

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2023

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

We write today to underscore our support for the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) and the U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) in the upcoming Farm Bill. We respectfully request that the Farm Bill provide funding of \$3.8 million per year for the NDMC to support both the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) risk management programs as well as the many Tribal, state, local, and regional decision-makers who depend on USDM data to make critical judgments for the diverse communities and constituencies they serve—from Nebraska to Nevada and beyond.

Established in 1995, the NDMC at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln works to reduce the effects of drought on people, the environment, and the economy by researching the science of drought monitoring and the practice of drought planning. NDMC serves the USDA’s drought assistance programs, agricultural producers, and related public and private stakeholders. The NDMC also works with decision-makers at all levels—including individual ranchers, rural communities, resource managers, state and federal agencies, and governors—to develop plans to monitor drought, reduce vulnerability to drought, and respond to drought.

An essential component of the NDMC’s efforts has been developing and maintaining the USDM and related science-based drought early warning products. The USDM is a map updated weekly to show the location and intensity of drought across the country. USDM data is used to administer several drought relief programs managed by the USDA, including the Livestock Forage Disaster Program; the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program; Fast Track USDA Disaster Designations; Emergency Farm Loans; and Emergency Haying & Grazing under the Conservation Reserve Program. Over the past 10 years, USDA’s Farm Service Agency has used the USDM to allocate \$10 billion to ranchers under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program alone. Water managers nationwide—including in the Colorado River Basin, which continues to experience historically dry conditions—rely on USDM data to declare drought emergencies or trigger various other drought responses.

The NDMC provides unique and essential services to USDA, supporting the administration of billions of dollars of risk management funding and programmatic assistance. NDMC's services are crucial to ensuring accurate drought early warning and effective administration of several USDA programs. However, even as USDA and other federal agencies have relied on the USDM in administering programs with mandatory funding, the NDMC has had to rely on fluid funding from ad hoc federal grants and cooperative agreements.

Authorized and dedicated funding will put NDMC's increasingly sophisticated array of tools on a solid foundation. Further, such funding will better enable NDMC to support USDA, Tribes, states, and other stakeholders in anticipating and reducing the effects of extreme weather on U.S. agricultural producers, at-risk communities, the environment, and our economy.

Thank you for your time and continued consideration of this key bipartisan priority. We look forward to collaborating with you to support the National Drought Mitigation Center and the U.S. Drought Monitor as you continue to work towards advancing the upcoming Farm Bill.

Yours very truly,



Mike Flood
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress