

# **USDA Farm Service Agency County Drought Monitoring for 2005 (05/04/05)**

**Background:** The USDA Farm Service Agency staffs offices in 26 county locations throughout the state. FSA employees interact with farmers and ranchers on a daily basis. During the 2005 drought situation, FSA county employees are sending a weekly report to FSA State Executive Director Jim Fitzgerald who also chairs the USDA State Emergency Board. Information is shared between FSA and partner USDA agencies Washington Agricultural Statistics Service and the Risk Management Agency for reports. Information from all three agencies is compiled into this biweekly report. The report is sent to USDA agencies, the Washington State Department of Agriculture and Congressional offices.

## **Northeast (Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens)**

Northeast Washington experienced warmer temperatures with some rain the week ending April 23 but none the last week in April. The winter wheat still looked good and producers were completing spring grain plantings. Producers began turning livestock out to pasture. Pastures looked good.

## **East (Adams, Lincoln, Spokane, Whitman)**

Warmer weather boosted growth of grain crops and pasture. Grain crops looked good. Spring crops began to emerge and grow. Livestock were turned out to pasture. Cattle producers expressed concerns about pasture conditions in Whitman County. Most estimated around a 50% loss in pasture so far this grazing season. Annual grasses on rangeland in Adams County headed, shorter than normal, indicating a decrease in forage production. Emergency Conservation Program livestock water development activity picked up. Adams County received strong winds the last week in April. Spokane County experienced temperatures low enough to damage fruit but no damage reports had been received at this time. Adams and Lincoln counties have been approved for the Emergency Conservation Program.

## **Southeast (Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla)**

Asotin and Garfield counties experienced warm, dry weather while Walla Walla and Columbia counties had cooler temperatures and some thunder showers the week ending April 23. Winter wheat in the lower elevations and on shallow ground in Garfield and Asotin counties started showing signs of moisture stress. Producers neared completion of spring crop planting. Winter wheat in Columbia and Walla Walla counties started to head out. Spring crops began to emerge and crops looked good. Dryland farmers were optimistic. Irrigators, however, are preparing for an extremely short water supply. Walla Walla County alfalfa hay growers started their first cutting of hay. Cattle producers in Asotin and Garfield counties reported poor pasture conditions and have

asked about emergency CRP grazing. The county office continues to receive reports about livestock watering problems. Asotin and Garfield counties have been approved for the Emergency Conservation Program.

### **Columbia/Yakima Basin (Benton, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Yakima, Klickitat)**

Conditions remained mostly dry with some spotty rain in all of the counties and a thunder shower in Benton and Yakima counties. Pastures steadily improved where rains occurred in Grant County but the rainfall was uneven. The Grant County offices received a report from a producer in the Mattawa area who was pulling cattle off the pasture because of the poor condition. Franklin County estimated pasture losses greater than 50%. Livestock producers who normally discontinue supplemental feeding in late February and early March continued supplemental feeding. Franklin County planned to request emergency CRP haying and grazing. Range conditions improved following two months of normal precipitation in Klickitat County. With the exception of Grant and Franklin counties, these counties all have been approved for the Emergency Conservation Program.

The winter wheat still looked good with some stress reported in Franklin County. Row crops were planted and potato planting continued. Asparagus was being harvested. The main concern is for irrigated crops. The Roza Irrigation District did start priming the canal on April 29. The district estimated the delivery will be at 11 pts/40 acres with the proration factor at .00461 and 2.0 gpm/acre.

### **North Central (Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan)**

Dry conditions prevailed in North Central Washington. Temperatures were warmer but still fairly mild. Windy conditions persisted in Chelan and Douglas counties. Fewer acres were planted to spring crops compared to past years. Winter wheat still looked good from the ground. An aerial view in Douglas County showed that wheat was spotty and the ridges were drying out and bare.

Livestock producers in all counties started releasing their cattle into spring pastures. The Douglas County office received numerous calls from livestock producers interested in spring developments and wells. Many already started hauling water. One producer indicated that he would be selling livestock due to the drought conditions of his pasture. Producers reported good pasture conditions in Okanogan County. Hay producers in Okanogan County started to irrigate. Chelan and Douglas counties have been approved for the Emergency Conservation Program.

### **Northwest (Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom)**

The northwest counties reported warmer temperatures and perfect conditions following earlier heavy rains in March and early April. Farmers have been working the fields.

**Olympic Peninsula/So. Puget Sound (Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Thurston)**

With the exception of Grays Harbor, Pacific and Lewis counties, the other counties received warmer, drier days allowing farmers to work the fields. Heavy rains continued in Grays Harbor, Pacific and Lewis limiting field time for farmers. Pasture, forage, vegetable crops and greenhouse production were many weeks ahead of schedule in Kitsap County.

**Lower Columbia (Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum)**

Rain continued in the lower Columbia counties. Concern has shifted from drought to crop loss due to cool, wet weather. The weather affected the bloom on fruit trees and caused concern about the berry crop.