

Congress of the United States

October 1, 2020

The Honorable Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

Thank you for accepting our invitation to visit Oregon to meet with local officials and witness the devastation wildfires have wrought upon our state. In advance of your visit this weekend, we ask your immediate approval of an increased Federal cost share as requested for both the State's Sept. 14, 2020 request for a Major Disaster Declaration and the Sept. 29, 2020 request for Category A (debris removal). The State of Oregon and local communities have exhausted their local funding sources and face an enormous financial burden in responding to and recovering from this disaster.

Based on ongoing Preliminary Damage Assessments, the State of Oregon predicts that debris removal alone will cost in excess of \$622 million and total disaster costs will exceed \$1 billion. The damage assessment to-date exceeds \$140 per capita, well in excess of the guidance for consideration of an increased Federal share under 44 CFR 206.47. Given the large areas devastated by the unprecedented series of the fires that began last month and inordinately high costs of clean-up and recovery, we support the State's request for this assistance to be granted at 100% Federal share. Such a cost share adjustment is warranted by previous Agency determinations which have authorized a 100% Federal share in 22 disasters under this Administration and a minimum 90% Federal share in 23 additional disasters, including six wildfires. This is in keeping with FEMA's long record of approving an increased cost share in the face of serious disasters, authorizing a minimum 90% Federal share in disasters on 173 occasions since 2004, 98 of which received a 100% Federal share.

In considering this request, we ask you to take into account the size and scale of this disaster as well as the backdrop upon which this disaster fell. In the span of a few short days, fires burned an area the size of the State of Rhode Island. As a result, thousands of our fellow Oregonians have been displaced, and countless businesses have been lost. Furthermore, the State and local governments continue to respond to and recover from four additional Presidentially-declared disasters since May 2019, including three counties which are covered under both Major Disaster Declarations from floods and the wildfire disaster last month.

As you will undoubtedly see this weekend, Oregon and her citizens are suffering under the strain of enormous calamity. State and local officials are working valiantly with their Federal partners to respond and recover as quickly and efficiently as possible. We are grateful for this partnership and respectfully request you further extend that partnership by increasing the Federal share for this disaster.

Thank you,



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress