

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

June 22, 2022

Federal Emergency Management Agency
P.O. Box 10055
Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Through: Nancy Dragani, Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VIII
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Request for Individual Assistance under DR-4655-MT

Dear Ms. Dragani:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C §§ 5121-5207 (the "Stafford Act"), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you designate Carbon, Park, and Stillwater counties for Individual Assistance under DR-4655-MT. This request is timely under 44 C.F.R. § 206.35(a). This request is for all programs under Individual Assistance to include, but not limited to, the Individuals and Households Program and Other Needs Assistance, Disaster Case Management, Crisis Counseling and Assistance, Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Critical Needs Assistance, and Clean and Removal Assistance which are currently not authorized under the Major Declaration that was issued for this event on June 16, 2022. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and local governments, and in accordance with 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, supplementary federal assistance is necessary to augment the efforts and available resources of the State and local governments, disaster relief organizations, and compensation by insurance for disaster-related losses.

A combination of factors came together in June 2022 to produce devastating flooding across portions of the State of Montana. Snowpack across most of the Montana river basins began melting much later and faster than normal. Most basin snowpack typically peaks sometime in mid to late April, but this year snowpack peaked in late April and in some cases mid-May.

Moderate to major flooding continues to occur in multiple basins statewide and the incident period remains ongoing at the time of this request. Flood forecasting efforts were hampered by this extreme event when several US Geological Survey stream gage stations were damaged or destroyed. Some of these sites have yet to be repaired since the entire bridges on which they were mounted were washed downstream.

Damage surveys were conducted by teams comprised of representatives from the County Assist Team (CAT) from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The results of this evaluation of primary residences indicate the following numbers of majorly damaged or destroyed residences: Carbon (23), Park (53), and Stillwater (39) counties. Due to the significant amount of debris caused by these storms, cleanup and recovery efforts remain ongoing, and it is anticipated that state and local-led emergency protective measures and debris removal operations will result in a diminished capacity to provide recovery assistance to the survivors of this incident.

Factors for the Individual Assistance Program

Per 44 C.F.R. § 206.48(b), the factors FEMA will consider to measure the severity, magnitude, and impact of the disaster and to evaluate the need for assistance to individuals under the Stafford Act include the following:

1. State Fiscal Capacity and Resources Availability;
2. Uninsured Home and Personal Property Losses;
3. Disaster Impacted Population Profile;
4. Impact to Community Infrastructure;
5. Casualties; and
6. Disaster-Related Unemployment.

Given the nature of this event and constantly changing information, the State of Montana offers the following data to support this request and to make a showing of the presence of the above factors.

1. State Fiscal Capacity and Resources Availability

The nature and amount of state and local governmental resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster are as follows:

- Emergency Declarations from local governments for the impacted areas.
- All-Hazards Incident Management Teams mobilized to aid local Emergency Operations Centers.
- Implementation of emergency protective measures throughout the impacted communities, including scene security, emergency debris removal, and assistance to displaced residents.

- Activated Montana National Guard for security and support of civilian authorities.
- State agency assistance with damage assessments and inspections of infrastructure.
- Activation of the Montana Emergency Response Framework (MERF), including coordination with State Emergency Support Function (ESF) primary agencies, to assure an adequate and timely response and recovery.
- Emergency Mutual Aid Compact (EMAC) support to include 19 personnel from the states of California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Oregon, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

The response to this flooding comes in the wake of numerous events over recent years to include 18 Fire Management Assistance Grants and six Major Disaster Declarations, as well as 15 state issued emergencies and declarations. The State of Montana and the affected counties are still in the fiscal and physical recovery phases for several events that have liabilities against the state general fund.

Moreover, due to the frequent and compounding response activities that have taken place over the past several years, the State of Montana has exceeded the fiscal and resource capabilities necessary to provide direct services to the survivors and families of this incident. Additionally, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other private non-profit entities, which also provide direct disaster relief to citizens, have seen a similar depletion of their resources over the past several years. The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency resulted a significant decrease in the number of available volunteers and donated resources.

Without additional federal assistance, these organizations must continue to expend their own resources, which have already been restricted by their efforts during COVID-19 and the numerous recent disasters, potentially limiting their ability to respond to other disasters and emergencies across the State.

2. Uninsured Home & Personal Property Losses

The impacted communities are primarily in areas that are not easily accessible or do not have alternate routes. While some survivors have insurance policies, many are at risk for being underinsured and/or not having the correct peril for coverage. The sudden impact of the severe flooding resulted in significant loss of many homes and personal property contained therein. Based on our preliminary data, we estimate that 115 primary residences have experienced either major damage or destruction, with some completely washed away. Because the survivors of these floods are particularly vulnerable, the size and scope of the devastation in these communities makes it clear that no amount of

insurance is adequate to address the immediate or long-term needs of the survivors of this destruction.

The Individual Assistance (IA) Program will provide desperately needed financial aid to these survivors in the form of Housing Assistance and Other Needs Assistance. All available Individual Assistance programs within a Major Disaster Declaration are needed to further address the unmet needs in the evolving crisis of these communities.

3. Disaster Impacted Population Profile

The communities surrounding the impacted areas are currently in the beginning months of their tourist seasons. Very few rentals are available and even fewer rentals are affordable. Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the housing market, and a marked increase in inflation over the past year, rental rates and home prices have increased significantly without a proportional increase in the fixed incomes of those affected.

