



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 23, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Robert J. Fenton, Jr.  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region IX  
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200  
Oakland, California 94607-4052

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 implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster in Lassen, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity counties due to wildfires burning across northern California that ignited and spread, or drastically expanded, during a severe wind event several weeks ago and continue to burn. Among these is the Dixie Fire, the largest single fire in California history, which has burned 725,821 acres to date and tragically destroyed the Town of Greenville in Plumas County. In addition, the Antelope, McFarland, Monument, and River Fires collectively have burned over 1,000,000 acres. Due to the catastrophic nature of these wildfires, I request that you expedite this declaration without the need for completed preliminary damage assessments pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.33(d).

These wildfires warrant expedited assistance. They are actively burning, limiting officials' ability to conduct a complete damage assessment. Based on what we

know already, however, these fires have impacted multiple communities, including some with substantial vulnerable and senior populations. Thousands of residents have been evacuated; entire towns, communities, and economies have been impacted; more than 1,600 structures have already been reported as destroyed, including nearly 1,000 homes (numbers that are expected to increase as areas become accessible and safe to assess); and multiple watersheds are likely to be contaminated with toxic runoff, endangering community water supply, agriculture, and wildlife. The need for assistance is paramount and cannot be delayed for the weeks or even months that assessments may take while fires continue to burn. The communities and affected populations cannot wait for the fires to be contained and formal assessments completed before receiving the Individual and Public Assistance they desperately require.

These fires are not the only ones burning in the State. Currently, active fires have burned more than 1.5 million acres, and this acreage continues to increase each day. There are currently more than 13,000 responders in California engaged in battling fires throughout the State, supporting communities, and managing evacuation centers, all dividing and significantly straining response resources.

## **INCIDENT OVERVIEW**

Critical fire weather in late July 2021 through early August 2021, coupled with California's exceptional drought conditions, greatly accelerated the spread of existing fires, and led to the ignition and rapid spread of new fires in northern California.<sup>1</sup> All of the counties impacted by this event are also named in my May 10, 2021 State of Emergency for drought.

Red Flag Warnings were in effect from July 29 through August 5, 2021 due to gusty and erratic winds combined with high temperatures and extremely low daytime humidity. During this critical fire weather event, the Antelope, McFarland, Monument, and River Fires were bolstered by wind gusts of up to 45 miles per hour, which fueled their swift expansion despite the heroic efforts of firefighters. The spread of the River Fire during this period prompted the full evacuation of Colfax, a city of nearly 2,000 people in Placer County. Simultaneously, these windy conditions caused the existing Dixie Fire to explode, growing by more than 158,000 acres from August 4 through 6, 2021, tragically razing the entire town of Greenville in Plumas County.

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<sup>1</sup> Enclosure: California Fire Weather Events July through Early August 2021, National Weather Service

Erratic and dangerous fire behavior and hazardous air quality persist across the impacted counties, presenting immediate life safety threats that make conducting preliminary damage assessments impossible. Limited initial damage inspections have revealed significant destruction of private homes, public facilities, and critical infrastructure, and state and local governments have already incurred considerable costs to save lives and preserve public health and safety. Furthermore, due to the size of these fires and current levels of containment, they will continue to burn for some time, causing further significant impacts to the State and to the affected local jurisdictions and requiring recovery efforts beyond the State's capabilities.

While the weather conditions within which these fires exploded in size were acute, they cannot be viewed in a vacuum. California is currently experiencing its third driest year on record and is actively under siege by historic wildfires and unprecedented fire weather conditions. The impacts of climate change have never been more apparent. With statewide rainfall totals less than 50 percent of average and snowpack levels peaking at 70 percent of average, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) has classified 47.1 percent of California as experiencing exceptional drought conditions – the most severe category.<sup>2</sup> According to NIDIS, exceptional droughts lead to extensive and very costly fire seasons as excess forest mortality occurs and natural water resources evaporate. Similarly, the National Interagency Fire Center forecasted above-normal conditions for significant wildland fire potential across much of the state throughout the month of August, suggesting an ongoing threat to lives, private property, and critical infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

Specifically, prolonged periods of record-breaking temperatures, high winds, and low relative humidity have resulted in numerous Heat Advisories, Excessive Heat Warnings, Fire Weather Watches, and Red Flag Warnings issued by the National Weather Service early in our fire season. Consequently, the fuel moisture of live trees is lower than kiln-dried wood found in a hardware store.<sup>4</sup> These extreme weather conditions have fueled, and will continue to fuel, the explosive growth of fires across California, that already have burned more than

