

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS  
LT. GOVERNOR

June 15, 2022

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

Through: Regional Administrator Nancy Dragani  
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 C.F.R § 206.36, I respectfully request that a major disaster be declared for the State of Montana as a result of spring flooding that began on June 10, 2022.

**Weather System Conditions:**

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.

The main contributing factor to the delayed snowmelt was due to much cooler than normal temperatures statewide in April and May 2022. April temperatures were 4 to 10 degrees below climatological normal across the entire state while May temperatures were 2 to 6 degrees below normal. These cooler temperatures played a major role in retaining snowpack in the mountains longer than normal, as well as keeping snow levels lower later in the spring season and adding to the snowpack well into May.

During the second week of June, an atmospheric river brought heavy rainfall to Southwest and South-Central Montana as well as Northwest Wyoming ranging from 2.00 to over 5.00 inches of liquid precipitation (400-600% of normal for this period in June). Much of that rainfall fell on snowpack that was very warm and therefore melted quickly with the additional rainfall. Precipitation totals in Northwest Montana were more modest but still 200-300% of normal, and produced flooding along many area rivers and streams. In many cases, the combination of rainfall and snow water equivalent generated during this short period of time equated to 5-10 inches of runoff over roughly a 24-hour period. This would equate to somewhere between a 1 in 100-year event (1% recurrence frequency) and a 1 in 500-year event (0.2% recurrence interval).

Moderate to major flooding occurred in multiple basins statewide. The Flathead, Yaak, Bitterroot, Clark Fork, Whitefish, and Swan Rivers experienced flooding in Northwest Montana. The Gallatin, Missouri, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone, and Boulder Rivers, along with Rock Creek and numerous other small creeks, flooded in Southwest and South-Central Montana. Flood forecasting efforts were also hampered by this extreme event when U.S. 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. In addition to the rainfall and runoff-caused damages, unusually high winds across much of the state exacerbated the impacts with multiple stretches of power transmission lines blown down. Continued flooding is expected in coming days as the high water and debris moves downstream.

#### **Direct Federal Assistance Needed:**

Due to the extensive and destructive nature of this event, the State of Montana and affected jurisdictions anticipate needing the following resources:

- Environmental Protection Agency: Assessments on damage to public water and wastewater infrastructure; Technical assistance on any impacts to oil or gas infrastructure or hazardous spills.
- U.S. Department of Energy: Assistance restoring power to affected communities.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Flood fighting support and operations; Assessments of water treatment facilities and critical infrastructure; Equipment.
- U.S. Department of Transportation: Technical assistance and assessments of damaged federal roadways.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Assistance with damaged health care facilities and evacuation of patients from at-risk facilities.
- U.S. Geological Survey: Assistance with data collection and incident impacts.

#### **Summary:**

This heavy rainfall in combination with rapid snowmelt moved across the southern region of the state, filling rivers, streams, and low-lying areas. Due to the severity of the flooding, many local jurisdictions activated their Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs)

and declared emergencies. Several counties had to perform emergency temporary repairs to allow emergency access. Multiple search and rescue operations have occurred for stranded residents along with recreationalists.

The spring flooding event caused widespread damage to roads, culverts, bridges, and private residences and businesses. To date, more than 5,300 yards of debris has been removed from US-89 and Secondary HWY 540. More debris will need to be removed when floodwaters recede and the scope of damages are assessed. The Montana Department of Transportation is currently aware of five state-owned bridges that are damaged. There are 218 miles of roads closed, most of which have no alternate route. An initial estimate of damage to transportation infrastructure is \$29 million.

The affected areas are high tourism and recreation centers. Thousands of visitors travel through these communities en route to Yellowstone National Park, which was also affected by flooding and closed all entrances on June 13 due to damaged roads and infrastructure. Carbon County brings in \$68 million from tourism and sees 500-600 thousand visitors annually. Park County benefits from more than \$200 million in tourism annually. High percentages of the workforce in these areas are in the hospitality and recreation sector. Housing stock and availability in the affected communities is already limited. Damage to residential areas will exacerbate this issue. The subsequent economic losses to these communities will be significant and long lasting.

The counties affected are highly mountainous with many remote communities and residents not easily accessible. Essential services are few and far between. Alternate routes may add hours of travel time for some residents. In Park County, the valley that stretches from Gardiner to Livingston is located between two major mountain ranges and only one primary route that follows the Yellowstone River channel. Impacts to roadways and bridges there have a significant impact on industry, livelihoods, and public safety.

The Montana State Emergency Coordination Center was activated on June 10, 2022, in response to the incident. Governor's Disaster Declaration EO-4-2022 was issued on June 14, 2022.

### **Summary of jurisdictional impacts:**

#### **Carbon County**

- Two community shelters open
- Power outage and transmission infrastructure damaged in the town of Red Lodge
- Water distribution infrastructure impacts
- Highways 212 and 308 are affected. 6 bridges confirmed washed out. Multiple other bridges are affected, unable to fully assess until water recedes.
- Hospital and long-term care facility evacuating some patients
- Incident Management Team in place to support local EOC

### **Stillwater County**

- Localized evacuations and sheltering
- Stillwater mine partially evacuated, which is a major economic driver in the area
- Two confirmed bridges washed out; multiple secondary roads damaged.

### **Park County**

- Community of Gardiner has limited accessibility due to road and bridge damage
- Centralized power outage in Gardiner
- Water distribution infrastructure impacts

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.
- State agency assistance with damage assessments and inspections of infrastructure.
- Activation of the MERF, including coordination with State Emergency Support Function (ESF) primary agencies, to assure an adequate and timely response and recovery.

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, 2019 and SFY 2020:**

- 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 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 to exist 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-4-2022 – Disaster – Spring Flooding

**Federally Declared Disasters:**

18 Fire Management Assistance Grant Declarations since 2017:

- FEMA-5194-FM-MT – Lodgepole Complex Fire
- FEMA-5197-FM-MT – Lolo Peak Fire
- FEMA-5208-FM-MT – Alice Creek Fire
- FEMA-5211-FM-MT – Moose Peak Fire
- FEMA-5210-FM-MT – Highway 200 Complex
- FEMA-5207-FM-MT – Rice Ridge Fire
- FEMA-5209-FM-MT – West Fork Fire
- FEMA-5212-FM-MT – Strawberry Fire
- 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-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
- FEMA-4405-DR-MT – 2018 Spring Flooding - Nine Counties

- FEMA-4388-DR-MT – 2018 Spring Flooding - Nine 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 & 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 me or my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kristen Juras  
Acting Governor, on behalf of Governor Greg Gianforte