

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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June 23, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Nancy Dragani, FEMA Region VIII Administrator

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act) and 44 C.F.R § 206.36, I respectfully request a major disaster declaration for the flooding disaster that occurred during April 10, 2023 – April 26, 2023. I request to include the counties of Blaine, Daniels, Hill, Park, Roosevelt, Sheridan, and Valley, along with the Fort Peck Tribes, in this request.

Weather Conditions:

For the month of March, Montana experienced colder and wetter conditions than usual. This led to a higher-than-normal accumulation of late season snowpack at lower elevations. By the end of the first week of April, Montana experienced sustained high temperatures, up to 80 degrees in some locations. These warm temperatures quickly melted the low elevation snowpack which led to large volumes of runoff flowing into the Milk River system. The addition of water quickly overwhelmed the carrying capacity of the Milk, Shields, and Poplar rivers.

Additionally, the warmer temperatures also caused the high elevation snowpack to start melting at a quicker than usual rate. At this point the rivers still contained surface ice that was broken up by high water flow leading to destructive ice jams. The increased run-off and already saturated soil led to perfect conditions for sustained flooding. While the onset of the flooding occurred quickly, it took weeks for water to recede in some locations.

Summary:

Miles of rural roads, bridges, culverts, and other infrastructure were affected. This damage has caused residents to add miles to their drive with detours, along with preventing emergency services from responding to calls in a timely manner. The public infrastructure damage, mostly

categories C and D, is extensive and the cost to return to pre-disaster conditions is beyond the capabilities of the local emergency fund and state disaster fund.

Per the data shown in enclosure B, one of the counties experienced a financial impact almost 25 times the per capita impact indicator threshold. The impacted areas are extremely rural with a small tax base spread out over a large area, which makes recovery from a disaster difficult and expensive for these communities compared to more urban areas. Also, Park County and the state of Montana are still actively recovering from the devastating Yellowstone flooding event from last year, placing even more strain on recovery resources throughout the state.

Impacts:

Due to the rural locations of the affected counties, the damages included in enclosure B are only a snapshot of the total damages from the disaster. For example, some counties had over 1,000 miles of road network within their boundaries and had damages occurring at opposite ends of the county. We fully expect this disaster to come in at a higher dollar amount than estimated due to how widespread the damages are from this event.

Work categories C – Roads and Bridges and D – Water Control Facilities, had the highest dollar damages for this event, totaling \$1,482,121.00 and \$407,700.00, respectively. The per capita loss by county ranged from \$9.03 to \$110.58, well above the FEMA \$4.44 indicator threshold. The recovery resources and staffing capacity of these counties and tribes are limited. The damages incurred by this event to their road and bridge systems were extensive and have placed not only a financial strain on the communities, but also have strained the efficiency of their transportation routes and effectiveness of their emergency response.

Below are listed the emergencies and disasters that have occurred in the State of Montana in the past four years.

State Issued Emergencies and Disasters for SFY 2019, SFY 2020, SFY 2021, SFY 2022, and SFY 2023:

- EO 1-2019 – Emergency – Energy emergency for harsh winter conditions statewide
- EO 2-2019 – Emergency – Winter storm emergency in Anaconda Deer Lodge County
- EO 3-2019 – Disaster – Spring flooding disaster
- EO 5-2019 – Disaster – Eight counties, the Crow Indian Reservation and one town
- EO-10-2019 – Emergency – State of emergency to meet the demand for aviation fuel and other fire suppression resources
- EO-13-2019 – Emergency – Flooding emergency in one county
- EO-15-2019 – Emergency – Winter storm emergency statewide
- EO-2-2020 – Emergency – State of emergency within the State of Montana related to the communicable disease COVID-19 novel coronavirus
- EO-3-2020 – Emergency – Amending Executive Order 2-2020 and providing the state of emergency runs concurrent with the president's emergency declaration
- EO-4-2021 – Emergency – Energy emergency

- EO-8-2021 – Emergency – June 8-10, 2021, windstorm
- EO-11-2021 – Emergency – Drought
- EO-12-2021 – Wildland fire
- EO-4-2022 – Disaster – Spring flooding
- EO-1-2023 – April flooding
- EO-2-2023 – Memorial Day flooding

Federally Declared Disasters:

Ten Fire Management Assistance Grant Declarations since 2019:

- FEMA-5286-FM-MT – North Hills Fire
- FEMA-5324-FM-MT – Falling Star Fire
- FEMA-5343-FM-MT – Huff Fire
- FEMA-5344-FM-MT – Bobcat Fire
- FEMA-5345-FM-MT – Snider/Rice Complex Fire
- FEMA-5346-FM-MT – Bridger Foothills Fire
- FEMA-5392-FM-MT – Robinson Draw Fire
- FEMA-5399-FM-MT – Buffalo Fire
- FEMA-5403-FM-MT – Poverty Flats Fire
- FEMA-5406-FM-MT – Richard Spring Fire

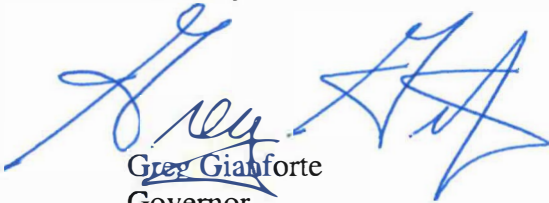
The State of Montana is still in the recovery phase for Presidential declarations that remain open and have liabilities against the state general fund.

- FEMA-4655-DR-MT – 2022 Severe storms and flooding – seven counties
- FEMA-4623-DR-MT – 2021 Richard Spring Fire – one county, one tribe
- FEMA-4608-DR-MT – 2021 Northeast Windstorm – five counties
- FEMA-4508-DR-MT – 2020 Covid-19 pandemic
- FEMA-4437-DR-MT – 2019 Spring Flooding – eight counties

Should this request for a Major Disaster Declaration be approved, I certify that the state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Stafford Act. I have designated the administrator of Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services Division, Delila Bruno, as the state coordinating officer for this request.

I look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff or me with questions.

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor