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**Clean Energy Summit Sparks Protests on Jobs, Tribal Health**

Mike Clifford, Public News Service-NV

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/27797-1>

(08/07/12) LAS VEGAS - Nevada is once again host to the national Clean Energy Summit, but this year one of the state's coal-fired power plants is drawing protests. Nevada is among the states with the most to gain from clean energy, according to Barbara Boyle, senior policy advisor, Clean Energy Campaign for the Sierra Club. That's why she says protestors will be up bright and early to take a stand against coal-fired power in the Silver State.

"Nevada has done a lot to train workers in implementing clean energy, both in efficiency and in installing solar. Shutting down this coal plant and replacing it with clean energy would help to give those folks jobs and help to boost our economy."

Nevada Energy operates the Reid Gardner coal-fired power plant, one of the oldest in the country, and they say they have spent millions to address environmental concerns. Protestors plan to gather in front of the Bellagio Fountains to call attention to the issue.

Vernon Lee, a member of the environmental committee of the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, says recent studies indicate the coal-fired power plant is linked to \$28 million in health care costs per year. He says his tribe, which is located right next door, is especially hard hit.

"We're a damaged people. That stuff is irreversible; you know, there's neurological things that happen, kids have nosebleeds, everybody has asthma. There's a whole gamut of various types of illnesses: that's across the board."

The tribe has been authorized to build the first major solar plant on tribal land. Lee says they won't be the only ones to benefit, because recent studies show Nevada consumers would save up to \$59 million if the coal plant's retirement date is moved up to 2013.

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**Senator Harry Reid Opens Clean Energy Summit With A Bold Speech On Climate Change: 'We Must Act Today'**

By [Stephen Lacey](#) on Aug 7, 2012

**Sen. Reid: "... deniers still exist, fueled and funded by dirty energy profits. These people aren't just on the other side of this debate. They're on the other side of reality."**

It appears that advocates of clean energy are getting the message: If you want to talk about clean energy in a political context, you must talk about the environmental imperative.

In a speech opening up this year's 5th [National Clean Energy Summit](#) in Las Vegas, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid gave one of the most powerful public speeches on climate that any national policymaker has made in years.

Reid joins Senators Al Franken, [John Kerry](#), [Bernie Sanders](#), and [Sheldon Whitehouse](#), all of whom have made excellent climate speeches on the Senate floor in the last year. However, today's speech was done in a much more prominent public forum in front of top journalists, regulatory officials, and policymakers.

Here's the climate portion of the speech, which was used to set up the pressing need to develop more renewable energy and efficiency:

Twenty-five years ago, President George H.W. Bush promised to use the "White House effect" to combat the "greenhouse effect." Yet a quarter century later, too many elected officials in Washington are still calling climate change a liberal hoax. They falsely claim scientists are still debating whether carbon pollution is warming the planet.

Of course, if those skeptics had taken a stroll along the Potomac River on a 70-degree day this February, they would have seen cherry trees blossoming earlier than at any time since they were planted 100 years ago. Washington experienced its warmest spring since record keeping began in 1895.

And back in the skeptics' home states, the harbingers of a changing climate are just as clear as those delicate February blossoms – and infinitely more perilous.

**This year alone, the United States has seen unparalleled extreme weather events – events scientists say are exactly what is expected as the earth's climate changes.**

**The Midwest is experiencing its most crushing drought in more than half a century – or maybe ever. Presently, disasters have been declared in the majority of U.S. counties. More than half the country is experiencing drought, and seventy-five percent of the nation is abnormally dry this year.**

Corn crops are withering and livestock are dying – or going to slaughter early – as heat waves parch America's breadbasket, breaking records set during the Woody Guthrie Dust Bowl years.

Now ravaging wildfires have replaced the dust storms of the 1930's. Devastating fires have swept New Mexico, Idaho, Colorado, Nevada and other parts of the Mountain West, destroying hundreds of homes and burning millions of trees. These fires are fed in part by vast areas of dead forest ravaged by beetles and other pests that now survive through warmer winters.

On the East Coast, extreme thunderstorms and high winds called "derechos" – literally meaning straight-line storms – have eliminated power for 4.3 million customers in 10 states in the mid-Atlantic region. One 38-year veteran of the utility industry told the New York Times this: "We've

got the ‘storm of the century’ every year now.” At the height of this storm – while the power was out and the air conditioning wasn’t working – the East Coast experienced record high temperatures.

Down south, the Mississippi River is nearly dry in various places, with shipping barges operating in only 5 feet of water. Just Friday, barges were grounded because the water level was so low. And New Orleans’ water supply is now being threatened by salt water moving up the Mississippi due to extremely low water.

But while record drought has struck many parts of the United States, torrential rains have poured down in others. In June, the fourth tropical storm of the hurricane season – a season which typically begins in the fall – dropped 20 inches of rain on Florida.

**And our nation’s infrastructure is literally falling apart because it wasn’t designed to withstand these conditions. Runways are melting, trapping planes. Train tracks are bending, derailing subways. Highways are cracking, buckling and breaking open. The water used to cool power plants – including nuclear power plants – has either run dry or reached dangerously high temperatures.**

And that’s just in the United States – just through the month of July.

Arctic sea ice is also at its lowest point in recorded history.

This month, the massive ice sheet atop Greenland experienced sudden and almost uniform melting – a phenomenon not seen in the modern age.

This spring, rain fell unexpectedly in Mecca despite 109-degree temperatures. It was the hottest downpour in the planet’s recorded history.

The Amazon River Basin has experienced super-flooding – reaching record high levels due to long summer rains and greater than normal glacial melting.

Massive forest fires have swept Siberia.

Monsoons in Bangladesh left hundreds dead and nearly 7 million people homeless.

And last week more than 600 million people in India were without power. Late monsoons and record temperatures increased demand for electricity to irrigate crops and air condition homes, overloading the fragile power grid and causing the blackout.

Scientists say this is genesis – the beginning. The more extreme climate change gets, the more extreme the weather will get. In the words of one respected climate scientist: “This is what global warming looks like.”

Dozens of new reports from scientists around the globe link extreme weather to climate change. Not every flood or drought can be attributed to human-induced transformation of our planet’s weather patterns. But scientists report that these extreme events are dozens of times more likely because of those changes.

The seriousness of this problem is not lost on your average American. A large majority of people finally believe climate change is real, and that it is the cause of extreme weather. Yet despite having overwhelming evidence and public opinion on our side, deniers still exist, fueled and funded by dirty energy profits.

These people aren't just on the other side of this debate. They're on the other side of reality.

It's time for us all – whether we're leaders in Washington, members of the media, scientists, academics, environmentalists or utility industry executives – to stop acting like those who ignore the crisis or deny it exists entirely have a valid point of view. They don't.

Virtually every respected, independent scientist in the world agrees the problem is real, and the time to act is now. Not tomorrow. Not a week from now. Not next month or next year. We must act today.

We've [argued](#) over and over on this blog that it's impossible to talk about clean energy without talking about climate and public health.

In 2009 and 2010, supporters of a comprehensive climate bill tried virtually every messaging strategy — [except talking about climate](#). We all know how that turned out. And today, the boom in unconventional fossil fuels has diminished traditional clean energy talking points around innovation and jobs. Of course, renewable energy spurs entrepreneurial innovation and creates jobs — but so too do carbon-intensive fossil fuels like tar sands, shale oil, and shale gas.

Given the new reality in today's energy market — and the [new climate reality](#) — we must communicate the environmental imperative of clean energy.

Kudos to Senator Reid for making that case today.

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## **REID WANTS NV ENERGY COAL PLANT SHUT DOWN**

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid took a break from stumping for renewable energy at Tuesday's National Clean Energy Summit to criticize NV Energy for keeping its Reid Gardner coal plant open 50 miles outside of Las Vegas.

<http://erj.reviewjournal.com/ct/uz3688753Biz14156797>

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### **H.R.205**

One Hundred Twelfth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the third day of January, two thousand and twelve

An Act

To amend the Act titled “An Act to authorize the leasing of restricted Indian lands for public, religious, educational, recreational, residential, business, and other purposes requiring the grant of long-term leases”, approved August 9, 1955, to provide for Indian tribes to enter into certain leases without prior express approval from the Secretary of the Interior, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership Act of 2012” or the “**HEARTH Act of 2012**”.

**SEC. 2. APPROVAL OF, AND REGULATIONS RELATED TO, TRIBAL LEASES.**

The first section of the Act titled “An Act to authorize the leasing of restricted Indian lands for public, religious, educational, recreational, residential, business, and other purposes requiring the grant of long-term leases”, approved August 9, 1955 (25 U.S.C. 415), is amended as follows:

(1) In subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (4), by striking “the Navajo Nation” and inserting “an applicable Indian tribe”;

(B) in paragraph (6), by striking “the Navajo Nation” and inserting “an Indian tribe”;

(C) in paragraph (7), by striking “and” after the semi- colon at the end;

(D) in paragraph (8)—

(i) by striking “the Navajo Nation”;

(ii) by striking “with Navajo Nation law” and inserting “with applicable tribal law”; and

(iii) by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(9) the term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given such term in section 102 of the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 479a); and

“(10) the term ‘individually owned allotted land’ means a parcel of land that—

“(A)(i) is located within the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe; or

“(ii) is held in trust or restricted status by the United States for the benefit of an Indian tribe or a member of an Indian tribe; and

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“(B) is allotted to a member of an Indian tribe.”.

(2) By adding at the end the following:

“(h) **TRIBAL APPROVAL OF LEASES.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**— At the discretion of any Indian tribe, any lease by the Indian tribe for the purposes authorized under subsection (a) (including any amendments to subsection (a)), except a lease for the exploration, development, or extraction of any mineral resources, shall not require the approval of the Secretary, if the lease is executed under the tribal regulations approved by the Secretary under this subsection and the term of the lease does not exceed—

“(A) in the case of a business or agricultural lease, 25 years, except that any such lease may include an option to renew for up to 2 additional terms, each of which may not exceed 25 years; and

“(B) in the case of a lease for public, religious, educational, recreational, or residential purposes, 75 years, if such a term is provided for by the regulations issued by the Indian tribe.

“(2) **ALLOTTED LAND.**— Paragraph (1) shall not apply to any lease of individually owned Indian allotted land.

“(3) **AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OVER TRIBAL REGULATIONS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**— The Secretary shall have the authority to approve or disapprove any tribal regulations issued in accordance with paragraph (1).

“(B) **CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPROVAL.**— The Secretary shall approve any tribal regulation issued in accordance with paragraph (1), if the tribal regulations—

“(i) are consistent with any regulations issued by the Secretary under subsection (a) (including any amendments to the subsection or regulations); and

“(ii) provide for an environmental review process that includes—

“(I) the identification and evaluation of any significant effects of the proposed action on the environment; and

“(II) a process for ensuring that—

“(aa) the public is informed of, and has a reasonable opportunity to comment on, any significant environmental impacts of the proposed action identified by the Indian tribe; and

“(bb) the Indian tribe provides responses to relevant and substantive public comments on any such impacts before the Indian tribe approves the lease.

“(C) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may provide technical assistance, upon request of the Indian tribe, for development of a regulatory environmental review process under subparagraph (B)(ii).

“(D) INDIAN SELF-DETERMINATION ACT.—The technical assistance to be provided by the Secretary pursuant to subparagraph (C) may be made available through contracts, grants, or agreements entered into in accordance with, and made available to entities eligible for, such contracts, grants, or agreements under the Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 450 et seq.).

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“(4) REVIEW PROCESS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date on which the tribal regulations described in paragraph

(1) are submitted to the Secretary, the Secretary shall review and approve or disapprove the regulations.

“(B) WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION.—If the Secretary disapproves the tribal regulations described in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall include written documentation with the disapproval notification that describes the basis for the disapproval.

“(C) EXTENSION.—The deadline described in subparagraph (A) may be extended by the Secretary, after consultation with the Indian tribe.

“(5) FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—Notwithstanding paragraphs (3) and (4), if an Indian tribe carries out a project or activity funded by a Federal agency, the Indian tribe shall have the authority to rely on the environmental review process of the applicable Federal agency rather than any tribal environmental review process under this subsection.

“(6) DOCUMENTATION.—If an Indian tribe executes a lease pursuant to tribal regulations under paragraph (1), the Indian tribe shall provide the Secretary with—

“(A) a copy of the lease, including any amendments or renewals to the lease; and

“(B) in the case of tribal regulations or a lease that allows for lease payments to be made directly to the Indian tribe, documentation of the lease payments that are sufficient to enable the Secretary to discharge the trust responsibility of the United States under paragraph (7).

“(7) TRUST RESPONSIBILITY.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The United States shall not be liable for losses sustained by any party to a lease executed pursuant to tribal regulations under paragraph (1).

“(B) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY.—Pursuant to the authority of the Secretary to fulfill the trust obligation of the United States to the applicable Indian tribe under Federal law (including regulations), the Secretary may, upon reasonable notice from the applicable Indian tribe and at

the discretion of the Secretary, enforce the provisions of, or cancel, any lease executed by the Indian tribe under paragraph (1).

“(8) COMPLIANCE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.— An interested party, after exhausting of any applicable tribal remedies, may submit a petition to the Secretary, at such time and in such form as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, to review the compliance of the applicable Indian tribe with any tribal regulations approved by the Secretary under this subsection.

“(B) VIOLATIONS.— If, after carrying out a review under subparagraph (A), the Secretary determines that the tribal regulations were violated, the Secretary may take any action the Secretary determines to be necessary to remedy the violation, including rescinding the approval of the tribal regulations and reassuming responsibility for the approval of leases of tribal trust lands.

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“(C) DOCUMENTATION.— If the Secretary determines that a violation of the tribal regulations has occurred and a remedy is necessary, the Secretary shall—

“(i) make a written determination with respect to the regulations that have been violated;

“(ii) provide the applicable Indian tribe with a written notice of the alleged violation together with such written determination; and

“(iii) prior to the exercise of any remedy, the rescission of the approval of the regulation involved, or the reassumption of lease approval responsibilities, provide the applicable Indian tribe with—

“(I) a hearing that is on the record; and

“(II) a reasonable opportunity to cure the alleged violation.

“(9) SAVINGS CLAUSE.— Nothing in this subsection shall affect subsection (e) or any tribal regulations issued under that subsection.”.

### SEC. 3. LAND TITLE REPORTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.— The Bureau of Indian Affairs shall prepare and submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate a report regarding the history and experience of Indian tribes that have chosen to assume responsibility for operating the Indian Land Title and Records Office (referred to in this section as the “LTRO”) functions from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(b) CONSULTATION.— In conducting the review under subsection

(a), the Bureau of Indian Affairs shall consult with the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Native American Programs and the Indian tribes that are managing LTRO functions (referred to in this section as the “managing Indian tribes”).

(c) CONTENTS.— The review under subsection (a) shall include an analysis of the following factors:

(1) Whether and how tribal management of the LTRO functions has expedited the processing and issuance of Indian land title certifications as compared to the period during which the Bureau of Indian Affairs managed the programs.

(2) Whether and how tribal management of the LTRO functions has increased home ownership among the population of the managing Indian tribe.

