April 16, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Through: Mike O’Hare, Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 10
130 228th Street SW
Bothell, WA 98021-9796

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) as amended, and
implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State
of Oregon as a result of a severe winter storm system that included heavy snow, ice, high
amounts of rain, flooding, and landslides/mudslides beginning February 23 through
February 26, 2019. I am specifically requesting the Public Assistance Program for five
Oregon counties: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jefferson, and Lane; and the Hazard Mitigation
Grant Program (HMGP) statewide.

On March 6, 2019, the Associate Administrator of FEMA’s Office of Response and
Recovery, Jeff Byard, granted an extension of time to make this request until April 21,
2019.

Please also see Enclosure 1 to this letter, FEMA Form 010-0-13 (OMB Control Number
1660-0009), Request for Presidential Disaster Declaration; Major Disaster or
Emergency.

Oregon communities faced numerous hardships during this destructive event, most
significantly the tragic loss of one life in Douglas County as result of fallen trees. The
conditions that led to this death illustrate the complexity of hazardous conditions we
experienced during this storm event. The severe storm brought down thousands of trees
causing widespread power outages, damage to infrastructure and multiple road closures
including interstates and major highways, which cut off access to entire communities
from critical supply chains and lifelines.
On February 28, 2019, I declared a State of Emergency, via Executive Order No. 19-02. This State of Emergency included ten counties: Coos, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Linn, and Marion. The following counties also declared local emergencies: Coos, Curry, Douglas, and Lane.

During the February 23 to 26, 2019 time frame, a stationary frontal system lay across the state and generated heavy rain and wet, heavy snow that fell across the region. This severe winter storm brought a multitude of weather hazards that affected the Southern Willamette Valley, and Southern, Central and Eastern Oregon, including cold arctic air, heavy snow, and freezing rain. Heavy rain associated with this storm generated mud and landslides on multiple roads and major highways.

Starting on February 23, 2019 rain and snow fell along a frontal boundary that stretched from the south – central Oregon coast to northeastern part of Oregon. The heaviest snow fell east of the Cascades with 6 to 18 inches of accumulation during the late afternoon of February 23rd, this heavy snow knocked down trees or tree limbs into spans of power lines and encased lines with snow and ice causing major power outages in Jefferson County. Central Lincoln Cooperative Inc., serving Jefferson County, reported that their entire customer base was without power due to downed transmission lines. Some customers were without power for up to six days. On February 24, National Weather Service winter storm warnings were in effect for much of Oregon as well as a flood watch and flood warning for portions of Southwest Oregon. The storm brought heavy rain over much of Southwest Oregon, which later turned to snow as cold air moved into the area. Initially, Douglas County received over 2.25 inches and Lane County 1.92 inches of rain which changed over to heavy snow during the late afternoon.

The heavy snow continued through February 26 in many location across the state with Lane, Douglas and Jefferson counties being the most severely impacted by this hazard. The amount of heavy snow in Lane County was up to 22 inches, which is a 20 year recurrence interval for daily snowfall for the area. Douglas County received 4 to 12 inches on top of saturated soils; their snowfall total made for the biggest snow event since 1965. The wet heavy snow downed thousands of trees which caused major power outages and blocked major transportation corridors, isolating numerous communities and stranding motorist and passengers on public transport.

In the same time frame heavy rain also fell over Coos and Curry counties. Over 10 inches of rain fell over coastal Coos and Curry counties on February 24 and 25, causing flooding on the Coquille River, with over 6 inches of rain reported within a 24-hour period in Gold Beach, while around 9 inches was reported near Brookings, Oregon. The heavy rain caused numerous landslides and mudslides involving transportation systems and brought massive amounts of silt and sediment to catch basins. Major interstates were closed due to landslides or high water, including US Highway 101.
President Donald J. Trump  
April 16, 2019  
Page 3  

As a result of the storm, power lines were down over a large area from Coos County on the coast, thru Douglas and Lane counties. Over 100,000 residents were without power during this event, with restoration of power often taking several weeks to almost a month, due to the severity of damages and lack of accessibility due to heavy snow, downed trees and impassable roadways. To gain accessibility, utility crews worked in coordination with state and local governments to help cut and dig their way into the damaged areas. The Douglas Electric Co-op was one of the hardest hit with power outages affecting the entire population of Douglas County with some residences without power for almost a month. This was the worst outage in the utility’s 81 year history. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) also experienced widespread destruction to their transmission lines that provides wholesale power though substations to local power providers.

In addition to widespread power outages and impassable roads, numerous communication towers went down, further isolating those communities. Welfare checks to towns such as the City of Elkton, located in Douglas County and City of Oakridge, located in Lane County were a high priority due to isolation by access and communications.

In the counties impacted by this disaster event we have previously worked with utilities to implement mitigation projects, significantly reducing impacts to both public and private facilities. The following examples of hazard mitigation success stories from this event are all projects that FEMA helped to fund years ago in Oregon that paid dividends during this recent storm event:

- Douglas Electric Cooperative reported, “The mitigation done absolutely helped shorten the outage to that portion of DEC’s transmission that was moved closer to the road. If the line would have been in the old location on the bluff, trees would have taken it out, it would have been considerably longer getting the Scottsburg community back on, our estimates one to two weeks longer. We had a couple trees in the new line and some wire down, but in general that section was quick to repair. In addition, we would have needed a helicopter to fly-in poles to the old location. The old line was in an area that was not accessible by equipment at all, you needed ropes to secure yourself while working due to the steepness of the terrain, and trying to put wire or a pole up with a few feet of snow in those conditions would have been difficult. I heard the comment several times in the storm, thank goodness that project was done. That work has paid for itself many times over and improved power reliability to a rural community.”

- The Eugene Water and Electric Board reported a 40% reduction in power outages in the Laurel Hill area due to past mitigation work.

- The Springfield Utility Board reported, “Yes, the (Underground Emerald Circuit) project reduced losses from the February snow storm. The portion of line that was converted from overhead to underground as a part of this project is in a heavily wooded area that experienced significant snow accumulation and damage to
President Donald J. Trump  
April 16, 2019  
Page 4

limbs/branches/trees. It’s a difficult area to access in ideal conditions, and would have been much more difficult with the snow and damaged trees.”

- The Emerald People’s Utility District reported, “our Operations Manager stated that the Mitigation Projects that we had completed at both the Harness Mountain Site as well as the Badger Mountain Site, having both of those locations underground saved us seven days’ worth of work for three crews during the February 2019 Winter Storm.”

Because much of the utility damage in this event was caused by entire trees - weighed down by wet snow – that fell from outside of rights-of-way, the aggressive tree-trimming mitigation work done within the rights-of-way generally did not provide as great of reduced damage benefits as those actions ordinarily would have provided.

The many impacts of this severe storm included extensive and long-lasting power outages; many road closures, including major highways; the closure of educational facilities; and the need to provide shelter for many people whose power was out, sometimes for weeks. The damage and impacts from this event pose a significant challenge to the state, its communities, and public utility providers.

The following provides examples of the infrastructure damage and impacts from this event:

- Coos County: There was a great deal of damage due to heavy rains on the County Road System in Coos County. Heavy rains overwhelmed culverts causing blowouts and road damages. The local utility company also suffered damages to its electric distribution system.

- Curry County: Heavy rain caused major road systems failures, due to flooding and landslides blocking lanes and causing road closures. One culvert completely washed out in the City of Gold Beach neighborhood, prohibiting access to emergency services and residences in the area for up to three days. In addition the Port of Brooking Harbor sustained damage to their Port basins due to massive erosion causing navigation hazards. Major highways were closed; US Highway 101 is still under repair due to a massive landslide

- Douglas County: Heavy wet snow knocked down trees towering over 80 feet, across roadways and across power lines. Douglas Electric Coop serves thousands of homes and business. As the storm passed, cooperative members were without power at nearly 10,000 meters. The damage was devastating with 105 miles of damaged line and 250 poles down. Some households were without power for almost a month.

