

Texas Governor seeks emergency drought disaster status for entire state

March 06, 2009

Writer(s): Steve Byrns, [325-653-4576](tel:325-653-4576), s-byrns@tamu.edu

Contact(s): Dr. Allan McGinty, 325-653-4576, a-mcginty@tamu.edu

AUSTIN – Texas Governor Rick Perry is seeking disaster status for all Texas counties due to continuing drought. In a letter released today to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Perry asked that all 254 counties be designated disaster areas for 2009.

“The drought has created an economic emergency because of losses suffered by many farmers and ranchers,” Perry said. “The farmers and ranchers are unable to control the cause of their economic and physical losses, which exceed state, local and private sector assistance capabilities.”

Dr. Allan McGinty, Texas AgriLife Extension Service range specialist at San Angelo, said, in general, Texas rangelands have received little to no effective rainfall in months.

“Soil moisture is almost non-existent in a large majority of our counties, resulting in an absence of cool season forage plants for livestock,” McGinty said.

“Most ranchers are having to significantly reduce livestock numbers and heavily supplement those that remain on the ranch. Dry forage conditions, higher than normal daytime temperatures and wind have added the additional risk of wildfire across most of the state. As of March 5, more than 57,000 acres have already burned.”

Dr. Travis Miller, AgriLife Extension agronomist at College Station, said, if granted, the federal drought declaration from the U.S. Department of Agriculture would allow counties to apply for assistance for drought mitigation and to assist agricultural interests with USDA funds.

-30-

We grant permission for the use of this news as a free service to the news media. Articles may be used either in their entirety or in part, provided that attribution remains. You may print the stories and art or you may put it on your Web sites. High resolution photos, audio and video also are provided with many of our articles for your use at <http://agnews.tamu.edu/>)