(3) What internal preparations and processes were required of the managing Indian tribes prior to assuming management of the LTRO functions.

(4) Whether tribal management of the LTRO functions resulted in a transfer of financial resources and manpower from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the managing Indian tribes and, if so, what transfers were undertaken.

(5) Whether, in appropriate circumstances and with the approval of geographically proximate Indian tribes, the LTRO H.R.205—5 functions may be performed by a single Indian tribe or a tribal consortium in a cost effective manner.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate.

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## **REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT RURAL COUNCIL MEETING**

Roosevelt Room August 7, 2012 4:21 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, everybody. I think all of you are aware that we are seeing devastating drought throughout the country. It is a historic drought, and it's having a profound impact on farmers and ranchers all across many states.

Now, at my direction, the Department of Agriculture, led by Secretary Vilsack, has been working with every other agency across the federal government to make sure that we are taking every single possible step to help farmers and ranchers to fight back and recover from this disaster.

We've already designated over 1,500 counties across 32 states as disaster areas, which gives qualified farmers access to low-interest emergency loans. We've also opened up more land for haying and grazing. And we've worked with crop insurance companies to give farmers a short grace period on unpaid insurance premiums, since some families will be struggling to make ends meet at the end of this crop year.

This has been an all-hands-on-deck response. I want to thank Tom for his leadership. But obviously, we've got a lot more to do, because a lot of folks are being affected by this.

So today, the Department of Agriculture is announcing an additional \$30 million to get more water to livestock and restore land impacted by drought. The National Credit Union Administration is allowing an additional thousand credit unions to increase lending to small businesses. The Department of Transportation is ready to help more commercial truck drivers to provide much-needed supplies to farmers and ranchers. And the SBA, the Small Business Administration, is working with other government agencies to connect even more eligible farmers, ranchers and businesses with low-interest emergency loans as well as counseling and workforce programs.

Now, those are the ideas that have already been presented and are in the process of being implemented, but my instructions to all the agencies is we need to keep working and to see if there is more that we can do. And we're going to continue to solicit ideas from state and local organizations, state-based organizations, not-for-profit groups, the private sector, and most of all, the farmers and ranchers that are directly impacted, to find additional ways that we can help -- because when there's a disaster like this, everybody needs to pull together.

Obviously, Congress has a role. Congress needs to pass a farm bill that will not only provide important disaster relief tools, but also make necessary reforms and give farmers the certainty that they deserve. That's the single-best way that we can help rural communities both in the short term, but also in the long term. And we've already seen some good bipartisan work done in the Senate.



Now is the time for us to come together and go ahead and get this done. And my hope is that Congress, many of whom will be traveling back to their districts, in some cases in rural communities, and see what's taking place there, will feel a greater sense of urgency and be prepared to get this done immediately upon their return.

In the meantime, my administration is going to use the full extent of our administrative powers to make sure that we're responding appropriately.

All right, thank you very much, everybody.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2012

### **Fact Sheet: President Obama Leading Administration-wide Drought Response**

As communities across the country struggle with the impacts of one of the worst droughts in decades, President Obama is committed to ensuring that his Administration is doing everything it can help the farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and communities being impacted.

To respond to immediate needs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other federal agencies are using their existing authorities wherever possible to address the hardships arising from the lack of water, feed, and forage. Within the last month, USDA has opened the Conservation Reserve Program to emergency haying and grazing, has lowered the borrower interest rate for emergency loans, and has called on crop insurance companies to provide more flexibility to farmers. The Department of the Interior has provided additional grazing flexibility on federal lands and the Small Business Administration is working to help with access to investment capital and credit in affected communities.

On Tuesday, August 7, 2012, President Obama convened his White House Rural Council for one of a continuing series of policy meetings to review Executive Branch response actions and to develop additional policy initiatives to assist drought-stricken Americans. Following the meeting, the White House announced several new measures the Administration is implementing to help those impacted by the drought, including providing additional assistance for livestock and crop producers, increasing the capacity for lending to small businesses, and waiving certain requirements on trucks helping to provide relief. President Obama also stressed the need for the entire Administration to continue to look at further steps it can take to ease the pain of this historic drought.

