August 2019





Farm Service Agency Electronic News Service

NEWSLETTER

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Montana FSA: August 2019 Newsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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From the State Executive Director

Hope you're enjoying your summer! It's been a busy time for FSA offices with program signups, crop certification and staff Farm Bill training. Thank you to everyone who threw their name in the hat to run for a position on County Committees across Montana. Offices are certifying eligible nominees. FSA will mail ballots out to voters in early November; voted ballots are due back to FSA by Dec. 2.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue recently announced the 2019 Market Facilitation Program (MFP) signup that began July 25 and ends Dec. 6. Montana producers of certain non-specialty and specialty crops as well as dairy and hogs should contact your local FSA to schedule an appointment to complete your paperwork. Learn more about this important program in this newsletter.

Liane Johnson (Cut Bank) Bruce Tutvedt (Kalispell)

Please review the program dates and deadlines for August and September that may impact your operations. Reach out to your local FSA office with any questions and for assistance.

Directories:

Online Directory of FSA Offices in Montana

PDF of Montana FSA Directory

PDF of Montana USDA Directory

We look forward to hearing from you and providing you with great service!

Sincerely, Mike Foster

Montana FSA Dates and Deadlines: CRP, DMC, MFP & NAP

- Ongoing: Contact FSA right away for notice of loss deadlines and any NAP and livestock disaster program requirements.
- June 3 to Aug. 23: Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Signup Period
- July 16 to Sept. 13: 2019 CRP Summer/Fall Managed Grazing Period (prior approval required)
- June 17 to Sept. 20: Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program Signup Period
- July 16 to Sept. 30: 2019 CRP Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting Period (prior approval required)
- July 25 to Dec. 6: 2019 Market Facilitation Program (MFP) Signup
- Aug. 21: Dairy Margin Coverage Producer Meeting at 2 p.m. at the Gallatin County FSA Office located at 3710 Fallon St. in Bozeman.
- Aug. 22: Dairy Margin Coverage Producer Meeting at 12 p.m. at the Cascade County FSA office located in the First Interstate Bank building at 12 Third St., NW, in Great Falls.
- Aug. 23: Last day to submit Continuous CRP Offer
- **Sept. 1**: 2020 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Coverage Application Closing Date for Winter Canola, Spring Canola and Value-Loss Crops such as Nursery, Christmas Trees, Grass Sod, Ginseng, Aquaculture, Floriculture, Root Stock Sets and Mushrooms
- Sept. 20: Deadline for Dairy Margin Coverage Signup and MPP-Dairy repayment elections
- **Sept. 30:** 2020 NAP Coverage Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops (including Spring-Seeded Annual Types of Mixed Forage), Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic

2020 NAP Risk Protection Coverage Deadlines Approaching

The Farm Service Agency encourages Montana producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the following 2020 NAP coverage application closing dates:

- **Sept. 1:** Winter Canola, Spring Canola and Value-Loss Crops such as Nursery, Christmas Trees, Grass Sod, Ginseng, Aquaculture, Floriculture, Root Stock Sets and Mushrooms
- **Sept. 30:** Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops (including Spring-Seeded Annual Types of Mixed Forage), Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic
- Dec. 2: Honey
- March 15, 2020: Spring Crops except Spring-Seeded Canola, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Mixed Forage

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. Beginning, underserved, limited resource, and veteran farmers and ranchers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops. Producers can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting

https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/ActuarialInformationBrowser2018/CropCriteria.aspx.

The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

NAP Service Fees

For all coverage levels, the new NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. These amounts reflect a \$75 service fee increase for crop, county or multi-county coverage. The fee increases apply to obtaining NAP coverage on crops on or after April 8, 2019.

NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans

The 2018 Farm Bill NAP amendments specify that qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are now eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, "Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification."

Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx, to predict insurance premium costs. For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov.

