

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

September 17, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington D.C.

Through: Acting Regional Administrator Tammi Littrell,
FEMA Region VIII Denver, CO 80225

RE: Request for Presidential Major Disaster Declaration

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 CFR § 206.36, I respectfully request that a major disaster for the State of Montana be declared because of the Richard Spring Fire that started on August 8, 2021, in Rosebud County and was not contained until August 21, 2021. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance be made available for Rosebud County and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

On July 14, 2021, I signed an Executive Order proclaiming an Emergency to exist due to the extreme wildland fire conditions statewide. I have activated the State's emergency plan. As of July 11, 2021, Montana, and other States in the Northern Rockies Geographic Area, went to a Preparedness Level 5, which is the highest level of wildland fire activity. The State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) was activated to a level 3 on July 14, 2021, and then to a level 2 on July 27, 2021, due to the increased fire activity.

The State received a Fire Management Assistance Grant for the Richard Spring Fire (FM-5406) on August 10, 2021, but even with increased fire-fighting resources it was not enough to stop the widespread damage to public infrastructure.

In response to the reports by local and tribal governments regarding widespread damages, on August 23, 2021, I requested that FEMA coordinate with the Department of Military Affairs, Disaster and Emergency Services Division, to conduct a joint federal, state, and local survey of the damaged areas. The Joint Public Assistance Preliminary Damage Assessment took place September 8-9, 2021, after fire conditions eased, and teams were able to enter the affected areas safely. Preliminary assessments indicated the most severe impacts to power lines, utilities,

pastureland, and Tribal fencing. Damages and losses also occurred to public and private property, and response expenditures were incurred for emergency protective measures. Tribal communities were evacuated and sheltered in local congregate sheltering facilities, due to COVID-19, many had to be sheltered in hotels or motels.

Damages to Rural Electric Co-op (REC) facilities have created power outages for entire communities including businesses and shelters that were open for evacuees. Tribal communities have incurred additional expenses relating to keeping generators operational for critical services. The RECs have repaired most of the damaged poles, and power is back on for most of the customers. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation has many miles of fencing that has not been repaired, allowing livestock to be on open range.

Should this request for a Stafford Act Declaration be approved, I commit to use State of Montana Disaster Funds for 10% of the total eligible costs. REC Applicants will assume 15% of total eligible costs. The cost-share will be, State of Montana 10% - REC Applicants 15% - Federal 75%. The state will assume the non-federal cost-share for the Tribe based upon actual costs.

Due to the number and magnitude of emergencies and disasters in the past four years including flooding, severe storms, drought, and severe wildfires, the costs of responding to this wildland fire exceeds the capability of the State of Montana. 2021 has been severe wildland fire season, intensified by drought.

The one County and one Tribal Reservation that we are requesting a major disaster declaration for, and the *per capita* total for Rosebud County is \$326.87 and for the state of Montana it is \$3.05. The figures captured in Enclosure B reflect uninsured losses only.

Additionally, I am requesting statewide implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Montana has an approved standard Mitigation plan with an expiration date of September 30, 2023. Preliminary estimates of the types and amount of Public Assistance Categories A through G needed under the Stafford Act are tabulated in Enclosure B. I certify that the severity and magnitude of this fire is beyond the State, Local and tribal capabilities, and the State will comply with the costs sharing requirements. I designate Delila Bruno, Administrator for Montana Disaster & Emergency Services Division as the State Coordinating Officer.

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 2018, SFY 2019, SFY 2020 and SFY 2021:

EO 4-2018 – Emergency – Energy Emergency for harsh winter conditions – Statewide

EO 5-2018 – Emergency – Winter Storm Emergency – Glacier County and Golden Valley County Blackfeet, Fort Belknap, and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservations

EO 11-2018 – Emergency – Spring Flooding Emergency – Seven Counties, the Town of Chester, and the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation

EO 12-2018 – Emergency – Spring Flooding Emergency – Statewide

EO 14-2018 – Disaster – Spring Flooding Disaster – Statewide

EO 1-2019 – Emergency – Energy Emergency for harsh winter conditions –Statewide
EO 2-2019 – Emergency – Winter Storm Emergency –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 – COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus – Statewide
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 for harsh winter conditions – Statewide
EO-8-2021 – Disaster – Wind Storm Damages in Dawson, Garfield, McCone, Richland, and Roosevelt Counties
EO-11-2021 – Emergency – Drought – Statewide
EO-12-2021 – Emergency – Wildland Fire – Statewide

Federally Declared Disasters:

10 Fire Management Assistance Grant Declarations since 2018:

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 – PF 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-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
FEMA-4405-DR-MT – 2018 Spring Flooding – Nine Counties
FEMA-4388-DR-MT – 2018 Spring Flooding – Nine Counties

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte". The signature is stylized with a large "G" and "G" and a cursive "ianforte".

Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enc: Enclosure "B" – Montana Preliminary Damage Assessment
OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13