As the drought continues, the Administration will actively implement its longer-term strategy for assessing and managing the effects of the crisis. In addition to impacts on farming and ranching operations, a long-term, widespread drought will also have implications for wildfires, water availability, navigation, and power generation across much of the country and across other sectors. As we move forward, the Administration will work closely with state and local governments, farming and ranching communities and others to ensure an effective and efficient response and recovery.

Finally, while the Administration is exploring every possible avenue to provide relief from the impacts of the drought, Congress still needs to act to ensure that the needed disaster assistance is available to these communities. The best way to do that is by passing a comprehensive, multi-year farm bill that not only provides much-needed disaster assistance but gives farmers and ranchers the certainty they deserve while enacting critical reforms.

## *New Actions by Federal Agencies to Help Respond to the Drought*

### **United States Department of Agriculture**

- **Additional Emergency Funding to Assist Livestock and Crop Producers:** To assist producers facing extreme drought conditions, USDA announced Tuesday that it will utilize nearly \$16 million in financial and technical assistance to immediately help crop and livestock producers in 19 states cope with the adverse impacts of the historic drought. In addition, USDA will initiate a transfer of \$14 million in unobligated program funds into the Emergency Conservation Program. These funds can be used to assist in moving water to livestock in need, providing emergency forage for livestock, and rehabilitating lands severely impacted by the drought. Together these efforts should provide nearly \$30 million to producers struggling with drought conditions.

### **The National Credit Union Administration**

- **Allowing an additional 1,000 Credit Unions to increase their lending to small businesses:** The National Credit Union Administration will announce that more than 1,000 credit unions are eligible for a low-income designation, which permits unlimited lending to small business owners including farmers; nearly half of those eligible credit unions are located in a severely drought-stricken state. Small business lending by credit unions is normally capped at the statutory 12.25 percent rate. This designation exempts designated credit unions from this cap. Currently, approximately 1,100 CUs are designated low-income and can offer unlimited lending to small businesses. The average credit union member business loan is \$223,000.

### **The Small Business Administration with USDA and the Department of Commerce**

- **Community Outreach Events:** SBA, USDA, and the Department of Commerce (DOC) through its Economic Development Administration (EDA), will host targeted events in communities severely impacted by the drought to provide detailed information on what federal resources are available to assist small businesses, farmers, and others in the community. These events will also be webcast to ensure audiences in other drought impacted communities can attend virtually. At these events SBA disaster assistance staff, small business counselors from its network of resource partners, and field staff from SBA district offices along with interagency staff will provide information and offer technical assistance on applying for loans and where to find additional resources after the event.
- **Leverage State and County Fairs in Regions:** In addition to the standalone events, SBA, USDA, and EDA will conduct outreach at already scheduled State and Country Fairs.
- **Online Outreach:** Since the drought's full impact may take months to be fully felt by small businesses and communities, SBA, USDA, and DOC will continue to reach out to affected regions through online webinars and conference calls that will further raise awareness and provide opportunity to gather real-time detail on the impact to communities.

### **The Department of Transportation**

- **Existing Emergency Exemptions of Federal Operating Requirements:** This authority can put more commercial drivers behind the wheel—driving large trucks needed to assist the farmers and ranchers in need. If a qualifying drought emergency has been declared in a state by the Governor or

appropriate official, the state automatically gets Hours of Service and other regulatory relief for those providing emergency assistance; no application is needed. If the situation does not qualify for emergency relief, the Federal rules regulating large truck and bus operations may be waived in certain circumstances. DOT can process a request to waive regulations in 7-14 days.

