WPA Drought Employment Now Nearing 74,000 Mark.

Field reports from the drought areas of the Great Plains States to Deputy Administrator Aubrey Williams show that employment of destitute farmers on Works Progress Administration projects was nearing the 74,000 mark at the close of books on Saturday.

The employment quotas for the western drought areas total 111,500.

Assistant Administrator Howard O. Hunter, in charge of drought operations, asserted, after studying telegraphic reports from the afflicted states, "we will be just plain lucky if the present quotas will provide jobs to all stricken farmers."

"At least six states--Kentucky, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana and the two Dakotas--are near their maximum job quotas and reports indicate thousands of additional farmers are destitute--worse off than people on relief," he said.

"Missouri officials report their 10,000 WPA drought jobs will be filled today and at least 20,000 additional farmers in 105 counties will need help between now and October 15th. Similar reports backed by field investigations are coming in from other states. The real pinch will come in October if rains do not restore crops in the less damaged areas."
At the same time, Colorado Works Progress Administration officials surveyed a hundred mile battlefield where thousands of men, who have been faced with defeat in their struggle against the combined forces of flood and drought, are fighting back.

Side by side in South Central and Southeastern Colorado are the ravages of uncontrolled natural forces that have wrought destruction in seemingly opposed directions during the summer. A Works Progress Administration program intended to curb both forces with water control is rapidly being expanded.

Thirty-five bridges were torn out by rushing torrents from the mountains in Huerfano county last week. Investigators today have been able to complete their check on only two canyons in Las Animas county, but had found twenty-four bridges out in these and were pushing their way through other debris choked passages that may double the total for the county. Houses, barns and complete homesteads were torn from their foundations in some sections.

A county-wide WFA project already has been submitted to rebuild the thirty-five bridges washed out in Huerfano county and an early start on similar work in Las Animas county is expected, but officials today said the program would be expanded in many cases to improve channels and check the force of the water in future cloudbursts. Wherever possible the flood control and water conservation projects are combined to assure farmers of the maximum security.

As evidence of the quality of work previously done by the Works Progress Administration, officials said, the survey had not revealed a single bridge built under these auspices that had failed to withstand the
flood.

Walsenburg, county seat of Huerfano, was cited as an example of how flood and drought may strike almost simultaneously. This city of five thousand inhabitants had suffered from an inadequate supply of water despite the fact that it is visited frequently by floods that come tumbling down the Cucharas River out of the mountains. The Works Progress Administration doubled the size of the city reservoir, providing an ample supply, and also reinforced the channel that frequently had failed to divert the river from the city. This rip-rapping of native rock had stood three assaults of floods each of which previously had caused as much as $150,000 damage in the business district. The latest cloudburst tore out part of this embankment when an old bridge acted as a dam and the river swept through two of the principal business streets inflicting damage estimated at several hundred thousand dollars. The Works Progress Administration now is preparing to elevate this bridge five feet and add three spans in addition to improving the channel reinforcement.

Despite the heavy floods, many evidences of drought damage remain in this district. Crops generally were ruined before the water came, and the torrents, tearing away much rich soil in their rush, swept through so rapidly that there was little penetration of soil in adjoining fields.

Works Progress Administration officials praised the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in northern Las Animas county, as the survey showed contour work by this agency had almost eliminated the erosion in certain sectors.

Officials also inspected the Works Progress Administration development at Aguilar where the municipal water supply, previously
inadequate, has been doubled by development of springs and by sinking a
tunnel from a natural reservoir.

Numerous basins capable of development for water control were
observed in the rolling lands east of the Greenhorn mountains and Spanish
Peaks, where cloudbursts and drought both must be conquered.