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Congress of the United States
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EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

September 16, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0002

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I previously wrote to you on September 2, 2016, requesting that the processing of the application submitted by the Farm Service Agency's New York State Office seeking a D2 drought disaster declaration for Jefferson County of my congressional district (NY21) be handled expeditiously. At this point in time, *I am respectfully requesting that you please review the attached data, and issue a D3 drought disaster declaration for Jefferson County.*

As you are aware, we have been experiencing a sustained drought in Northern New York, which has had, and will continue to have, a negative impact on the agricultural sector of my district. It is my understanding that drought levels in my district are monitored by the Northeast Regional Climate Center, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Drought Mitigation Center. After speaking with representatives from these organizations and reviewing the indicators that are used to determine drought categorization, I am extremely concerned that the data collected up until this point does not adequately reflect the severity of this drought, particularly in northern Jefferson County.

I have attached an e-mail from Mr. Jay Matteson, the Jefferson County Agricultural Coordinator with the Jefferson County Local Development Corporation, along with detailed precipitation data for Jefferson County. I ask that you please review this e-mail and this data carefully, and provide me with any feedback you think may be helpful. I appreciate your time in this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact Madeline Donovan in my Watertown office at 315-782-3150 or madeline.donovan@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



ELISE STEFANIK
Member of Congress

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GLENS FALLS, NY 12801
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(518) 561-2324

WATERTOWN
88 PUBLIC SQUARE
SUITE A
WATERTOWN, NY 13601
(315) 782-3150

Donovan, Madeline

Subject: rainfall data for Jefferson County
Attachments: jeffcountyprecipdata.xlsx
Importance: High

Hi,

Attached you will find an excel spreadsheet with a sample of precipitation data from across Jefferson County, including Watertown Airport, which is used by the National Weather Service. I call your attention to the data from Wood Farm in Cape Vincent. This is the hardest hit area in Jefferson County from the drought. **Cape Vincent received over 6.5" less rain than Watertown Airport from April 1 to August 31.**

The rainfall data used in this report is collected in two different ways:

All the stations listed, except Sheland Dairy farm, collect weather data using automated weather reporting monitors. The data is automatically reported to the Weather Underground Website where visitors can look at each individual weather reporting station to see current weather conditions as well as research historical data from the station.

Doug Shelmidine, a partner from Sheland Dairy Farm, provided their precipitation data directly.

I suggest that the significant difference in rainfall from Watertown Airport to the Cape Vincent weather station indicates a much more severe drought was occurring in northern Jefferson County. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, it only requires a very small sliver of area within a County to be classified as a more severe drought area for the entire County to be designated in the more severe drought designation. If the Cape Vincent area qualifies as a D3 drought classification or worse, all of Jefferson County must be classified as a D3 drought zone. We are currently classified as D2 which is less severe.

We already recognize that the data used by the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) is flawed for designating a drought zone in Jefferson County. They use stream gauge data from the Black River whose watershed is primarily in the western Adirondack Mountains and eastern Tug Hill region, which received closer to normal precipitation than Jefferson County. They also used stream gauge data from Sandy Creek. The Sandy Creek watershed lies primarily on the Tug Hill and eastern Jefferson County area, which received closer to normal precipitation throughout the spring and summer. The NDMC used only precipitation data from the Watertown Airport which received more rainfall than 3 of the 5 sites in our data sample. The NDMC indicated they used crop damage reports from USDA. USDA at their national and State offices reports they did not share crop damage reports with NDMC. Finally NDMC reported in an email that they use local observers to report on the ground conditions. To date they have not provided any evidence of local observers visiting Jefferson County.

It is very important to our farms in Jefferson County that the drought designation be re-evaluated. With a D3 designation, more USDA programs become available that provide critical assistance to farms trying to recover from the financial impacts of the drought. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our farming community.