- In addition, the transportation bill President Obama signed in July provides a new authority for States to issue special permits for overweight vehicles and loads that can easily be dismantled or divided in an emergency. The legislation makes the new special permits available beginning October 1, 2012. DOT is expediting the process of developing guidance for States to support their permitting programs, and the way in which “relief supplies” are defined may provide states with a new tool to use for hauling heavy loads of grain, livestock, etc. for drought relief.

***Today's Actions Build on Steps Taken by Agencies across the Federal Government to Help Drought-Stricken Counties***

**United States Department of Agriculture**

- **Use of Indemnity Payments for Crop Insurance Premiums.** To assist farmers in meeting cash flow challenges, USDA has taken steps to ensure that farmers will be able to apply this year's crop indemnity payments toward their crop insurance premiums for the following crop year. As of August 1, 2012, the sixteen major providers of U.S. crop insurance have all agreed to forego interest charges on unpaid premiums through November.
- **Disaster Designation Regulation.** On July 12, USDA announced an expedited disaster designation process, allowing farmers and ranchers to obtain disaster assistance faster. USDA projects a 40 percent reduction in processing time for affected producers as a result of this change.
- **Reduction of USDA's Emergency (EM) Loan Rate.** Emergency Loans will help producers recover from production and physical losses associated with natural disasters. The current rate was set in 1993 at 3.75 percent. Effective July 15, the Administration lowered the interest rate on loans, effectively lowering the rate from 3.75 percent down to 2.25 percent.
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Haying and Grazing.** The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allows farmers and ranchers to receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers (grasses) on eligible farmland. Nationwide, 29 million acres are enrolled in the CRP. Due to the drought, the federal government has opened up virtually all of the CRP grassland acres for emergency haying and grazing and reduced the payment penalty for haying and grazing from 25 percent to only 10 percent. Further, the Administration took additional steps to ensure that appropriate wetland and riparian buffer areas will also be available for haying and grazing.

**Department of the Interior**

- **Grazing on Federal Lands:** The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service are providing relief to ranchers who graze on public lands by employing flexibility to accommodate needs and conditions on the ground. BLM will issue refunds to cattlemen that were displaced by early season fires and therefore not able to make use of their allotments and the Forest Service has liberally granted Permittee requested non-use. Both agencies are making vacant land available for grazing and allowing for: changes in grazing use, including delayed or early turnout if

conditions allow; increased salting to improve livestock distribution; water hauling and temporary portable water troughs; and other measures.

### **The Small Business Administration**

**SBA Drought Disaster Declarations.** To date, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has followed USDA's disaster declarations and has issued 71 agency declarations in 32 states covering 1,636 counties, providing a pathway for small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and non-farm small businesses that are economically affected by the drought in their community to apply for SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).

### **The Army Corps of Engineers**

**Army Corps of Engineers Preserving Navigation:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has published guidance to coordinate a collective Common Operation Picture (COP) to monitor ongoing drought impacts on navigation. At this time they have identified the 15 most critical river gages (of 2000+) as key monitors for navigation impacts and implemented Water Way Action Plans. USACE will continue coordinating with Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and navigation industries on the mitigation of drought impacts by:

- Working with contract dredges to identify areas of concern to divert resources based on priority.
- Identifying available channel depths and widths to navigation industries, so barge tow drafts and widths can be modified accordingly.
- Ensuring that storage reservoirs are releasing flow to augment natural flows downstream.
- Continuing to do public and media outreach via, conference calls, webinars and emails with respect to the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers and tributaries.
- Monitoring the National Weather Service outlook on short and long term rainfall forecast to prepare for potential reservoir releases are other mitigation measures.

### **The Department of Transportation**

- **DOT Outreach to the State DOTs:** On Wednesday August 1, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood convened a call with states to listen and discuss the ways in which DOT can work with Governors and State Departments of Transportation to help communities impacted by the drought. Issues raised during the call included emergency waivers of hours of service requirements and emergency waivers for Federal truck weight regulations.