USDA Opens Signup for Market Facilitation Program

Enrollment Now Open through Dec. 6 Please call your local FSA to schedule an appointment

Signup is open for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program to assist farmers who continue to suffer from damages because of unjustified trade retaliation from foreign nations. Through MFP, USDA will provide up to \$14.5 billion in direct payments to impacted producers, part of a broader trade relief package announced in late July. The sign-up period runs through Dec. 6.

MFP payments will be made to producers of certain non-specialty and specialty crops as well as dairy and hog producers.

Non-Specialty Crops

MFP payments will be made to producers of alfalfa hay, barley, canola, corn, crambe, dried beans, dry peas, extra-long staple cotton, flaxseed, lentils, long grain and medium grain rice, millet, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, rapeseed, rye, safflower, sesame seed, small and large chickpeas, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, temperate japonica rice, triticale, upland cotton, and wheat.

MFP assistance for 2019 crops is based on a single county payment rate multiplied by a farm's total plantings to the MFP-eligible crops in aggregate in 2019. Those per acre payments are not dependent on which of those crops are planted in 2019. A producer's total payment-eligible plantings cannot exceed total 2018 plantings. View payment rates by county.

Dairy and Hogs

Dairy producers who were in business as of June 1, 2019, will receive a per hundredweight payment on production history, and hog producers will receive a payment based on the number of live hogs owned on a day selected by the producer between April 1 and May 15, 2019.

Specialty Crops

MFP payments will also be made to producers of almonds, cranberries, cultivated ginseng, fresh grapes, fresh sweet cherries, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts. Each specialty crop will receive a payment based on 2019 acres of fruit or nut bearing plants, or in the case of ginseng, based on harvested acres in 2019.

More Information

Payments will be made in up to three tranches, with the second and third tranches evaluated as market conditions and trade opportunities dictate. If conditions warrant, the second and third tranches will be made in November and early January.

MFP payments are limited to a combined \$250,000 for non-specialty crops per person or legal entity. MFP payments are also limited to a combined \$250,000 for dairy and hog producers and a combined \$250,000 for specialty crop producers. However, no applicant can receive more than \$500,000. Eligible applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) for tax years 2015, 2016, and 2017 of less than \$900,000, or 75 percent of the person's or legal entity's average AGI for those tax years must have been derived from farming and ranching. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

More information can be found on farmers.gov/mfp, including payment information and a program application.

Montana Dairy Producers Invited to Attend Dairy Margin Coverage Producer Meetings Aug. 21 in Bozeman and Aug. 22 in Great Falls

USDA Farm Service Agency is hosting two outreach meetings in Bozeman and Great Falls on the new federal Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) available to Montana dairy producers. The meetings are open to the public.

The first meeting will be held on Wed., Aug. 21, at 2 p.m. at Gallatin County FSA Office located at 3710 Fallon St. in Bozeman.

The second meeting will be held Thurs., Aug., 22, at 12 p.m. at the Cascade County FSA office located in the First Interstate Bank building at 12 Third St., NW, in Great Falls.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes the new Dairy Margin Coverage program, which replaces the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). Much like the MPP-Dairy program, the DMC program is a voluntary program that provides dairy operations with risk management coverage that will pay producers when the difference (the margin) between the national price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below a certain level selected by the program participants. Montana producers have until Sept. 20, 2019 to sign-up for the DMC program and MPP-Dairy repayment elections.

FSA will present information on the DMC. The meetings will include special guest Dr. Hernan Tejeda, a professor with University of Idaho Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology.

For more information about the meetings, please contact Program Specialist Stacey Johnson at stacey.johnson@usda.gov and (406) 228-4321, ext. 140. Visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact Jennifer Cole at jennifer.cole@usda.gov, (406) 654.1333, ext. 117, or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by Aug. 19, 2019.

Timely Filing a NAP Notice of Loss

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must timely report damage or loss to their administrative County Office. For all low yield and value-loss crop claims, a CCC-576 Part B Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of earlier of the date disaster occurs (or becomes apparent) or the normal harvest

date. However, all producers should be aware that deadlines to provide initial notice to FSA do now vary by method of harvest and crop.

Crops that are either hand-harvested or other crops determined by FSA to deteriorate quickly and therefore need prompt appraisal must notify FSA within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This initial notice may be by the filing of the CCC-576 Part B, e-mail, FAX, or a phone call. When initial notice is by email, FAX, or phone, County Offices will provide a Receipt for Service with additional requirements. A **signed** *CCC-576 Notice* of Loss will still be required within 15 calendar days of earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

Other crops, such as forages and grains, continue to have the 15 day requirement to file a required *CCC-576*, *Notice of Loss*, to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. This Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of the earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 Part B must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Further, to receive NAP assistance for claimed losses producers **must** timely file an Application for Payment on CCC-576 (Parts D through H) along with all required production records. Each producer on the unit must file their own application for payment. The deadline to apply for payment is 60 calendar days after the end of coverage for the crop year on the unit. There are no late-file provisions for NAP Applications for Payment.

USDA Offers Producers Options to Re-Enroll or Extend Expiring CRP Contracts: August 23 Deadline

Farmers and ranchers with expiring <u>Conservation Reserve Program</u> (CRP) contracts may now re-enroll in certain CRP continuous signup practices or, if eligible, select a one-year contract extension. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is also accepting offers from landowners who want to enroll for the first time in one of the country's largest conservation programs. FSA's 52nd signup for CRP runs from June 3 to August 23.

This year's CRP continuous signup includes practices such as grass waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. View a full list of practices approved for this signup. Continuous signup contracts last for 10 to 15 years. Soil rental rates are set at 90 percent of 2018 rates. Incentive payments are not offered for these practices.

Producers interested in applying for CRP continuous practices, including those under existing CREP agreements, or who want to extend their contract, should contact their USDA service center by August 23.

To locate your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information

It is important to promptly report any changes in your farming operation to FSA. These changes can include, but are not limited to, changes in your address, phone, or email, name changes, changes to entity membership or shares, formation or dissolution of any entity (such as a trust, partnership, LLC, LLP or corporation) that owns or operates land or owns other farming assets used in your operation, sale or purchase of land, adding or dropping leases, and any changes to financing or equipment. Participants in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to their local FSA office in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan with necessary changes, as applicable. Failure to timely notify your local FSA office may result in ineligibility for program benefits, or delays in issuance of program payments. If you have any updates or corrections to your records, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

2019 CRP Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting and Grazing

Summer/Fall Managed Grazing: July 16 – Sept. 13 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting Period: July 16 – Sept. 30

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) 2019 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting Period begins July 16 following Montana's Primary Nesting Season and ends no later than Sept. 30. All Hay Bales must be removed from CRP by Nov. 12. Contracts originally approved prior to December 15, 2015 are authorized to conduct Managed Harvesting 1 out of every 5 years. If an activity impacting the cover on your CRP was conducted in 2014, the CRP will rest in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, and be eligible to be hayed in 2019. If your contract was approved after December 15, 2015, Managed Haying is authorized 1 out of every 3 years. If an activity impacting the cover on your CRP was conducted in 2016, the CRP will rest in 2017 and 2018, and be eligible to be hayed in 2019. CRP operates on a fiscal year basis - October 1 through September 30. Producers are authorized to harvest 100% of the contract acres that meet the applicable rest interval.

The CRP 2019 Summer/Fall Grazing Period begins July 16 and ends when the calculated AUMs have been utilized or no later than Sept. 13. Routine Grazing is authorized 1 out of 2 years. If an activity impacting the cover on your CRP was conducted in 2017, the CRP will rest in 2018 and be eligible to be grazed in 2019. Producers are authorized to graze 100% of the contract acres that meet the rest interval.

Producers must sign up at their local FSA office and complete a CRP-117 form for office approval before conducting any managed harvesting and/or grazing activity. Any harvesting and/or grazing activity without prior approval is a violation of the CRP contract, and standard payment reductions will apply.

