THE WORKS PROGRAM

-- Works Progress Administration --

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Williams Authorizes 2,500 WPA Drought Employment Quota for Illinois.

Deputy Administrator Aubrey Williams today authorized Illinois WPA officials to employ 2,500 drought-stricken farmers in the six southern counties designated to the "emergency" drought area by the Department of Agriculture. Illinois by virtue of today's designation becomes the fourteenth state in the area to join the mounting list of primary drought regions.

In authorizing the Illinois drought employment quota, Mr. Williams ordered Howard O. Hunter, Assistant Administrator in charge of Drought Operations, to instruct state WPA officials to "cut investigation and certification procedures to the bone."

"Every farmer in the designated counties who is in distress because of the drought is eligible for assistance from the WPA," Mr. Hunter declared. "We are prepared to meet the drought situation on a disaster basis. A survey of the drought in southern Illinois indicates from 3,500 to 5,000 farmers may need aid in the near future. The 2,500 quota authorized today should be sufficient to take care of immediate needs but it can be adjusted up or down to meet daily changes in conditions."
Major A. R. Lord, Assistant State Administrator called a meeting of local WPA officials and county farm agents at Harrisburg to discuss ways and means for inaugurating the drought relief program in the two WPA districts (Harrisburg and East St. Louis) affected. The meeting will probably be held tomorrow or not later than Thursday, he said.

"G. L. Jordan, Director of the University of Illinois Agriculture Extension Division will represent agricultural interests at the conference and a cooperative arrangement between the WPA and county farm advisors will be worked out in order to speed assignments to regular WPA projects of those found to be in need," Major Lord explained.

"Unless good rains are forthcoming, this may be only the beginning of the drought in Illinois. Reports indicate that crops in at least a dozen additional counties in the southern part of the state are severely damaged."

The six counties designated to the "emergency" drought area today were: Franklin, Hardin, Jefferson, Gallatin, Pope and Saline.

Meanwhile, drought tolls continued to mount in the other stricken states. Weather Bureau officials predicted scattered rains for Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin but said no moisture was in sight for the dust bowl of the Great Plains states to the west.

North Dakota increased its WPA drought employment to more than 19,000 and South Dakota reported over 17,000 stricken farmers at work on projects--mostly water conservation.

Missouri was nearing its 5,000 quota with 4,580 reported at work. Montana with 5,316 at work was approaching its 6,000 quota. Colorado had 1,651. Minnesota lacked but 500 of filling its 3,000 quota. Wyoming reported 862 on jobs.
More recently designated states including Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin reported certification of destitute farmers rising rapidly and all the way from 300 to 800 already at work.

The addition of Illinois to the primary drought area brought the total authorized jobs on WPA drought projects in the 14 west and mid-west states now affected to 111,000.