



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 11, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United State Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On November 12, 2018, the President of the United States declared a major disaster in the State of California (DR-4407), as a result of the wildfires that began on November 8, 2018. These wildfires included the Camp Fire in Butte County, which was the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in the history of the state. The Camp Fire decimated the Town of Paradise, tragically claiming 85 lives and destroying an estimated 90 percent of the town. This included over 18,000 structures, of which more than 14,000 were residences, as well as a significant portion of the town's critical infrastructure. Further, the Camp Fire severely impacted unincorporated areas of rural character within Butte County surrounding the Town of Paradise, including Concow and Magalia.

Based on the United States 2010 Census data, the population of the Town of Paradise prior to the fire was estimated to be 26,800. However, as a result of the Camp Fire's destruction, a significant majority of the town's residents no longer reside in Paradise. On April 23-25, 2019, the Paradise Irrigation District conducted a door-to-door survey of standing homes in the Town of Paradise following the Camp Fire. The survey revealed 1,220 standing structures with a total of 2,034 occupants.

Additionally, the United States 2010 Census data revealed pre-fire populations of 710 and 11,310 for Concow and Magalia, respectively. The Camp Fire destroyed 2,158 homes within Magalia, which resulted in a significant decrease in population.

On June 6, 2019, Congress passed H.R. 2157 - Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act. Section 108 of this bill states:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any rural community impacted by major declared disaster DR-4407 may have the governor in the affected state, or the governor's designee, certify

the area's population as a rural area with respect to eligibility for loans, grants, and technical assistance under rural development programs funded by the Department of Agriculture until data from the 2020 United States Census is available: [provided that] such amount is designated by the Congress as being for an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

As a result of the widespread destruction inflicted by the Camp Fire upon the Town of Paradise and surrounding unincorporated areas of Butte County, I hereby certify these areas "rural areas" with respect to eligibility for assistance under the rural development programs funded by the USDA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gavin Newsom", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gavin Newsom
Governor of California