

FDR: Do What Works!

Figure 3 shows the 436 U.S. counties now officially designated to be drought disasters, as of April 1, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Under the Obama Administration, that's as far as it goes. The designation means only the possibility that farmers and ranchers may squeak by for a little while, by qualifying for certain loans, grants, and waivers, to try to stay on the land.

Contrast this to the very active map of Federal action on the drought under the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administrations in the 1930s and war years. The entire productive base of the nation was upgraded. During the Dust Bowl, measures were deployed ranging from building wind-breaks, to initiating contour ploughing. The Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) planted hundreds of thousands of trees, against water and wind erosion on the High Plains. In 1935, the national Soil Conservation District system was launched, enlisting citizens to work together in a local, state, and Fed-

eral partnership to enhance resources. Millions of people were given jobs and hope.

At the same time, the Roosevelt Administration conducted breakthrough work in atomic research, plant genetics, and other branches of science. There is no conflict between long-term commitment to the most advanced knowledge, and taking short-term emergency measures. Only if we pursue the frontiers of progress, can we succeed in taking the actions for the immediate crisis.

—*Marcia Merry Baker*

FIGURE 3

