



GARY MAST
President

August 15, 2003

The Honorable Thad Cochran,
Chair, Committee on Agriculture
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member, Committee on
Agriculture
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cochran and Harkin:

As you are aware, Senator Domenici recently introduced the National Drought Preparedness Act of 2003. This legislation comes at a crucial time when many parts of the country continue to suffer from the most severe drought conditions on record. America's 3,000 conservation districts ask that you consider cosponsoring this important legislation. In addition to asking that you sign on as a cosponsor, we also ask that the Senate Agriculture Committee convene a hearing on this issue and proposed legislation.

The United States often suffers serious economic and environmental losses from severe regional droughts but has no national policy to ensure an integrated and coordinated federal strategy to respond to drought emergencies. Even though historically there have been frequent and significant droughts of national consequence, drought has been addressed primarily through special legislation and makeshift action rather than through a systematic and permanent process. State, tribal and local governments have to deal individually and separately with each federal agency involved in drought monitoring, planning, mitigation and response. Crop and grassland losses, fire and dust storms cause significant environmental and economic disruption in many areas of the nation that currently are experiencing substantial drought conditions.

Conservation districts support the approaches to address this void proposed in S. 1454 and H.R. 2871. It is crucial for our nation to have a coordinated national policy on drought that will result from this legislation. We are poised to help in any way we can to get this important legislation enacted this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Mast" followed by a vertical line.

Gary Mast

National Association of Conservation Districts

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