assistance

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JEFFERSON CITY — After the devastating storms of September, which ravaged homes and agriculture in our communities, many of us in Southeast Missouri have worked hard to procure federal assistance for those affected by the severe weather. That hard work has paid off thanks to federal disaster declarations that will open the region to federal relief efforts.

On Monday, Nov. 27, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it has declared several Southeast Missouri counties natural disaster areas due to agricultural losses from the storms of Sept. 22–23. The USDA declared Butler, Dunklin, Mississippi, Pemiscot, New Madrid and Stoddard counties as natural disaster areas. The declarations ensure that the farm families impacted by the severe weather are eligible for federal assistance to help with income losses associated with the storms. In addition, Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Ripley, Scott and Wayne counties were named as contiguous disaster areas and will also qualify for assistance.

The disaster declarations were issued after more than a foot of rain, high winds, hail and tornadoes pummeled Southeast Missouri counties and resulted in widespread ground saturation and flooding. The Missouri Farm Service Agency has reported that Southeast Missouri farmers saw at least 30 percent agricultural loss. This has affected corn and soybean crops and destroyed an estimated 25 to 50 percent of the cotton crop. Under the USDA declarations, affected counties will be eligible for Farm Service Agency emergency loan assistance.

This federal assistance will be vital in getting Southeast Missourians back on their feet after September's severe weather. The crop losses sustained by hardworking farmers were simply too great to be ignored, and I am thankful for all the help my colleagues and I have received to ensure the needs of our constituents were met.

However, these disaster declarations do not mark the end of my efforts to help Southeast Missourians. The USDA assistance was approved only after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) denied requests for federal assistance in October. This was a poor decision by FEMA. More than 600 homes and 75 businesses sustained damage from the September storms, and area residents are in need of affordable housing and long-term recovery assistance. Although Missouri's Disaster Recovery Partnership is working to provide state-based assistance for displaced citizens, greater federal support is also needed.

I will not stop working to help Southeast Missourians until our needs are met, and I would like to thank everyone who is helping in the fight. The good people of the Bootheel deserve our best efforts.

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*Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*