

## BLM'S DROUGHT POLICY

### PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

National and statewide drought policies can affect annual livestock operations across the state. By providing guidance during winter and summer months, the BLM strives to assist land managers and permittees in avoiding last-minute economic surprises, improving grazing strategies, and reducing land use impacts.

### ISSUES:

Most of Montana is not experiencing drought-like conditions. The exception is Glacier County which is in a "Drought Alert" (moderately dry). Slightly dry conditions exist in Fergus, Teton, Pondera, Toole, and Liberty counties. The "Drought Alert" in Glacier County is likely to persist through the fall. Additional information on the short term outlook can be obtained at: [http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert\\_assessment/seasonal\\_drought.html](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html)

#### Drought Alerts:

The Montana [Governor's Drought Advisory Committee](#) strongly encourages watershed groups and county drought committees to convene and undertake planning for drought.

### MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The Montana BLM's policy, supported by the bureauwide drought policy, presents existing laws and regulations used to guide livestock grazing in Montana and the Dakotas during periods of drought. The BLM has provided copies of this policy to grazing lease holders in the three states several times during the last decade. Montana's Drought Policy may be viewed at [http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/mt/blm\\_programs/grazing.Par.72521.File.dat/drought.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/mt/blm_programs/grazing.Par.72521.File.dat/drought.pdf)

Under the drought policy, BLM assesses soil moisture levels necessary for plant growth, effective precipitation, environmental demands, plant vigor, and the amount of available water and forage prior to and during the grazing season. Emphasis is placed on allotments having multiple resource values, grazing problems, and a high percentage of federal land. If resource assessments indicate a need to delay livestock turnout, reduce livestock numbers, or close areas to grazing, BLM works closely with livestock operators to minimize impacts to their operations.

### BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Most livestock operators, the Montana Stockgrowers Association, local and state grazing districts, and all resource advisory councils support BLM policy on grazing during periods of drought. Montana BLM is an active participant in the Governor's Drought Advisory Committee as well as local drought advisory committees and groups. When available and applicable, the BLM provides soil moisture and soil temperature conditions from remote automated weather stations (RAWS) as well as Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) located throughout the state. This data, when combined with weather and climate data from other agencies and used with GIS soil survey data, assists Montanans in making decisions affecting their management options and techniques. More extensive and detailed soil information is available at [http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/Soilmst\\_Monitoring/](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/Soilmst_Monitoring/).

Montana drought information is available from the state's drought information page at: <http://drought.mt.gov/>.

Information on a national scale may be obtained at: <http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>,

[http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert\\_assessment/drought\\_assessment.shtml](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/drought_assessment.shtml), and

[http://www.drought.gov/portal/server.pt/community/drought\\_gov/202;jsessionid=73060412814EE91C8EA8F536ED592D2D](http://www.drought.gov/portal/server.pt/community/drought_gov/202;jsessionid=73060412814EE91C8EA8F536ED592D2D)

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