



Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

For Immediate Release

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Western North Carolina Counties Receive Natural Disaster Designation Due to Easter Weekend Freeze *Crop Payments for Farmers Also Included in FY '07 Supplemental*

Washington, D.C. – Representative Heath Shuler today received notification from the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, that twelve (12) counties in North Carolina's 11th Congressional District have been designated as natural disaster areas due to the freezing temperatures that struck the area over the Easter weekend.

Secretary Johanns designated Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Polk, and Rutherford Counties as "primary natural disaster areas." Buncombe, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Swain, Transylvania, and Yancey Counties received designation as "contiguous disaster counties." Farmers in both "primary" and "contiguous" counties affected by the freeze are now eligible to apply for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Additionally, the Supplemental Fiscal Year 2007 funding that passed the House of Representatives and the Senate on May 24th contains funding for payments to farmers who lost crops due to a natural disaster. Farmers would be eligible for emergency payments, if the crops had been planted prior to February 28, 2007. The Supplemental Fiscal Year 2007 funding bill now awaits the President's signature.

"The freezing temperatures that hit Western North Carolina over the Easter weekend destroyed acres of crops and cost our local economy millions of dollars. The impact of this storm will be felt for years to come. I am pleased that the federal government is now stepping in with much needed assistance," said Rep. Shuler. "I offer my deepest thanks to Governor Easley and all those who have worked to make sure our farmers received the help they deserve."

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