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# United States Senate

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April 6, 2017

Michael L. Young  
Acting Deputy Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Acting Deputy Secretary Young,

We first want to commend and thank the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the support the agency has provided in response to last year's Anderson Creek fire that devastated communities in southwest Kansas and the most recent wildfires across the state. Wildfire knows no boundaries so it is reassuring to know that there are programs and resources available across the agency to provide assistance to producers in times of adversity.

With more than 700,000 acres burned to date across the state, local officials are still in the process of evaluating the totality of the damages and impacts from this disaster. In response to the recent wildfires, farmers and ranchers across Kansas are in need of assistance to protect their property, livestock, and livelihood in a number of ways. We appreciate the Department utilizing programs offered through agencies, including the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Risk Management Agency (RMA), to help with recovery efforts from this catastrophic event.

We appreciate USDA's recent efforts to provide relief to farm and ranch families in Kansas devastated by the wildfire. For instance, USDA's previous announcement approving emergency use and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrolled land for livestock producers; delivering disaster assistance through the Livestock Indemnity Program and other authorities; providing resources through the Emergency Conservation Program to assist producers with rebuilding fencing damaged by wildfire; and allocating resources through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to help restore devastated landscapes, rehabilitate damaged watersheds, and address rebuilding concerns.

We also welcome and applaud the President's recent directive and announcement which extends the use of emergency grazing on CRP enrolled land in Kansas impacted by the wildfire. We thank the Administration for this swift action and request that the Department move expeditiously to allow emergency grazing on these acres to provide much needed relief for producers. Response efforts to natural disasters require flexibility to address challenges

specific to local and county circumstances. We request that USDA consider any further requests, particularly those that have garnered local consensus on appropriate flexibilities, including additional conservation practices eligible for emergency grazing.

Unfortunately, Kansas has now experienced two consecutive seasons of unrelenting wildfire. As a result of Anderson Creek, many lessons have been learned that can be applied to the response and recovery efforts for the challenges that remain ahead related to the most recent wildfire. I urge the Department to employ any program requirements and contract flexibilities that will result in timely, deliverable assistance to producers during this critical time.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue.

With every best wish.

Sincerely,

  
Pat Roberts

  
Roger Marshall