

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 18, 2005

The Hon. Michael Johanns
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Secretary Johanns:

As you know, many areas of North Dakota have experienced excessive rainfall and flooding this season. As a result, it is certain that the operations of many livestock producers will not survive without emergency assistance.

In response to the threats facing North Dakota livestock producers, we urge that you:

1. **Allow haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage in disaster-affected areas.** You recently received a request from North Dakota Governor John Hoeven to allow haying and grazing on CRP land in disaster-affected areas. We ask that you act as quickly as possible to expedite approval of this request, as well as any others that may be submitted by the Farm Service Agency State Committee in North Dakota. Taking this action will provide important assistance to farmers and ranchers in communities affected by excessive rainfall and flooding.
2. **Approve haying and grazing on acreage enrolled under the CRP's CP23 "wetlands restoration" practice.** This is important because a significant portion of CRP in affected counties is enrolled in the CP 23 practice. Release of these acres is important and is unlikely to negatively impact waterfowl or other wildlife populations.
3. **Allow livestock producers in emergency-designated counties to hay and graze CRP acres in non-emergency counties.** This would add new supplies of much-needed forage by reducing the current payment reduction for haying and grazing CRP acres from 25 percent to 10 percent of the CRP payment rate.

Thank you for your efforts to assist producers in North Dakota who have suffered from weather-related disasters this year.

Sincerely,



Kent Conrad
United States Senate



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senate



Earl Pomeroy
House of Representatives