Farmers Drought Relief Fund Update

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Statutory Authority: Chapter 729, Public Laws of 2022 (L.D. 1998)

7 MRSA c. 8-A, sub-c. 4 §220-A. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program

1. Grant program established. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established in the department to assist farmers in the State to overcome the adverse effects of drought conditions by providing grants in accordance with this section.

2. Eligibility. A farmer in the State may apply for a grant under the program if the farmer needs **to establish a source for irrigation water** to **alleviate the risk of crop losses due to drought**. **The source for irrigation water must be sustainable, environmentally sound and affordable.**

3. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund is established as **a nonlapsing fund** to provide funding to achieve the purposes of the program. The fund consists of any funds received from private and public sources. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year must be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

4. Rules. **The department shall adopt rules to implement the program**. The rules must include grant eligibility requirements, grant application and award procedures and grant funding limits. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

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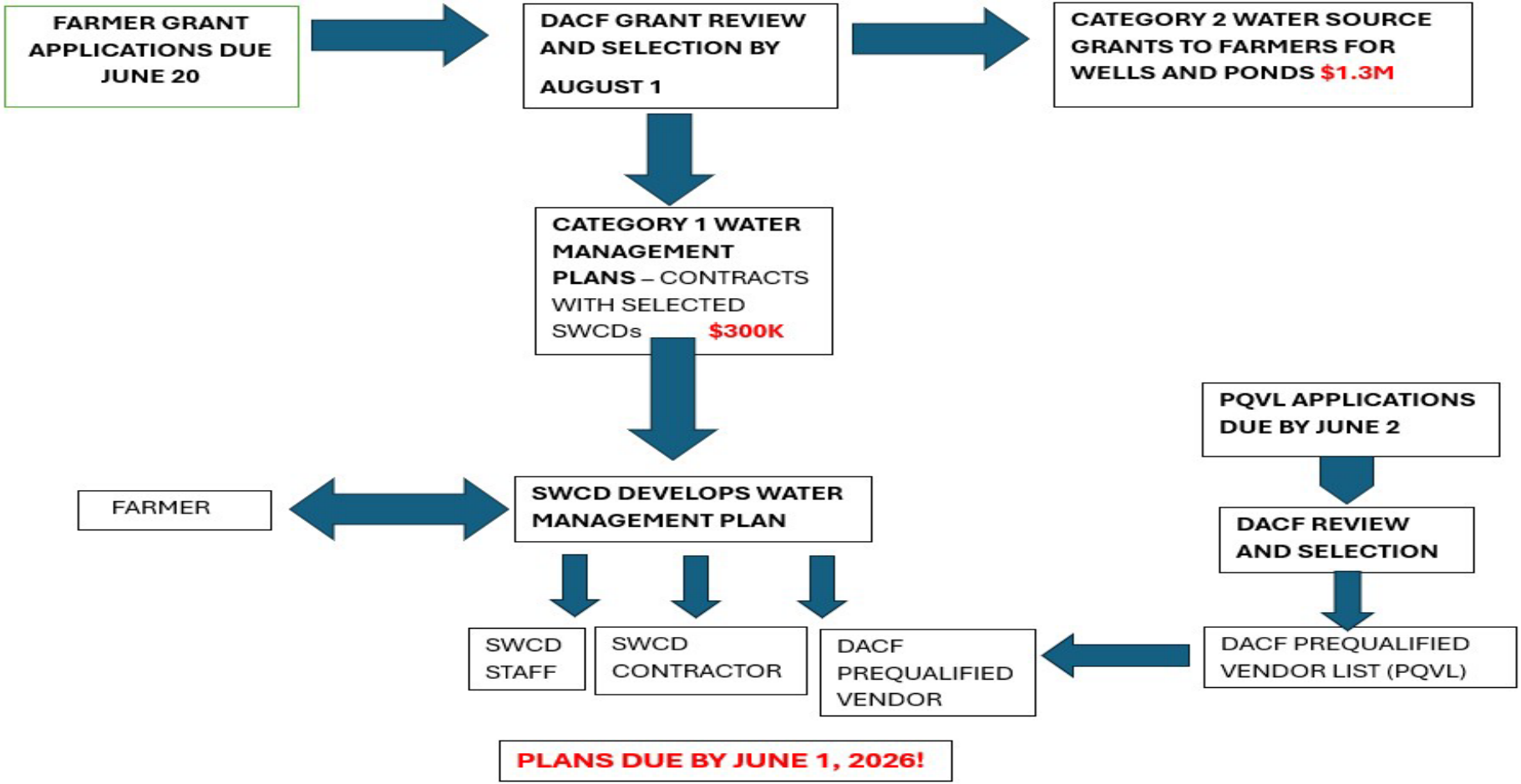
FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Timetable

