

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
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April 11, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D. C. 20500

Through: Acting Regional Administrator Tony Russell FEMA Region VIII Denver, CO 80225

RE: Request for Presidential Disaster Declaration Major Disaster or Emergency

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 as a result of widespread flooding and ice jams in rivers and streams throughout the State.

Causal Weather Conditions

During much of the 2014 winter season an upper level, low pressure trough located over the central United States, combined with a high pressure ridge to the west, created a cold, northwest flow over Montana. A series of storm systems pushed across the central and eastern portions of the state during February and early March, bringing several inches of snow to the mountains and plains. From January through March, much of Montana received 150 to 300 percent of normal precipitation. Some isolated areas received more than 300 percent of normal precipitation. Temperatures for the winter season overall averaged far below normal. For the period of December through February, temperatures west of the Continental Divide averaged from near normal to 4 degrees Fahrenheit below normal. East of the Continental Divide, temperatures averaged 2° to 6°F below normal. February was particularly cold: west of the Continental Divide, temperatures averaged 15° to 25°F, which is 6 to 12 degrees below normal. East of the Continental Divide, temperatures in February averaged 10° to 20° F, which is 9 to 15 degrees below normal. These cold temperatures allowed for thick ice to develop on rivers and streams.

Early March brought a return to more seasonal temperatures. Daytime high temperatures ranged from 40°F to 60°F, with overnight lows dropping below freezing for only a few hours. This pattern allowed the snowpack over the plains and lower elevations to ripen and melt very quickly. Frozen ground

conditions from the recent cold prevented the snowmelt from percolating into the soil. Instead, the snowmelt drained toward stream channels as overland flows caused flooding in many areas. While the warm-up, to this point, had not been enough for environmental factors to rot or even significantly weaken the river and stream ice, the rapid influx of water into the rivers and streams added enough energy to cause the ice to break up. This resulted in large chunks of ice moving downstream, catching and jamming on bridge abutments and curves in the stream channels. These ice jams caused flooding to occur as water rapidly rose behind the ice build-ups, and flash flooding occurring downstream as the ice jams released.

During these events, several USGS gauge sites rose to moderate and major flood stages due to the rapid runoff and ice jams.

Summary

Beginning in March of 2014, flooding caused widespread damage to roads, culverts, bridges, public buildings and private residences. The damage to secondary roads has had major impacts on rural populations. Flood waters could not percolate into the soils and flowed to low lying areas, saturating road beds where the frost depth was zero. High snowbanks along roadways trapped flood waters and directed the flow for long distances over roads. The rapid mid-level snowmelt moved across the state, filling streams and low lying areas. Due to the severity of this flooding, many local jurisdictions activated their Emergency Operations Center (EOCs) and declared emergencies. Many counties had to perform emergency temporary repairs to allow emergency access. Flooding and ice jams ended on or about March 16, 2014.

A state of emergency was declared on March 10, 2014, with an effective date of March 5, 2014, for the entire State, activating the State Emergency Management plan. The State Emergency Coordination Center was activated on March 10, 2014. The Crow, Northern Cheyenne, and the Blackfoot Reservations requested assistance either from the State or from the USACE directly. The Blackfoot Tribe declared an emergency. The following 15 counties declared either an emergency or disaster: Broadwater, Golden Valley, Jefferson, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Lincoln, Musselshell, Park, Pondera, Prairie, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Stillwater, Wheatland. The following seven cities or towns declared an emergency: Boulder, Clyde Park, East Helena, Libby, Livingston, Manhattan, and Roundup. These jurisdictions were all affected by the flooding and ice jams. Ice jams and flooding also damaged Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) fishing access sites in Richland, Dawson, and Custer Counties.

My Office requested a joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) on March 20, 2014, which was conducted from March 31, 2014 to April 4, 2014. The PDA teams were comprised of representatives from city, county, tribal, state and federal agencies. The results of the PDA are attached as form "Enclosure B." The nature of state, local, and tribal governmental resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster are as follows:

- Local and tribal officials declared emergencies and disasters for the impacted areas;
- Evacuations were ordered for inundated areas;
- Sandbags were distributed to tribal residents on the three affected reservations;
- Emergency repair work was conducted across the entire area on main roadways to ensure accessibility for emergency response;
- The State requested and received a six-inch pump from the USACE for Musselshell County to prevent the inundation of critical facilities by flood waters.

Due to the number and magnitude of emergencies and disasters over the past 24 months, as well as the current flooding, the costs of responding to the recent flooding have exceeded the resources of the State of Montana. The figures captured in Enclosure B reflect uninsured losses only.

Below is a list of the emergencies and disasters that have occurred in the State of Montana in the past two years.

State Issued Emergencies and Disaster for SFY 2013 and SFY 2014

EO 5-2012 - *Emergency* - Wildfires in the west central, south central and southwest portions of Montana. **EO 6-2012** - *Emergency* - Wildfires in southeastern and south central counties and reservations in Montana. .

EO 6A-2012 - *Emergency* - Adding Powder River County to EO 6-2012.

EO 7-2012 - *Emergency* - Wildfires in southeastern and south central counties and reservations in Montana.

EO 9-2012 - *Emergency* - Statewide for wildfires.

EO 11-2012 - *Disaster* - Statewide for wildfires.

EO 4-2013 - *Emergency* - Flooding in central and north central Montana counties and reservations.

EO 06-2013 – *Disaster* – Flooding in central and eastern Montana counties and reservations.

EO 07-2013 – *Emergency* - Rainbow Family Gathering in Beaverhead County.

EO 8-2013 – *Emergency* - Hazardous wildfire conditions in southwest Montana.

EO 11-2013 – Assistance to Colorado for flooding under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Federally Declared Disasters

FEMA-4127-DR-MT - 2013 Spring Flooding - 11 Counties as well as the Rocky Boy, Fort Belknap, and Fort Peck Reservations.

FMAG declarations:

FEMA-5047-FM-MT- Lolo Creek Complex Fire

FEMA-5035-FM-MT- West Mullan Fire

FEMA-5016-FM-MT -Saw Tooth Fire

FEMA-2987-FM-MT -Corral Fire

FEMA-2988-FM-MT -Dahl Fire

FEMA-2989-FM-MT -Ash Creek Fire

FEMA-5008-FM-MT - 19 Mile 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.

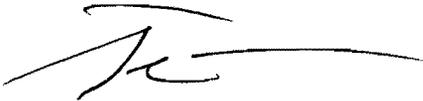
FEMA-4074-DR-MT - Ash Creek Fire on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Powder River and Rosebud Counties.

FEMA-1922-DR-MT - Rocky Boy Reservation, Chouteau and Hill Counties - Flooding in 2010.

FEMA-1996-DR-MT - 48 counties and six Indian Reservations - Flooding in 2011.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Bullock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

Enc: OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13