

United States Senate

July 20, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack:

I write to express my concern that the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) has changed the timeline for producers that participate in emergency haying of their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land. The deadline has historically been November for farmers to remove the bailed hay. But it has been brought to my attention that revisions have been made by FSA to require removal of hay 15 days after bailing. This change is burdensome and I ask that you immediately provide farmers with flexibility.

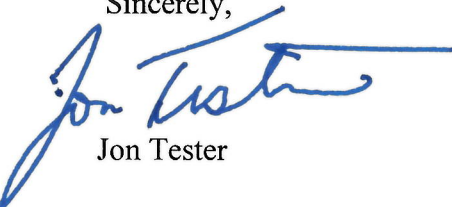
I am hearing from constituents that this new timeline was rolled out without the opportunity to provide input and without clear notification. It has caught many of them off guard and may be nearly impossible to meet. Producers authorized to use emergency haying and grazing starting July 16th are also on the verge of harvesting other crops. This new timeline is unattainable and farmers must be provided with flexibility.

I want to thank you for your recent announcements regarding aid available to Montana producers. I request that you continue to offer all available assistance to farmers and livestock producers in Montana impacted by the ongoing, severe drought. Producers are likely to need both technical and financial assistance as well as continuous communications about the relief for which they are eligible.

Finally, I would like to again ask you to provide flexibility for the 60-day CRP haying and grazing window. Since droughts were declared so early this year, this window was only open during primary nesting season for some producers which precluded haying and grazing of CRP lands. I urge you to allow an extension of for haying and grazing of CRP lands this year.

I appreciate your commitment to producers and stand ready to work with you to address this crisis. I look forward to hearing what you will do for Montana producers during this time.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester