



Willo Vieira
Agricultural Commissioner
Sealer of Weights & Measures
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Plumas-Sierra Counties

Department of Agriculture Weights and Measures

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November 25, 2024

Ms. Nancy Ward, Director
Governor's Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, CA 95655

RE: Plumas County request for disaster declaration

Dear Director Ward,

In past years, drought affected 90% of Plumas County's private and grazing lands. Due to drought, Plumas County saw an increase in grasshoppers infesting crops and grazing lands in 2021, 2022, and 2023 (historic maps available at droughtmonitor.unl.edu).

Grasshoppers require heat and dry land to survive. Although grasshoppers are often treated (sprayed) on agricultural lands, adjacent public lands harbor and over winter grasshopper eggs. Wet, warm weather conditions during the winter and spring of 2024 increased the survivability of grasshoppers on infested public and adjacent private lands. Infestation of grasshoppers affected both crop and livestock production. Forage hay crops are being damaged before harvest.

Through interviews, field visits and reported pesticide usage received by the Plumas County Department of Agriculture (Ag Department), Plumas producers increased treatments of properties with high infestations of grasshoppers in 2023 and more applications occurred in 2024. The department has also received phone calls stating crop loss due to grasshoppers. Additionally, I conducted field visits across the county where I observed the destruction of hay and pasture fields from grasshoppers that corroborate the results from producer survey.

The Ag Department conducted a survey of agricultural producers to access the grasshopper damage in the county. Livestock producers reported experiencing an average 42% forage loss in rangeland and a 34% average loss in pasture with some individual producers experiencing up to 75% loss on their grazing lands from grasshoppers. This has resulted in lower stocking rates requiring the movement of cattle from pasture to pasture more quickly due to the lack of feed to prevent destruction to the pastures; and purchase of additional feed to meet forage demands. Hay crop losses for meadow and grain hay were up to 65% for some individuals resulting in a county average of 41%. Vegetable producers also experienced grasshopper losses amounting to 35% of the crops.

A review of observations provided to the Plumas County Department of Agriculture indicates that crop and grazing losses meet the minimum 30% yield loss threshold required to request a disaster declaration for Plumas County. Therefore, I am requesting the Office of Emergency Services to pursue a disaster declaration designation from the Secretary of the United Stated Department of Agriculture for field crops, pastures, and rangelands for Plumas County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Willo Vieira". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Willo" on the top line and "Vieira" on the bottom line.

Willo Vieira
Plumas-Sierra Counties Agricultural Commissioner

CC:

Plumas County Board of Supervisors
Plumas County OES
Hyrum Eastman, CDFA Liaison
Tracy Schohr, Plumas-Sierra-Butte County UCANR Farm Advisor
Plumas-Sierra County Cattlemen's Association

Attachment:

California County Agricultural Commissioner Disaster Report for Plumas County

CALIFORNIA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER DISASTER REPORT