Report: Farmers Prevented from Planting Crops on More than 19 Million Acres

Agricultural producers reported they were not able to plant crops on more than 19.4 million acres in 2019, according to a <u>new report</u> released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This marks the most prevented plant acres reported since USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) began releasing the report in 2007 and 17.49 million acres more than reported at this time last year.

Of those prevented plant acres, more than 73 percent were in 12 Midwestern states, where heavy rainfall and flooding this year has prevented many producers from planting mostly corn, soybeans and wheat.

Cover Crops

USDA supported planting of cover crops on fields where farmers were not able to plant because of their benefits in preventing soil erosion, protecting water quality and boosting soil health. The report showed where producers planted 2.71 million acres of cover crops so far in 2019, compared with 2.14 million acres at this time in 2018 and 1.88 million at this time in 2017.

To help make cover crops a more viable option, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) adjusted the haying and grazing date of cover crops, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service held signups in select states that offered producers assistance in planting cover crops. Meanwhile, USDA added other flexibilities to help impacted producers, including adjusting the deadline to file acreage reports in select states.

About the Report

This data report aggregates information from crop acreage reports as of August 1, 2019, which producers file with FSA to maintain program eligibility and to calculate losses for various disaster assistance programs. The crop acreage data report outlines the number of acres planted, prevented from planting, and failed by crop, county and state. To find more information, view the

Because some producers have not completed their filing and data are still being processed, FSA will make available subsequent data reports in September, October, November, December and January. You can find reports from 2007 to the present on FSA's Crop Acreage Data webpage.

To receive FSA program benefits, producers are required to submit crop acreage reports annually regarding all cropland uses on their farm. This report includes data for producers who had already filed for all deadlines in 2019, including the mid-July deadlines, which are for spring-seeded crops in many locations.

Other Prevented Planting Indicators

In addition to acreage reports filed with FSA, producers with crop insurance coverage for prevented planting file claims with their insurance providers. These claims are provided to RMA and may differ from the prevented planted acres reported to FSA. More information on prevented plant coverage is available on the RMA website.

Official USDA estimates of total acres planted, harvested and to be harvested, yield, and production are available from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service at nass.usda.gov.

Emergency Loans Available in Montana Disaster Areas

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

Current Disaster Designations in Montana - (by county) Emergency Loan Factsheet (pdf)

USDA Rural Development: \$400 Million Available for Renewable Energy System and Energy Efficiency Loan Guarantees

Funding Helps Farmers, Rural Small Businesses and Ag Producers Cut Energy Costs

Farmers, rural small businesses and agricultural producers can apply for financing in USDA Rural Development program that provides loan guarantees to help rural small businesses lower their energy costs.

USDA accepts applications for <u>Rural Energy for America Program</u> (REAP) funding year-round. Potential applicants should contact their state USDA Rural Development office for additional information.

REAP funding can be used for renewable energy systems such as anaerobic digesters, biomass, geothermal, hydropower, wind and solar. It also can be used to make energy efficiency improvements to heating, ventilation and cooling systems; insulation; and lighting and refrigeration.

Interested applicants can apply for REAP funding through RD area offices in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell or Missoula. To locate your RD area office and for more information visit www.rd.usda.gov/mt.

NRCS Sets Conservation Program Funding Application Cutoff for Aug. 30

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana has set an **Aug. 30, 2019,** application cutoff for agricultural operators to be considered for the next conservation program funding cycle through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

NRCS provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers implement conservation practices that provide environmental benefits to help sustain agricultural operations. Conservation program participation is voluntary and helps landowners and operators defray the costs of installing conservation practices.

Conservation funding is available for the following initiatives:

Capital 360 Forestry Project: This partnership project will improve forest health by integrating resource management across all administrative boundaries through reduction treatment projects strategically placed across Broadwater, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Powell counties.

High Tunnel Systems: These systems extend the growing seasons for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality and fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment.