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<sup>2</sup> <https://water.ca.gov/News/News-Releases/2021/April-21/Statewide-Snowpack-Well-Below-Normal-as-Wet-Season-Winds-Down>; <https://www.drought.gov/states/california>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weather.gov/fire/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/business-science-fires-environment-and-nature-california-5d1fd7d8883b04f641f7ee28f45c2bfa>

1,570,151 acres as of August 23, 2021. The current situation in California is dire; 460,074 more acres have burned this year than the same period in the historic 2020 wildfire season – a 42 percent increase.

The response and recovery efforts for these fires are, and will continue to be, uniquely challenging. Due to the catastrophic nature and erratic behavior of these wildfires, responding to the relentless event requires a massive firefighting effort. Even before the rapid expansion and ignition of the subject fires, there were several other large firefights occurring in Northern California in response to the Lava, Beckwourth, and Tamarack fires.

### Dixie Fire

The Dixie Fire---the largest single fire in California history--- in Lassen, Plumas, and Tehama Counties has burned over 725,821 acres to date and is only 40 percent contained.

Initial damage reports are limited due to unpredictable fire behavior and life safety concerns; however, it has been confirmed that the Dixie Fire has destroyed more than 1,200 structures thus far, including more than 665 homes. The fire continues to threaten numerous communities across Lassen, Plumas, and Tehama Counties, with an estimated 6,753 residents under mandatory evacuation orders and thousands more that have received voluntary notices.

Notably, this fire tragically destroyed most of the historic town of Greenville, which, until August 5, 2021, was a well-preserved example of the state's Gold Rush era. Today, nearly 75 percent of this quaint Plumas County community of 817 people has been reduced to smoldering rubble. Downtown Greenville, formerly full of small businesses vital to the local economy, had nearly two dozen mid-19th century structures destroyed and ultimately erased as historic tourist destinations. Critical community resources, including the Plumas County Sheriff substation, the fire station, and a fire engine, were also destroyed. Known cultural resources and historic features that have been destroyed include the Cy-Hall Memorial Museum, a circa-1877 building with exhibits depicting Indian Valley's pioneer families; the Sierra Lodge, a 1930's historic hotel; and the Greenville Public Library. Unfortunately, as 40 percent of the Plumas County economy is based on tourism and with the foundation of Greenville's local economy destroyed, the path to recovery for the survivors will be insurmountable without supplemental federal assistance.

Immediate threats in Lassen County include Susanville, a city of nearly 18,000 people, and Westwood, a town of more than 1,600 people. In Plumas County,

firefighters are heroically defending Chester, a town of 2,144 people that is also home to many outdoor activities, including Lake Almanor, United States Forest Service trails and campgrounds, and a Boy Scouts of America camp. In Tehama County, the Dixie Fire is bearing down on the tiny tourist towns of Mill Creek and Mineral near Lassen Peak.

A vast majority of the Dixie Fire burn scar is within the Feather River Watershed, which provides nearly all the water delivered by the California State Water Project (SWP). The SWP consists of a collection of canals, pipelines, reservoirs, and hydroelectric power facilities that delivers clean water to 27 million Californians, 750,000 acres of farmland, and businesses throughout our state. Preliminary assessments of the Feather River Watershed have identified the potential risk for toxic runoff in the Greenville, St. Bernard, and Belden communities. Additionally, steeply sloped topography within the burn area will drastically increase sedimentation rates within the Feather River watershed, as well as contribute to flash flooding and debris flow potential.

#### McFarland Fire

The McFarland Fire in Shasta, Tehama, and Trinity Counties has burned over 118,090 acres to date. At one point the fire was 67 percent contained; however, gusty winds and calamitous fire weather caused the fire to grow, reducing containment to 51 percent in less than 48 hours. Although public and critical infrastructure impacts are unknown, 542 structures have been identified within the fire perimeter. Preliminary assessments of the McFarland Fire have identified potential toxic runoff impacts to the Cottonwood and Beegum Creek watersheds. Beegum Creek is a major tributary to the Middle Fork Cottonwood Creek. The North, Middle, and South forks of Beegum Creek originate in the easternmost portion of the Shasta-Trinity National Forests and converge to form the mainstem of Beegum Creek. Both sediment influx and increased water toxicity could impact the local fish populations and downstream communities.