The depth of snow accumulation coupled with numerous downed trees and limbs caused road closures even on major transportation routes making repairs and access to communities difficult. This hampered local first responders doing
welfare checks and search and rescue activities. Access to communications towers was challenging when repairs and fuel were needed at these sites to ensure emergency communications. The city of Elkton was isolated and without communication for 12 days due to downed lines and inoperable communication towers. Towns were isolated due to the massive amounts of downed trees blocking critical routes. Working around the clock, Douglas County Public Works cleared routes in order for emergency services to continue. Emergency medical services were greatly assisted by Search and Rescue personnel with the skills and resources needed to work in such conditions.

There were also access issues reaching the communities of Yoncalla and Drain in Douglas County. Douglas County Search and Rescue were performing numerous welfare checks on isolated homeowners that had no power or communications. The Sheriff’s Office received calls from family members from outside the area when they could not contact loved ones.

- Jefferson County: The Central Electric Cooperative suffered damages to its electric distribution system due to downed trees. All of the utility’s 1,743 meters were without power for up to six days.

- Lane County: Heavy water-saturated snow caused hazardous conditions to include extensive debris due to fallen trees across roadways and across power lines. The depth of snow accumulation coupled with numerous downed trees and limbs caused road closures even on major transportation routes. The storm resulted in closure of 40 miles of I-5 from Cottage Grove to Sutherlin for 24-hours as a result of hazardous conditions from heavy snow, down trees and powerlines. In addition Highway 58 closed from mile posts 13-86 isolating the community of Oakridge. The town of Oakridge with a population of 3200 was without power for three days, warming shelters were established for those in need and the town critical population. A life line was established by pilot car for emergency access only.

The Oregon Department of Transportation escorted power utilities and fuel deliveries to assist with critical needs of the town. All power utility providers were affected by this storm, for instance Lane Electric Corporative had widespread damages as a result of countless trees crashing down on power lines through the valley, leaving most of the members without power for up to 14 days.

Springfield High School experienced the collapse of the roof of their gym under the weight of the snow. The entire gym was deemed unsafe and the district was forced to demolish the remaining portion of the structure.

At least three school districts in Lane County were forced to close schools for an entire week due to the power outages. Not only did this affect the education of
thousands of students, but many of the children in these schools rely on breakfast and lunch meals provided in school for critical nutrition.

An Amtrak train with 183 passengers was stuck for more than 36 hours in Oakridge due to heavy snow and fallen trees on the tracks; passengers were kept on the train because there was no power in the City of Oakridge.

Local governments in many parts of the state conducted first response actions that included steps to protect public safety, and local public utility work. Counties and cities implemented emergency plans and activated emergency operations centers. Emergency response actions were performed by medical, police, fire and public works agencies. State and local transportation agencies worked in coordination with critical utilities and local governments to provide residents and travelers with safe passage along severely affected roads. Local government agencies also worked with voluntary organizations to provide much needed shelter and food to people displaced from their homes.

Among the noteworthy assistance provided through voluntary agency efforts were the following:

- The Douglas County and Lane County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs) were both active during the event. In addition to coordinating voluntary organization efforts in their communities, many welfare checks were performed. All told, efforts organized by these COADs included more than 1,700 hours of volunteer efforts.

- The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief organization provided approximately 750 meals in Oakridge (Lane County) and 150 in Drain (Douglas County), provided a laundry and showers in Elkton (Douglas); all told they provided almost 500 hours of volunteer effort.

- Team Rubicon deployed 26 volunteers to Lane County, contributing almost 1,000 hours of work, saving communities an estimated $30,000 in costs. This included chainsaw crews for downed trees, which resulted in more than five miles of county roads being cleared to allow for utility, communications, and emergency access. They also cleared ice and snow at homes occupied by elderly residents, and from two rural fire departments.

- For two weeks, a church affiliated with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) operated a warming shelter in Veneta (Lane County) that included more than 200 overnight stays, over 500 meals, and also provided clothing, electronic device charging stations, and an Internet connection.