Honey Bee Pollinators: Combats future honey bee declines by implementing conservation practices that provide forage for honey bees while enhancing habitat for other pollinators and wildlife.

National On-Farm Energy Initiative: Agricultural producers work with an NRCS-approved technical service provider to develop agricultural energy management plans or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. NRCS may also provide assistance to implement recommended measures identified in the energy audit through the use of conservation practice standards.

National Organic Initiative (NOI): Producers currently certified as organic, transitioning to organic, or National Organic Program exempt will have access to a broad set of conservation practices to assist in treating their resource concerns while fulfilling many of the requirements in an Organic System Plan.

National Water Quality Initiative: Producers implement conservation systems to reduce nitrogen, phosphorous, sediment and pathogen contributions from agricultural land in the Lower Gallatin Watershed (Camp and Godfrey Creeks).

Sage Grouse Initiative: Landowners can work with NRCS on three different components to improve sage-grouse habitat. One is a general category to implement prescribed grazing management practices. The others are to seed cropland back to perennial species to improve the connectivity for sage-grouse that depend on large, intact landscapes and the removal of conifers to increase nest success rates.

Wildfire Adapted Missoula: A partnership project that addresses shared wildfire risk by mitigating current wildfire hazards surrounding the Missoula community via prescribed fire and thinning maintenance.

Montana Focused Conservation - 2019 Targeted Implementation Plans:

Big Horn County – Ventenata Invasive Grass Control: Control the spread of Ventenata in Big Horn County through proper rangeland management and chemical control methods to improve rangeland health.

Big Horn and Yellowstone Counties – Irrigation Improvement Project: Convert less efficient irrigation systems to subsurface drip irrigation to increase irrigation efficiency, improve soil health and reduce soil compaction.

Broadwater County – Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area Range Health and Conifer Encroachment Treatment: Remove conifers to restore plant productivity and health, improve forest health, reestablish proper hydrologic function and reduce wildfire risk.

Lewis and Clark County – Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Manage unhealthy forest conditions to reduce fuel hazards, improve rangeland health by removing encroaching conifers, prevent runoff of sediment and heavy metals post fire, and control the spread of noxious weeds and undesirable plant species.

Lake County – Miller Coulee Water Quantity Improvement Project: Improve water quantity by reducing off-field movement of irrigation water in the Miller Coulee project area.

Lincoln County – Edna-Fortine Creek Forest Resiliency Project: Implement forest management practices to reduce hazardous fuels around homes and structures within the wildland urban interface, improve resiliency to insects and diseases, increase wildfire preparedness, and improve overall forest health.

Stillwater County – Pasture Monoculture Diversification Project: Diversify a monoculture, tame pastures to a diverse mix of introduced and native plants to improve available forage, expand grazing options, and increase grazing animal carrying capacity.

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. In Montana, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers will receive a higher payment rate for eligible conservation practices applied.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round; however, applications for the next funding consideration must be submitted by Aug. 30, 2019. Applications made after the cutoff will be considered in the next funding cycle. Additional information is available on the Montana NRCS website at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov under the Programs tab or by contacting a local NRCS service center.

Document the Drought: USDA U.S. Drought Monitor Offers Producers a Voice to Report Drought Impacts

The U.S. Drought Monitor's reporting feature offers producers an opportunity to submit drought impact and condition reports.

The USDA, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, produced the U.S. Drought Monitor to include a reporting feature that allows producers to report local drought impacts and conditions.

The report allows producers to:

- Provide a written description of drought impacts on livelihood, activities, etc.;
- Select categories to show losses and gains as a result of the drought;
- Report on the duration of drought event;
- Select Affected Places geographic areas ranging from an entire state to a small area within a state;
- Submit images that document the drought and its impact;
- Provide contact information (includes an option to keep information confidential).

The reporting tool for producers to record the effects of the drought can be accessed at the following link: http://droughtreporter.unl.edu/submitreport/

More information including state specific drought impact maps can be found on the U. S. Drought Monitor homepage: http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home.aspx

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