

- HOME
- ABOUT GOVERNOR HASSAN
- ABOUT TOM HASSAN
- MEDIA CENTER
- JUST FOR KIDS
- CONTACT GOVERNOR HASSAN



Press Release

For Immediate Release

August 5, 2016

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Governor Hassan Requests Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation from U.S. Department of Agriculture for Three New Hampshire Counties

Declaration Would Make Federal Aid Available for Grafton, Rockingham and Strafford Counties and All Contiguous Counties

CONCORD – In order to support New Hampshire farmers and other local businesses in the agriculture industry responding to the crop losses caused by recent severe drought conditions, Governor Maggie Hassan today sent a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack requesting a Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation for farmers in Grafton, Rockingham and Strafford counties. The request follows a vote by the USDA Farm Service Agency's State Emergency Board to seek a disaster declaration.

Crop losses – including mixed forage alfalfa/grass, pumpkins and blueberries – in those three counties have exceeded 30 percent, and a Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation would automatically qualify Grafton, Rockingham, Strafford and all contiguous counties for any disaster-related programs or assistance.

"New Hampshire's agriculture industry is critical to our economy and our way of life, and a drought disaster declaration for these three counties is critical to minimizing the negative impacts of the recent severe drought conditions to this important industry," Governor Hassan wrote.

If severe drought conditions persist, other New Hampshire counties will reach the 30 percent threshold that triggered the declaration request, at which point the Governor would issue additional disaster declaration requests.

The full text of the Governor's letter to Secretary Vilsack is below:

August 4, 2016

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to formally request a Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation for farmers affected by severe drought conditions which have occurred over this current growing season in three of the ten New Hampshire counties – Rockingham, Strafford and Grafton. Major crop losses reported thus far include mixed forage alfalfa/grass, pumpkins and blueberries.

These crop losses are estimated to have exceeded thirty percent. On August 3, the State Emergency Board met with state leadership of the Farm Service Agency and voted to seek drought disaster designation for these three counties.

New Hampshire's agriculture industry is critical to our economy and our way of life, and a drought disaster declaration for these three counties is critical to minimizing the negative impacts of the recent severe drought conditions to this important industry.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

With every good wish,

Innovate NH

Balanced Budget

Public Safety

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor

Cc: Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food

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