



— State of —
North Dakota
Office of the Governor

Doug Burgum
Governor

NEWS: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Burgum declares drought emergency; State Water Commission makes aid available for livestock producers

Drought and wildfire information page launched at NDResponse.gov; Burgum calls on USDA to release CRP acres for haying

BISMARCK, N.D. (June 22, 2017) – Gov. Doug Burgum today declared a drought emergency that allows the State Water Commission to reactivate a water supply assistance program for livestock producers in 26 counties experiencing moderate to extreme drought.

The governor also ordered the formation of a unified command structure with representatives from the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, Department of Agriculture and other state agencies to coordinate the state’s drought response.

“This drought represents an escalating threat to farmers, ranchers and all North Dakota residents as livestock feed and water supplies deteriorate and the risk of wildfires continues to climb,” Burgum said. “We’re committed to mobilizing the appropriate state resources to ensure the safety and economic security of our citizens for the duration of this situation.”

Today’s U.S. Drought Monitor report shows 8 percent of North Dakota in extreme drought, 32 percent in severe drought, 27 percent in moderate drought and 33 percent abnormally dry.

Below-average rainfall and soil moisture have devastated pasture land and hay crops, with reports of livestock producers already downsizing their herds. In the latest U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports, 43 percent of the state had short or very short topsoil moisture, and pasture and range conditions were listed as 30 percent poor and 24 percent very poor.

Wildfires also are a growing concern, with the latest statewide fire index showing five western counties in high fire danger and 11 northeastern counties in moderate fire danger. The Burning Index, used to describe the potential effort needed to suppress a wildfire, is near or in some cases exceeding the worst June conditions on record since data collection began in 1998.

Burgum signed an executive order today declaring a drought emergency for 15 counties experiencing extreme drought and 11 counties adjacent to them, making producers in a total of 26 counties eligible for aid under the North Dakota Drought Disaster Livestock Water Supply Project Assistance Program. The State Water Commission voted today to reactivate the program, making \$250,000 available in funding.

Created in 1991 and last activated in 2006, the program provides eligible livestock producers with 50 percent cost-share assistance of up to \$3,500 per project, with a maximum of three projects per applicant. Details, including how to apply, will be made available on the State Water Commission's website at www.swc.nd.gov.

The 26 counties are Adams, Billings, Bowman, Burke, Burleigh, Divide, Dunn, Emmons, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Kidder, McHenry, McKenzie, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Mountrail, Oliver, Renville, Sheridan, Sioux, Slope, Stark, Ward and Williams.

Burgum also sent a letter today to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, asking him to immediately release Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for haying to give producers an additional source of livestock feed before it loses its nutritional value.

In addition, NDResponse.gov, the official state website for major events impacting the public, has launched a drought and wildfire information page featuring links to the U.S. Drought Monitor, USDA crop reports and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture's interactive drought map, among other resources.

The website also contains information on burn bans in effect around the state. Nineteen counties currently have burn bans with at least some restriction on fireworks, which go on sale Tuesday in North Dakota. Residents are encouraged to adhere to the burn bans and contact their local fire department or emergency management office for the most current restrictions.

The governor helped launch NDResponse.gov in January as a single source for accurate and timely information when major events impact North Dakota citizens, allowing the public to be best prepared for whatever situation arises. Updates also are posted on accompanying social media sites at <https://www.facebook.com/NDResponse/> and <https://twitter.com/ndresponse>.

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