

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 14, 2020

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We strongly support Governor Brown's request on September 14, 2020 for an expedited Major Disaster declaration for the State of Oregon in response to the devastating wildfires burning across the state, which are also significantly impacting the lands and resources of several federally recognized tribes. Given the catastrophic nature of these wildfires, the limited accessibility to assess damages, and the ongoing emergency response, we urge you to expedite the declaration pursuant to Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and make Federal assistance available to support the State, including Public Assistance for Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Deschutes, Douglas, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook, Umatilla, Wasco, Washington, and Yamhill counties and Individual Assistance for Clackamas, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, and Marion counties. As more information becomes available, more counties may require access to either Public Assistance or Individual Assistance.

Oregon is facing its worst drought in nearly 30 years, which has resulted in some of the driest forest conditions on record. On the afternoon of September 7, 2020, a windstorm, with winds up to 50 mph and gusts of 60 mph, moved into the region from the east. These winds, mixed with dry fuel loads, exploded existing fires and caught many communities by surprise. Tens of thousands of Oregonians were forced to flee from their communities in the early morning hours of September 8, and it is unclear when they will be able to return home.

In addition, strong winds have downed power lines, starting new fires that have quickly spread, and have already destroyed more than 1,000 structures, including homes and businesses. This year, more than 1 million acres of land in Oregon have been burned, and at least ten Oregonians have tragically lost their lives to the fires, with the death toll expected to increase. For comparison, an average total area of approximately 500,000 acres have burned each year of the last decade during a typical fire season. Over the past several days, the state has been focusing its resources on saving lives and protecting property. Fortunately, recent changes in weather patterns have allowed the state to finally start containing some fires while maintaining its focus on defending life and property.

Governor Brown has determined that the severity of the wildfires is beyond the capabilities of the State. The number and scale of fires burning across Oregon's landscape at the moment are catastrophic and unprecedented, and urgent action is necessary. We thank you in advance for your expedited review and approval of the Governor's request for a Major Disaster declaration.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

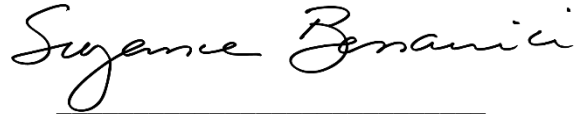


Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress