



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 14, 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

In accordance with 7 C.F.R. 759, I request a Secretarial Disaster Designation for the State of Vermont, including for Windham, Windsor, Orange, Washington, Caledonia, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille, Grand Isle, Franklin, Chittenden, Addison, Rutland and Bennington Counties.

Heavy rains saturated the State of Vermont starting on July 7, 2023, and reaching an apex a few days later, innumerable streams and rivers ripped over their banks, tore through our towns, uprooted our roads, flooded our farms, and destroyed our crops. We experienced additional rain and flooding accompanied by high winds on July 13 and expect additional rain over the coming weekend. This ongoing series of weather events, water runoff and damages follows closely on the heels of a hard freeze many of our farmers experienced in May 2023. (Vermont's separate request for a disaster declaration related to those significant crop losses is pending.)

Shortly after the flooding began, President Biden issued an emergency declaration and FEMA responded quickly, sending a large team to Vermont. On July 14, 2023, President Biden also declared a Major Disaster for Vermont. Our Major Disaster Declaration request is attached.

It is too early to fully describe or even estimate damages, but it is clear losses will be catastrophic and our farmers and agricultural producers will need help. In our mountainous State, much of our most fertile farmland lies in river valleys, and countless fields of corn, hay, vegetables, fruit, and pasture were swamped and buried. We expect that the excessive flooding and related silt and other contamination will destroy large shares of our produce and livestock feed. Moreover, Vermont's growing season is short, and a historic flood in the heart of it is particularly devastating. Many crops cannot be replanted, and losses will not be effectively recovered or mitigated prior to our early fall harvest.

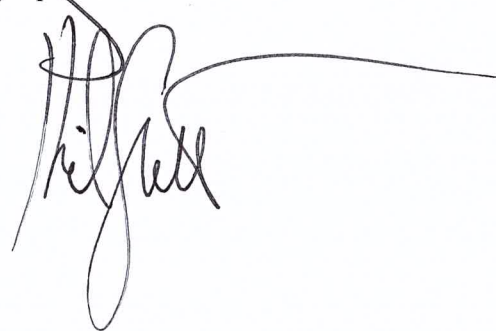
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Farming is always challenging, but heavy losses of agricultural products or feed can make it untenable. The disruption to our farms may compromise our regional food system and our food security.

The widespread flooding we suffered throughout Vermont this week is among the worst of the last century, and it arrived in the middle of our growing season. I have personally observed enough of the damage to know the need for assistance will be acute. Accordingly, I am requesting a Secretarial Disaster Designation for the entire State of Vermont, including Windham, Windsor, Orange, Washington, Caledonia, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille, Grand Isle, Franklin, Chittenden, Addison, Rutland and Bennington Counties.

A Secretarial designation will open the availability of financial assistance including low-interest USDA Farm Service Agency emergency loans for eligible producers in the approved counties. We appreciate USDA's critical support and thank you for your Agency's work to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on farms. The severe flooding and the earlier freeze make USDA's assistance invaluable. If your staff have any questions or require additional information or documentation, please contact Vermont's Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Anson Tebbetts at anson.tebbetts@vermont.gov or at (802) 324-9850. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Scott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

cc: John D. E. Roberts, State Executive Director, FSA
Anson B. Tebbetts, Secretary