*Jay M. Matteson
Jefferson County Agricultural Coordinator
Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
800 Starbuck Avenue
Watertown, NY 13601*

Precipitation Data for Jefferson County

March 1 - August 31, 2016

Date	Wood Farm Cape Vincent	Sheland Farm Ellisburg	Airport Hounsfield	Volunteer fire dept DePaulville	Limerick Ce Limerick N
March 1		0.21	0	0	0
2		0.00	0.08	0.01	0
3		0.00	0	0	0
4		0.00	0	0	0
5		0.00	0	0	0.01
6		0.00	0	0	0
7		0.00	0.04	0.05	0.04
8		0.04	0	0	0
9		0.00	0.03	0	0.01
10		0.15	0.73	0.58	0.67
11		0.90	0	0.01	0.03
12		0.00	0	0	0
13		0.00	0	0.01	0
14		0.00	0.01	0.02	0.01
15		0.00	0.03	0.04	0.05
16		0.01	0.26	0.3	0.26
17		0.26	0	0.01	0
18		0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02
19		0.02	0	0	0
20		0.00	0	0	0
21		0.00	0	0	0
22		0.00	0.08	0.06	0.08
23		0.00	0.02	0.11	0.1
24		0.00	0.13	0	0
25		0.25	0.22	0.36	0.04
26		0.00	0	0	0
27		0.00	0	0.01	0
28		0.00	0.32	0.27	0.37
29		0.60	0	0	0.02
30		0.00	0	0	0
31		0.00	0.68	0.89	0.72
total	0	2.44	2.65	2.75	2.43
Apr-16					
1	0.11	0.68	0.25	0.13	0.24
2	0	0.25	0.07	0.02	0.05
3	0	0.00	0	0	0
4	0	0.00	0	0	0
5	0	0.00	0	0	0
6	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.05	0.04
7	0.11	0.00	0.07	0.14	0.09

8	0	0.00	0	0	0
9	0	0.00	0	0	0
10	0	0.00	0	0	0
11	0.39	0.00	0.31	0.46	0.38
12	0.1	0.80	0.08	0.09	0.1
13	0	0.00	0	0	0
14	0	0.00	0	0	0
15	0	0.00	0	0	0
16	0	0.00	0	0	0
17	0	0.00	0	0	0
18	0	0.00	0	0	0
19	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.02
20	0	0.00	0	0	0
21	0.01	0.00	0.01	0	0
22	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.05
23	0	0.00	0	0	0
24	0	0.00	0	0	0
25	0	0.00	0	0	0
26	0.3	0.20	0.29	0.27	0.36
27	0	0.20	0	0	0
28	0	0.00	0	0	0
29	0	0.00	0	0	0
30	0	0.00	0	0	0
totals	1.12	2.14	1.14	1.23	1.33

May-16

1	0.29	0.01	0.29	0.49	0.32
2	0.08	0.32	0.37	0.29	0.47
3	0.03	0.40	0	0.01	0
4	0	0.00	0.09	0.05	0.17
5	0	0.08	0	0.01	0.01
6	0.01	0.00	0.06	0.02	0.01
7	0.02	0.13	0.07	0.04	0.07
8	0.14	0.13	0.07	0.11	0.1
9	0.02	0.00	0	0.01	0.01
10	0	0.00	0	0	0
11	0	0.00	0	0	0
12	0	0.00	0	0	0
13	0.27	0.00	0.24	0.39	0.26
14	0	0.50	0.05	0.02	0.03
15	0	0.05	0.15	0.16	0.23
16	0	0.15	0.01	0	0
17	0	0.02	0	0	0
18	0	0.00	0	0	0
19	0	0.00	0	0	0
20	0	0.00	0	0	0
21	0	0.00	0	0	0

22	0	0.00	0	0	0
23	0	0.00	0	0	0
24	0	0.00	0	0	0
25	0	0.00	0	0	0
26	0	0.00	0	0	0
27	0	0.00	0	0	0
28	0	0.00	0	0	0
29	0	0.00	0	0	0
30	0	0.00	0	0	0
31	0	0.00	0	0	0
totals	0.86	1.79	1.4	1.6	1.68

Jun-16

1	0	0.00	0	0	0
2	0.08	0.00	0.32	0.64	0.38
3	0	0.28	0	0	0
4	0	0.00	0	0	0
5	0	0.00	1.42	1.77	1.43
6	0.01	0.90	0	0	0
7	0	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.14
8	0	0.00	0.21	0.02	0.09
9	0.01	0.21	0	0	0
10	0	0.00	0	0	0
11	0	0.00	0.42	0.58	0.53
12	0	0.28	0.01	0.01	0.01
13	0	0.01	0	0	0
14	0	0.00	0	0	0
15	0	0.00	0	0	0
16	0	0.00	0	0	0
17	0	0.00	0	0	0
18	0	0.00	0	0	0
19	0	0.00	0	0	0
20	0.67	0.00	0.3	0.91	0.72
21	0	0.00	0	0	0
22	0.16	0.07	0.2	0.23	0.22
23	0	0.18	0	0	0
24	0	0.00	0	0	0
25	0	0.00	0	0	0
26	0	0.00	0	0	0
27	0.27	0.30	0.58	0.67	0.6
28	0	0.11	0	0	0
29	0.12	0.00	0	0.03	0.01
30	0	0.00	0	0	0
totals	1.32	2.44	3.6	4.97	4.13

Jul-16

1	0	0.00	0.01	0	0
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2	0	0.04	0	0.01	0.02
3	0	0.00	0	0	0
4	0	0.00	0	0	0
5	0	0.00	0	0	0
6	0	0.00	0	0	0
7	0	0.00	0	0	0
8	0	0.00	0.28	0	0.11
9	0.16	0.04	0	0.07	0
10	0	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.01
11	0	0.00	0	0	0
12	0	0.00	0	0	0
13	0	0.00	0	0	0
14	0	0.00	0	0	0
15	0	0.00	0	0	0
16	0	0.04	0	0	0
17	0	0.00	0	0	0
18	0	0.00	0	0	0
19	0	0.00	0	0	0
20	0	0.00	0	0	0
21	0	0.00	0	0	0
22	0	0.00	0	0	0
23	0	0.00	0	0	0
24	0	0.00	0	0	0
25	0.06	0.00	0.08	0.05	0.06
26	0	0.12	0	0	0
27	0	0.00	0	0	0
28	0.03	0.00	0	0.03	0
29	0	0.00	0	0	0
30	0	0.00	0	0	0
31	0	0.00	0	0	0
totals	0.25	0.24	0.4	0.17	0.2

Aug-16

1	0	0.00	0.27	0	0
2	0	0.00	0	0	0
3	0	0.01	0	0	0
4	0	0.00	0	0	0
5	0	0.00	0	0	0
6	0	0.00	0.26	0.08	0.14
7	0	0.00	0	0	0
8	0	0.00	0	0	0
9	0.16	0.00	0	0	0
10	0	0.00	0	0.01	0.02
11	0	0.04	0	0	0
12	0	0.00	0	0	0
13	0	0.10	0.32	0.45	0.37
14	0	2.04	0.05	0.02	0.03

15	0	0.00	0	0	0
16	0	0.00	0.59	0.29	0.54
17	0	1.75	0.04	0.02	0.04
18	0	0.00	0	0	0
19	0	0.00	0	0	0.01
20	0	0.00	0	0	0
21	0	0.00	1.3	0.58	0.91
22	0	1.96	0	0	0
23	0	0.00	0	0	0
24	0	0.00	0	0	0
25	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.02
26	0	0.05	0	0.03	0.08
27	0	0.00	0	0	0
28	0.03	0.00	0	0	0
29	0	0.00	0	0	0
30	0	0.00	0	0	0
31	0	0.00	1.17	0.88	0.7
totals	0.25	5.95	4.03	2.39	2.86
5 mth tota	3.8	12.56	10.57	10.36	10.2

5 month totals are calculated from April 1 to August 31.

Data is collected from the Weather Underground website using personal Weather Station Data
Sheland Farm Data was supplied directly by the farm.

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