

Message From Marsha



July 22, 2008

COLORADO'S BEEF INDUSTRY IN PERIL OVER ENVIRONMENTAL LAWSUIT

Many farmers and ranchers turn to "The Conservation Reserve Program" (CRP) to assist them with the management of their grass, shrubs, trees and environmentally sensitive lands. Authorized by the Food Security Act, the mission of the CRP is to; reduce soil erosion; protect ground and surface water; increase wildlife benefits; protect the nation's capacity to provide food and fiber products and provide income support to producers by curbing the production of surplus commodities. The CRP program allows farmers and ranchers to use their land while honoring the intent of the program.

Over the past few years drought conditions and the increase of the bio-fuels industry have negatively affected the cost and availability of feedstock for cattle, dairy, swine, and the poultry industries of our county, state and country. The Critical Feed Use Waiver (CFUW) allows farmers and ranchers to use their CRP land for emergency grazing and haying operations during these drought and feedstock supply shortages. Ensuring there are enough meat products in the food supply is one of the most important issues facing agriculture in America today and the CFUW is an important part of that long-term strategy.

Several environmental organizations from South Dakota, Washington State, Kansas and Arkansas have filed a lawsuit against the USDA to prohibit rancher's access to **THEIR** own land for emergency grazing and haying operations. In response to the lawsuit, the U.S. District Court has issued an injunction against the USDA that prohibits the farmers and ranchers of the entire United States from using **THEIR LAND** to graze **THEIR** cattle.

I have spoken with many farmers and ranchers in Eastern El Paso County who may lose their entire herds and face bankruptcy if they are not allowed to use their CRP land to feed their animals. Our state's beef production is in dire straights today! Drought conditions, higher feed prices, lack of adequate feedstock and increasing energy costs have caused many farmers and ranchers to liquidate their herds at unprecedented rates. How much more can this industry take?

Please stand with me and our farmers and ranchers in El Paso County urging the U.S. District Court to allow Colorado farmers and ranchers to use their CRP land during this critical time.

If you are interested in helping on this issue, email me your opposition letter to the injunction and join us for a town hall meeting on July 23rd Fountain City Hall 7:00 – 8:30 pm; and, July 26th for coffee & donuts at the Wagon Wheel Restaurant in Ellicott from 8:30 – 10:00 am, July 29th, coffee & donuts at 10620 Double D Rd., FTN. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you!

Respectfully,

Marsha Looper

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