40,000 Destitute Farmers Now at Work on WPA Projects in Western Drought States.

Forty-thousand destitute farmers are now at work on Works Progress Administration projects in the midwestern and western drought areas, Assistant Administrator Howard O. Hunter reported today.

Mr. Hunter, who is in charge of drought operations of the Works Progress Administration, has ordered "full speed ahead" in placing an additional 36,500 destitute farmers at work on WPA projects--mostly water conservation--in the ten west and midwest states already designated in the emergency area by the Department of Agriculture.

"Although the area is not so large as two years ago," he said, "the damage in the affected regions is far greater than in 1934. Water supplies are drying up almost over night and crops in many areas are withered beyond reclamation even if rain comes."

That the drought toll has mounted in the last month is evidenced by the fact that potential WPA drought employment in the stricken states has been almost doubled from its original quota of 52,500 in order to relieve immediate distress. Mr. Hunter authorized the quota increase to 89,000 yesterday.
"WPA Administrations in the drought states have a back-log of useful projects ready to be thrown into operation as needed," he declared. "We will assign men as rapidly as their needs are certified by the Resettlement Administration and local agencies charged with this responsibility."

State Works Progress Administrators in the Dakotas, eastern Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri reported pastures and feed crops in many sections as "wiped off the books."

"This means," said Mr. Hunter, "that farmers employed on WPA projects will need continued work throughout the emergency period. With their crops gone and the feed situation worse than in 1934, the real pinch is yet to come. Feed crops that could be salvaged are being used up now which means an acute shortage in the fall and winter. Even with substantial rains, it will be fortunate if the current drought employment quota of 89,000 does not have to be increased later."

Employment of WPA drought projects today was:

- North Dakota: 16,423
- Montana: 4,131
- Colorado: 668
- Minnesota: 1,566

Substantial increases in drought employment are expected within the next week as the program swings into action in the recently designated emergency areas of Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kentucky.

---oOo---