

Governor Nixon extends "Drought Emergency" for Missouri

News

Posted by : John

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Governor Jay Nixon today extended for 45 days, until November 15th, the state of emergency for Missouri he declared in July because of the heat, fire risk and prolonged drought impacting the state. The Governor also extended the deadline to help Missouri livestock producers and farmers complete water projects approved under the drought relief program he established on July 23.

Governor Nixon spoke today at Howell-Oregon Electric Cooperative in West Plains, where he said rural electric co-ops have been a vital partner in providing necessary and expedited electrical connections to service the water projects. Since late July, more than 5,800 projects have been approved under the emergency cost-share program to drill new wells, deepen existing wells or undertake other projects to get water to animals and crops.

As of today, more than 4,400 projects have been completed; are under construction; or have been scheduled for construction.

Under the Executive Order signed by Governor, in order to be eligible for this extension, a landowner with an approved project must diligently endeavor to engage the services of contractors and/or suppliers necessary to complete the project by the earliest possible date.

Governor Nixon said the same strict criteria used in evaluating farmers' eligibility for project approval would be used for eligibility of the extension. To ensure accountability to taxpayers, the Governor has created a program audit and compliance team, working under the direction of the State Budget Director.

More than 11,000 applications were submitted to the state in just a two-week period, of which more than 5,800 were approved. The Governor praised the work of all involved in implementing the projects, including the rural electric cooperatives, such as Howell-Oregon, which has helped provide electrical hook-ups for new wells and other projects.

Under Executive Order 12-08, signed on July 23, Governor Nixon established an emergency program to provide urgent relief for farmers and producers facing critical shortages of water. To be eligible for the program, projects had to provide immediate and material relief for the farmer or producer. The same day, he signed a separate executive order declaring a State of Emergency in Missouri because of the drought.

Because of the emergency nature of the program, project applications were due by 5 p.m. Monday, August 6th. Officials from the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources supported local soil and water districts in reviewing the applications to determine eligibility for funding.

The program covers 90 percent of the cost of the emergency water project, such as digging or deepening a well or connecting a farm to a rural water supply. The producer or farmer pays the remaining 10 percent. The average allocation per approved livestock project is approximately \$4,800.

Funding for this emergency program comes from unallocated reserve funds provided by the State Soil & Water Districts Commission and state resources made available by Gov. Nixon through House Bill 8, which provides the Governor the authority to direct funds for "responding during a declared emergency at the direction of the Governor, provided the services furnish immediate aid and relief".