- American Red Cross assistance in this event may be summarized as follows:
  - Managed a total of five shelters with 170 overnight stays; the final shelter closed on March 13
Number of mental health contacts made: 102
Number of ARC cases open and closed: 1
Number of clean up kits provided: 0
Number of meals served: 2018
Number of fixed or mobile feeding sites: 0 - feeding occurred at shelters
Level of ARC operation (I-V): II
More specifically, ARC staff and volunteers logged 1,525 hours in Douglas County supporting the following activities:

- The Winston shelter was open from February 25 to March 1;
- The Elkton shelter was open from March 2 to March 13;
- Supported independent shelters in Sutherlin at Looking Glass Grange,
  and in Yoncalla with cots and supplies; and
- Drinking water was provided for distribution in Drain on March 2.

Local governments also operated several shelters.

A joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) was conducted for Public Assistance (PA) on April 8 through April 12, 2019 with an approved time extension to make this declaration request provided by the Associate Administrator of FEMA’s Office of Response and Recovery, Jeff Byard, to April 21, 2019. The joint PDA was conducted in the following five counties: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jefferson, and Lane.

The following information provides examples of the nature and amount of state and local government resources that have been used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster:

- The *State Emergency Operations Plan* was executed on February 26, 2019 and the State Emergency Coordination Center (State ECC) was activated in order to coordinate support to and communication with local governments and responding state agencies.

- I declared a statewide emergency on February 28, 2019 via Executive Order No. 19-02 to support identified needs as a direct result of this event.

- Several shelters were opened in Douglas and Lane counties, primarily by local governments with help from the American Red Cross, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, and the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

- Local public works and Oregon Department of Transportation responded using state and local resources through mutual aid agreements, in an effort to keep roads clear, open, and safe for the traveling public and gaining access to communication tower sites for repairs and/or fuel for generators.

- Mutual Aid was utilized to provide emergency management assistance to local emergency operations centers.

- Local public utility crews worked tirelessly to restore power.
Mutual aid assistance was requested and received from the public utilities in Douglas and Lane counties to support their efforts on getting power restored to their customers.

To ensure a full assessment of damage, costs, and impacts, the Oregon Military Department, Office of Emergency Management (OEM) reached out to each of Oregon’s local emergency management agencies, as well as its nine federally recognized Tribes.

While Oregon had no other major disaster declarations during the past year, we did have six fires declared by FEMA under the Fire Management Assistance Grant Program (FMAGP), and six corresponding FMAGP-Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) awards to support post-wildfire mitigation activities. I issued nine Conflagration declarations last summer for wildfires. I also issued a statewide State of Emergency declaration due to wildfires. The state is still very much in the process of recovering from the wildfires last summer. We are actively engaged in efforts to minimize flooding in and below burned areas if we receive a heavy rain or rain-on-snow event in those areas. We are also currently actively engaged in assisting 12 counties and two Tribes with responding to and recovery from flooding that occurred last week, including four out of the five counties included in this major disaster declaration request.

Cost estimates and percentages for each category of the total eligible Public Assistance are shown in Enclosure B to this letter. In summary, Public Assistance assessed during the PDA across the five counties comprising this request included the following approximate dollar estimates organized by PA category: A ($4,934,072), B ($601,360), C ($719,137), E ($474,365), F ($23,124,453), and G ($175,556), totaling an estimated $30,028,943.

The reported and surveyed damage for insurable facilities under PA Category E (buildings, contents, and equipment) is $3,828,000. The PA Joint PDA indicated that the most severe impacts were damages to public utilities, roads, culverts, debris removal, and emergency protective measures that were implemented by local governments. The insurance coverage of such costs and damages is very limited.

The following counties appear to meet FEMA’s intent for the term “extremely high Public Assistance per capita”: Curry ($40.10), Lane ($49.30 per capita) and Douglas ($103.71 per capita).

Estimated assistance that has been or is likely to be provided by federal agencies other than FEMA are shown in Enclosure C to this letter.

I appreciate your consideration of this request in support of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown
Enclosures
1. OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
   A: Estimated Requirements for Individual Assistance [N/A - not used as part of this request]
   B: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance
   C: Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs
   D. Historic and Current Snowfall Data [N/A - not used as part of this request]