December 2024	Published draft Rules
January 17, 2025	Public hearing
February 2025	Comment analysis/Rules revision
March 2025	Attorney General review
April 8, 2025	Secretary of State publishes Final Rules
April 2025	DAFS Procurement Services reviews RFA and PQVL-RFP
May 2, 2025	Request For Applications opens
May 9, 2025	**Blanket contract with SWCDs approved for 2025-2026**
June 20, 2025	**Applications due**
July 18, 2025	Anticipated completion of application review/scoring
August 1, 2025	**Anticipated notification of award decisions**
June 1, 2026	Final invoices due for FY25 funded projects (plans)


FARMER GRANT APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 20
DACF GRANT REVIEW AND SELECTION BY AUGUST 1
CATEGORY 2 WATER SOURCE GRANTS TO FARMERS FOR WELLS AND PONDS $1.3M
CATEGORY 1 WATER MANAGEMENT PLANS – CONTRACTS WITH SELECTED SWCDs $300K
PQVL APPLICATIONS DUE BY JUNE 2
FARMER
SWCD DEVELOPS WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN
DACF REVIEW AND SELECTION
SWCD STAFF
SWCD CONTRACTOR
DACF PREQUALIFIED VENDOR
DACF PREQUALIFIED VENDOR LIST (PQVL)
PLANS DUE BY JUNE 1, 2026!

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Funding

FY 25	$ 300,000 – Plans
FY 26	$ 300,000 – Wells and Plans
Nonlapsing	$1,000,000 – Ponds and Wells

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/farmers-drought-relief-program.shtml

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Eligibility

- Maine residency
- Land ownership (or application by owner to support use of leased fields)
- Annual farm sales of at least $ 10,000, unless DACF Commissioner determines:
  - demonstrates “unique benefits to local food economy”
  - an ancestral history of disinvestment/land dispossession
- Cropland emphasis – not primarily for livestock, processing, or residential use without waiver from DACF Commissioner:
  - additional uses will not impair cropland irrigation
  - no increased environmental impacts

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

On-line Application

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/farmers-drought-relief-program.shtml

Location / Aerial Photo

Soils Map

 # Acres / Crops Grown

Past Drought Losses ($$$)

Current Water Source

Current Water Management Practices

Current Soil Health Practices

Requested Funding / Price Quotes

IRS Schedule F or C

June 20, 2025, 5 PM

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Allowable Costs

- Development of an agricultural **water management plan** prepared by a Soil & Water Conservation District or other qualified technical service provider
- Installation or deepening of a **dug water well**
- Installation of a **drilled bedrock well**
- Installation of a **gravel-packed well**
- Construction or expansion of a **water storage pond**
- **Water pumps and necessary appurtenant equipment** for a water storage pond

Unallowable Costs

- *Field irrigation equipment such as center-pivot or micro-irrigation systems*
- *Water supply for livestock operation **
- *Water supply for residential use **
- *Water supply for commercial processing **

** (unless expressly waived by the DACF Commissioner to allow uses that do not impair cropland irrigation or result in increased environmental impacts)*

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Agricultural Water Management Plans

Provides for payments up to **$ 7,500** to a SWCD on behalf of a selected applicant

Water management planning can be done by:

SWCD employee or contractor

3rd party technical service provider

Coordination with NRCS Field Office is encouraged

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FARMER DROUGHT RELIEF FUND PROGRAM

Water Source Development Grants

Funds **90% of costs** with a **10-percent match** for:

- **Dug well (up to $ 15,000)**
- **Drilled bedrock well (up to $ 25,000)**
- **Water storage pond (up to $ 50,000)**
- **Gravel-packed well (up to $ 50,000)**

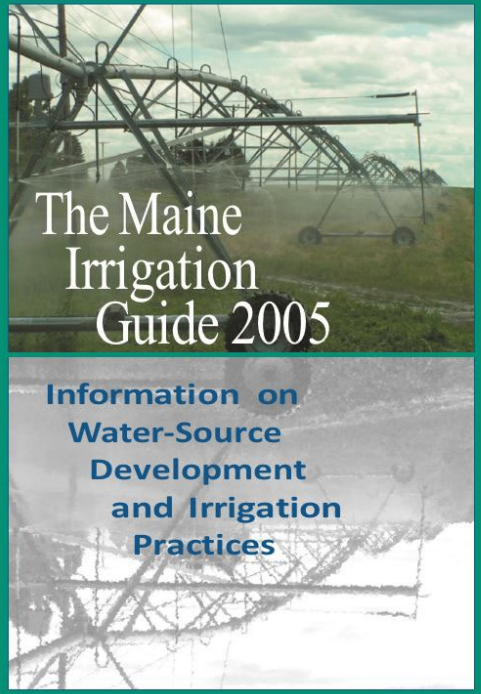
Limits funding to cropland irrigation (not livestock, residential, or commercial processing without an express waiver by Commissioner)

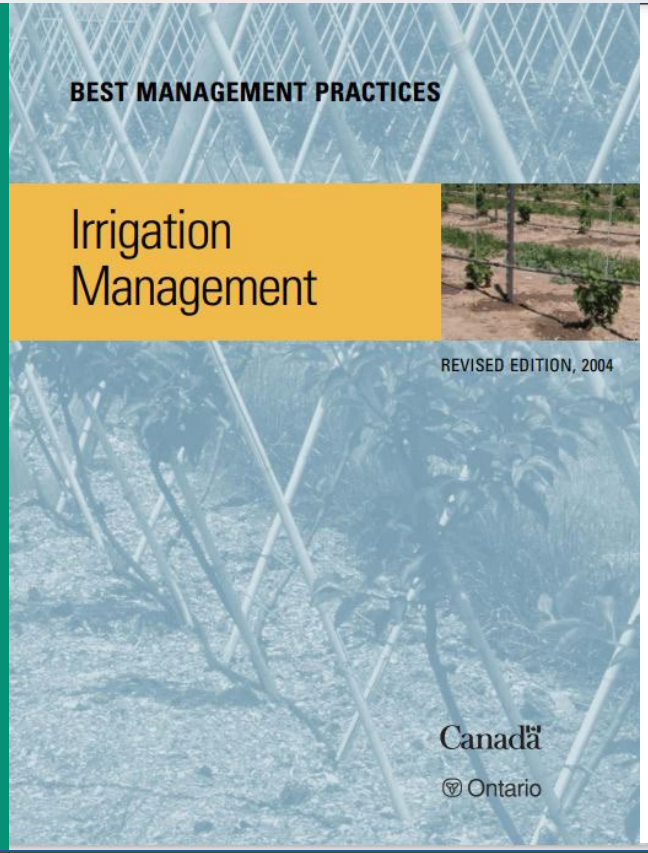
Requires compliance with DEP Low Flow Rule and all relevant environmental permitting

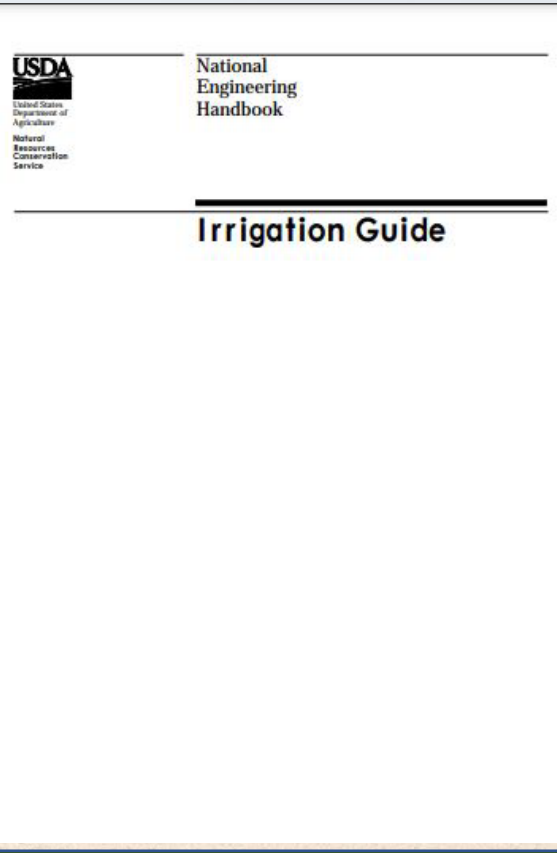
Prohibits duplication with NRCS financial assistance

Encourages coordination with NRCS planning and financial assistance

Irrigation Planning Assistance







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