



## **For Immediate Release**

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# **VICTORIA COUNTY ISSUES DISASTER DECLARATION DUE TO INCREASING DROUGHT AND FIRE CONDITIONS**

Acting on the authority given to counties under the Texas Constitution, Victoria County Judge Ben Zeller today issued a Declaration of Local Disaster for Victoria County in the face of increasingly severe drought and fire conditions, and extended forecasts from the National Weather Service that give little chance of rain over coming weeks.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) is used by the Texas State Fire Marshal's Office to measure wildfire potential, and yesterday Victoria County reached 700 on that scale, which has a maximum score of 800. The index score for Victoria County has climbed steadily over past weeks as hot temperatures, dry South winds, and lack of precipitation have combined to create increasingly extreme fire conditions around the county.

"Our number of fires in the county is on the rise, with recent grass fires around Inez and Nursery, and along Highway 59. I've had lengthy conversations and listened closely to local law enforcement, our Emergency Management team, the County Fire Marshal and Victoria Fire Chief and a number of others. Based on their advice and expertise, I believe it is prudent to issue a Declaration of Local Disaster due to worsening drought conditions and the rapidly growing potential for wildfires throughout our county", Zeller stated.

This Declaration of Local Disaster will prohibit firework sales within Victoria County, which by state law could not have begun until this coming Friday. This Declaration also bans the use of fireworks in areas of the county that are outside Victoria city limits.

"Our family enjoys celebrating the Fourth of July very much, and Independence Day is an important time for us all. Making decisions about local recreation during this holiday isn't something I take lightly, and adding fireworks to the growing mix of wildfire issues that we're already dealing with will only make the wildfire situation in our county worse. I believe that this Declaration is a necessary step to help preserve lives and property from fire in our county", Zeller concluded.

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