Specific social vulnerabilities include the following:

- The levels of elderly (65+) residents are high, at 22.5% in Park, 25.6% in Carbon, 22.9% in Stillwater. MT avg is 18.7%. US avg is 16%.
- In Stillwater County, 6.6% of residents have less than HS education attainment compared to 6% in MT.
- 16.4% of Carbon County residents are persons with disabilities, 14.2% in Stillwater. MT overall is 13.7%.
- 10.2% of people in Park County lack health insurance compared to 8.4% in MT

Housing affordability is a major issue in this region:

- Mortgage cost is >30% of household income in Park (37.7%) and Carbon (33.8%) counties. The MT average is 28.8% and the national average is 27.2%.
- Rent is >30% of household income in Park (33.8%), Carbon (33.6%), Stillwater (30.8%).
- Median home values have increased significantly from 2010-2020 in Park (\$43,653), Carbon (\$34,791), and Stillwater (\$57,336).

The percentage of mobile homes in Carbon (12%), and Stillwater (14.9%) is far higher than the MT average (9.9%). All three counties, including Park (9.8%), are significantly higher than the US average (5.5%). Mobile home residents have been shown to be disproportionately impacted by disasters –due to physical characteristics of the home, location, social vulnerabilities of residents, and complicated ownership arrangements which means that they can be excluded from some legal protections (such as eviction notices).

There are a total of 686 mobile homes in high flood risk census tracts in the affected counties to include Park (441), Stillwater (98), and Carbon (147).

4. Impact to Community Infrastructure

At the time of this request, power and water is still being restored to the areas. Many residents are unable to have their utilities reconnected due to broken pipes, exposed septic lines, and lost water well caps because of the significant level of erosion. The remaining usable land available does not provide the adequate distance for separation between water and septic lines. This damage significantly impacts the homeowner's ability to reside in safe and sanitary conditions and will severely impair their recovery.

Additionally, the estimates for debris continue to cumulate. Mixed debris, including machinery, construction and demolition (C&D), vegetative, etc. have been washed away into the rivers. In addition to this myriad of debris, there are exposed slabs that are at imminent risk of collapsing into the waterways. The channel migration of multiple rivers and this accumulation of hazards has caused the impending risk of further damage to downstream infrastructure (e.g., bridges, culverts, roadways, etc.).

Nine major highways have received significant damages. Furthermore, many areas remain inaccessible due to the shortage of alternate routes. Below are some of the notable infrastructure damages by area:

Carbon County

- Power outage and transmission infrastructure damaged
- Water distribution infrastructure impacts
- 6 bridges confirmed washed out
- Multiple other bridges are affected, unable to fully assess until water recedes
- Breached wastewater lagoon

Park County

- Community of Gardiner has limited accessibility due to road and bridge damage
- Power outage and transmission infrastructure damaged
- Water distribution infrastructure impacts

Stillwater County

- Stillwater mine was completely cut off due to bridge failure with designated alternate route is threatened due to safety concerns.
- Two confirmed bridges washed out
- Multiple secondary roads damaged

5. Casualties

At the time of this request, there are an unknown number of injuries with one (1) confirmed fatality from an individual recreating on high water.

6. Disaster-Related Unemployment

In Montana alone, visitors to Yellowstone National Park (YNP) generate more than \$237 million in spending, which creates over \$100 million in labor income. The northern entrance to YNP, which is only accessed through Park County, has been closed indefinitely.

- In 2020 there were 1.9 million visits to YNP in Montana
- Spending by YNP visitors created approximately 3,000 jobs in Montana in 2020.

In Montana, Carbon and Park Counties may be the hardest hit by this factor. Not only did they suffer some of the greatest damage, but they also have the largest share of jobs tied to Travel & Tourism in south central Montana. It's hard to understate how important the coming tourism season is for these communities.

- Carbon County: 39% of jobs; 26% of wages
- Park County: 31% of jobs; 26% of wages
- In Montana overall, around 20% of jobs are in travel & tourism.

Mining makes up an estimated 40.7% of jobs in Stillwater County. This is an incredibly high percentage with the national average of jobs being only .4% mining. The routes into the Stillwater mine have been closed, leaving more than 1,000 employees out of work. There is no estimate timeframe for repairs to these access points. This mine is the only palladium and platinum producer in the U.S. Among communities that are economically dependent on mining, some are positioned to experience greater hardship than others when faced with the loss of a mine or disruptions in activities. This is, in part, because wages in the mining sector tend to be higher than the average wage in communities where they are located and therefore difficult to replace. Rural and remote energy communities, like Stillwater County, are particularly vulnerable to these declines.

I understand per FEMA Guidance issued in June 2019 that FEMA evaluates these six factors detailed above in recommending Individual Assistance programs and am confident that the State of Montana has met this criterion. The compounding factors of a global pandemic, rising inflation, and home costs have made the road to recovery more difficult. I therefore respectfully request that you approve all programs under Individual Assistance to include the Individuals and Households Program and Other Needs Assistance, that may be available to assist our citizens.

As stated in my request for the initial declaration (DR-4655-MT), I have designated Delila Bruno, Administrator for Montana Disaster Emergency Services, as the State Coordinating Officer for this event. She is authorized to provide any further information,

assurances, requests, or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte", is written over the printed name and title.

Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosures:
FEMA Form 010-0-13