



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2010

Contact: Courtney Warner Crowell (Merkley) – 503-326-2747
Tom Towslee (Wyden) – 503-326-7525

Merkley, Wyden Announce USDA Designation of Klamath County as Primary Natural Disaster Area

Designation Qualifies Farmers and Ranchers in Klamath, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Lake, and Lane Counties for Disaster Assistance

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated Klamath County as a primary natural disaster area due to severe drought conditions affecting Oregon farmers and ranchers.

The designation extends disaster assistance to farmers and ranchers in Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Lake, and Lane counties in Oregon as well as Modoc and Siskiyou counties in California.

“Weather conditions can vary from year to year and some growing seasons are better than others, but when disaster strikes, we have to stand with our farmers and ranchers,” Merkley said. “Today’s designation of Klamath County as a natural disaster area is crucial in getting economic assistance to water users in the Klamath Basin so they can recover from this historic drought and preserve their land and business for the future. In my visits to the Basin in the past few months, I’ve seen outstanding cooperation and understanding between the farmers, ranchers, and tribes of the region. Secretary Vilsack has been a supportive partner throughout this process and I look forward to continuing to work with him and the USDA to mitigate the effects of the drought and preserve the local economy.”

“The USDA is making good on their promise to help growers and ranchers in the Klamath Basin during this drought,” Wyden said. “Access to these low interest loans and other disaster related relief will help to take some of the burden of this drought off of Klamath’s agricultural community.”

“President Obama and I understand these conditions caused severe damage to the area and serious harm to farms and ranches in Oregon and we want to help,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “This action will provide help to producers who suffered significant production losses.”

According to the USDA, the disaster designation makes all qualified farm operators in the designated and contiguous areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

The USDA has also made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE), which was approved as part of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008; the Emergency Conservation Program; Federal Crop Insurance; and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

###