



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

October 13, 2026

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I write to request that the USDA designate additional Wisconsin counties as primary natural disaster areas due to drought.

The Trump Administration last month designated a handful of counties as being “primary” disaster areas, failing to include nine other impacted and eligible counties across Northern Wisconsin, including five that have been experiencing extreme drought for nearly two months now. In so doing, the Trump Administration left Wisconsin farmers and small businesses in Wisconsin’s rural areas with economic uncertainty at a time when they are already experiencing soaring costs and economic volatility caused by President Donald J. Trump’s erratic tariff taxes and reckless trade wars.

Farmers, growers, and small business owners across Northern Wisconsin are making difficult decisions right now about how to finance the months ahead and cover losses due to the prolonged drought conditions—and this is on top of the twin economic calamities the Trump Administration has created for Wisconsin’s farmers and producers. Every week without a drought designation is another week they make those decisions without the federal support for which many already qualify. I urge you to act on these requests swiftly and issue these drought designations without any further delay to ensure Wisconsin’s farmers and producers can get the support they need.

Last month, the USDA designated Burnett, Douglas, Pepin, Pierce, and Washburn counties as primary natural disaster areas (disaster designation number 2026N00002817), making emergency loans available to farmers in Northwestern Wisconsin. However, unfortunately, the Trump Administration did not include much of Northern Wisconsin, where the drought is now most severe. As of the U.S. Drought Monitor map dated Oct. 8, approximately 20 percent of our state is now in extreme drought or worse. Exceptional drought, the most severe category, now covers most of Iron and Ashland counties and half of Bayfield and Douglas counties.

Under 7 CFR 759.5(a), a county will be designated a disaster area when, during the growing season, any part of it reaches extreme drought (D3) or remains in severe drought (D2) for at least eight consecutive weeks. As of Oct. 8, nine Wisconsin counties meet that standard and have no drought designation from USDA at all:

Ashland, Chippewa, Florence, Forest, Iron, Marinette, Oneida, Price, and Vilas. Five of these counties (Ashland, Iron, Oneida, Price, and Vilas) first reached extreme drought on the Aug. 18 Drought Monitor map, one week prior to the five counties that have already been designated. **Months later, they are still waiting for the same designation. I ask that all nine of these counties be designated as primary natural disaster areas without further delay.**

Seven more Wisconsin counties (Barron, Bayfield, Dunn, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, and St. Croix) also meet the primary natural disaster drought designation standard in their own right but are covered today only because they are contiguous to a previously designated county. Bayfield, Rusk, and Sawyer counties have been in extreme drought since the Aug. 18 map; St. Croix County has now been in severe drought for nine consecutive weeks; and Barron, Dunn, and Polk counties have been in severe drought for eight consecutive weeks. **I ask that these seven counties also be designated as primary natural disaster drought counties, which would also extend USDA support to farmers in the counties contiguous to them.**

Finally, I am also asking for your assistance and attention to seven counties that have not yet reached the threshold, but where folks are feeling the same effects: Buffalo, Clark, Eau Claire, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, and Taylor. As of Oct. 8, each has been in severe drought for seven consecutive weeks. A farmer in one of these counties who is short on hay or paying to haul feed from further away is in the same position as many fellow Wisconsinites in designated counties. **I ask that the USDA designate each of these counties as soon as it reaches eight consecutive weeks in severe drought, which is anticipated to occur this week, and, for any county that falls short, that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) carefully assess production losses under 7 CFR 759.5(b) and consider the discretionary authority granted to it under 7 CFR 759.5(d) and designate those counties as primary natural disaster areas to enable farmers in these counties to access emergency loans. I also ask that FSA use this discretionary authority to designate Door County, which has experienced severe drought conditions for six of the past seven weeks and remains in moderate drought this week.**

Wisconsinites need and deserve expeditious action. Thank you for your swift and immediate attention to this important issue.

Cordially,



Tony Evers
Governor

cc: President Donald J. Trump