

Western Kansas gets disaster aid

IN the wake of the Dec. 28-30 winter storm that dropped several inches of rain, ice and snow on 44 counties in the western half of Kansas, President George W. Bush has declared the region a disaster area.

The declaration, which came Jan. 7, lists the following counties: Cheyenne, Clark, Comanche, Decatur, Edwards, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Gove, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Jewell, Kearny, Kiowa, Lane, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Norton, Osborne, Pawnee, Phillips, Rawlins, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Scott, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita.

The storms, accompanied by high winds, and blizzard and icy conditions, left more than 69,000 people without power, including police departments, fire departments and hospitals. Nearly 3 feet of snow blanketed the area in some counties, and drifting as high as 15 to 16 feet was reported. The Kansas Livestock Association estimated that more than 5,000 head of cattle were killed due to the storm.

"This federal assistance will enable local officials to restore vital public infrastructure damaged by these storms," said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in a statement Jan. 9. "On behalf of the state of Kansas, I appreciate the president's decision that will help those communities impacted."

1st District Rep. Jerry Moran says the categories of public assistance available are for debris removal on public right-of-ways and emergency protective measures, which include funds to assist in activities like restoration of public utilities. Additional public assistance categories, like assistance to rebuild public infrastructure, may be added once a preliminary damage assessment is completed.

The cost of approved public assistance projects will be shared 75% by the federal government and 25% by the state and local governments. Also

Key Points

- A winter storm caused widespread damage in 44 western Kansas counties.
- Storm left 69,000 homes without power, caused millions of dollars in damages.
- President Bush declared area a federal disaster; USDA's declaration is pending.

available will be hazard mitigation assistance.

Sebelius noted certain private non-profit organizations also may be eligible for assistance.

National Guard contributes

The Kansas National Guard used Black Hawk helicopters to help feed stranded cattle in western Kansas following the storm.

"We have been working diligently to ensure the people of western Kansas have what they need, and we also want to make sure we protect the state's economic interests," says Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, Kansas adjutant general.

More than 130 members of other National Guard units assisted with power restoration and other missions,

Bunting says. Kansas National Guard provided emergency generators and operation personnel to some communities to provide power to water treatment plants and other critical facilities. The generators were moved to other locations as power was restored.

Keep track of losses

"Many livestock have died because of the extreme circumstances of this storm," says Bill Fuller, state executive director of the Kansas Farm Service Agency. "Milk has been dumped because transport trucks could not reach the dairy farms."

Those who suffered economic losses due to power loss, stalled transportation, damaged infrastructures and livestock fatality need to record their losses by keeping track of receipts associated with rendering, insurance, carcass removal, veterinarian expenses, IRS records, financial reports and photos of damage, Fuller says.

In addition, dairy farmers should maintain documentation to prove production was dumped due to a direct result of this storm, he says.



PHOTO COURTESY GENE BIRNES

Sprayer dealer receives award for Apache sales

SIMPSON Farm Enterprises, with locations in Ransom, Great Bend and Hays, has been named Apache Dealer of the Year by Equipment Technologies, manufacturer of the Apache line of self-propelled sprayers.

Greg Simpson, owner of the business, says the company sold 33 Apache sprayers in 2006, earning the most units sold by a dealer in 2006 and the most growth in units sold by a dealer in 2006 when compared with 2005.

Jason Pavlu, sales consultant for Simpson Farm Enterprises, sold 24 Apache machines in 2006, leading all Apache salespeople. He won two sales contests sponsored by Equipment Technologies.



TOP HAND: Jason Pavlu, sales consultant for Simpson Farm Enterprises, met with potential customers Rob Olson and Duane Olson, both of Pomona, at the Topeka Farm Show last month. Pavlu was the nation's top Apache Sprayer salesman in 2006, while Simpson Farm Enterprises won the company's Dealer of the Year award.

Kansas gears up for '07 Farm Bill debate

By **BRAD LUBBEN**

WITH a new Congress at work in Washington, the debate on the 2007 Farm Bill is ready to kick into high gear. Several factors will drive this discussion, including economic, budget, trade and political considerations.

The congressional agriculture committees will be working on several proposals to fit into a new farm bill in time to replace or extend the 2002 Farm Bill before it expires in September.

Before then, the budget committees will need to establish the spending baseline under which the agriculture committees can authorize programs. With ongoing concerns about the federal deficit and potential budget reconciliation, there have been expectations of a tight budget and constrained spending for agriculture.

Add to that the calls for more spending in some new program areas — particularly conservation and

Key Points

- With budget reconciliation a current priority, the 2007 Farm Bill is under fire.
- K-State, University of Nebraska teamed up to host farm bill meetings this month.
- Meetings will focus on 2007 Farm Bill issues and options.

energy — and substantial challenges exist that must be worked through.

Baseline spending decrease?

Complicating matters further is the potential for higher crop prices, which by way of government accounting mean lower spending projections and lower baseline allocations from which to start.

All of these factors add up to an interesting battle to start the farm bill process.

Into this process will come several proposals for future farm programs. Already, calls have been made for continuing the basic provisions of the cur-

rent farm income safety net, changing the safety net approach from price to revenue, and even shifting major funding from the safety net to conservation and other programs. Understanding these major proposals and how they might affect farms and farm operators is critical to preparing a sound business and management strategy for the coming farm program.

Ag policy specialists from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Kansas State University are teaming up to deliver a series of meetings in both states focused on the issues and options in this year's farm bill debate. Each meeting will provide an overview of the farm bill debate and will focus on the mechanics and implications of the various farm bill proposals put forward at that time.

Farm bill options

Specific topics will include potential modifications to current farm programs and the mechanics of a proposed rev-

enue safety net to replace part of the current safety net programs.

Additionally, efforts to shift funding to an expanded and enhanced Conservation Security Program will be discussed.

Each meeting also will provide an opportunity for producers to discuss the major options and provide feedback that will contribute to the ag policy debate.

The meetings in Kansas will occur Feb. 20, 21 and 22 in Sabetha, Emporia and Hays, respectively.

Full information on the meeting agenda and schedule for both states is available at www.agmanager.info/policy/commodity/2007default.asp. Or, call Troy Dumler at (620) 275-9164 for more details.

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