#### Monument Fire

The Monument Fire in Trinity County has burned over 150,011 acres and is 20 percent contained. Initial damage inspections indicate 31 structures destroyed with over 4,550 structures under threat, including the towns of Junction City, Weaverville, Hayfork, and Douglas City. This includes 400 commercial structures, the Trinity Water System, 40,000 acres of commercial timber land, offices of county fire, sheriff, the California Highway Patrol, and the California Department of Transportation, and major power transmission lines. Further impacts include the Trinity River, which has supported large populations of steelhead and salmon

for thousands of years, some of which are California Fish and Wildlife protected endangered species, such as the spring chinook salmon. The Trinity River is a tributary to the central valley water system that terminates in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Potential post-fire impacts to the watershed include increased sediment rate from the steep topography into the water system, as well as toxic runoff from burned structures. Both sediment influx and increased water toxicity could impact the local fish populations and downstream communities.

### Antelope Fire

The Antelope Fire in Siskiyou County has burned over 66,912 acres to date and is 30 percent contained. More than 250 structures have been identified within the fire perimeter, with limited damage inspections indicating the destruction of 21, including 11 homes. The Antelope Fire burn scar is transected by the north-south oriented Antelope Creek. Preliminary data identifies several groupings of burned structures within proximity to Antelope Creek, which creates toxic runoff into the flowing waterway, threatening wildfire, agriculture, and downstream communities.

### River Fire

The River Fire in Nevada and Placer Counties burned 2,619 acres and is 100 percent contained. Based on joint FEMA-State preliminary damage assessments, 144 structures were destroyed, including 102 homes. The River Fire burn scar is entirely within the Bear River watershed. This watershed provides water for communities as far as Lincoln, approximately 20 miles southwest of the River Fire. There are several water supply infrastructure components within the burn area that are at risk of damage from hazard trees and other vegetative debris. Additionally, the burned area will result in an influx of sediment into the Bear River Watershed, reducing channel capacities and stressing water treatment facilities.

## **RESPONSE OVERVIEW**

As a result of the Dixie Fire, Plumas County proclaimed a local emergency on July 19, 2021, Lassen County on July 21, 2021, and Tehama County on August 10, 2021. As a result of the McFarland Fire, Trinity County proclaimed a local emergency on July 31, 2021. As a result of the Monument Fire, Trinity County proclaimed a local emergency on July 31, 2021. As a result of the Antelope Fire, Siskiyou County proclaimed a local emergency on August 6, 2021.

As a result of the River Fire, Nevada and Placer Counties proclaimed a local emergency on August 5, 2021.

On July 23, 2021, I proclaimed, under the California Emergency Services Act, a State of Emergency in Plumas County due to the Dixie Fire. On August 5, 2021, I proclaimed a State of Emergency in Siskiyou due to the Antelope Fire and in Nevada and Placer counties due to the River Fire. On August 10, 2021, I proclaimed a State of Emergency in Trinity County due to the McFarland and Monument Fires, Tehama County due to the Dixie and McFarland Fires, and Shasta County due to the McFarland Fire. To mitigate the effects of these devastating wildfires, my State of Emergency proclamations provided additional assistance to support local recovery efforts.

My Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) expanded its State Operations Center (SOC) activation on August 4, 2021, to include response to multiple wildfires occurring in the State, even as the SOC has been continuously activated since March 2020 for COVID-19 response activities, wildfires, and the Southern Border humanitarian mission. The State activated its Emergency Plan and deployed all available assets to the wildfires, including local and state mutual aid, as well as mobilizing out-of-state resources. The Inland Regional Emergency Operations Center was also activated as of June 24, 2021 to support the coordination of fire response resources. Additionally, several counties activated their Emergency Operations Center at the county level. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Operations Center is also activated to support statewide wildfire response.

On July 14, 2021, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group raised the Wildfire Preparedness Level (PL) to 5, only the third time in the past 20 years the nation has reached PL 5 by mid-July.

The scope, scale, complexity, and impacts of these fires are enormous. In Northern California, specifically in the counties included in this request, there three simultaneous megafires, a term designated for wildfires larger than 100,000 acres. This is unprecedented. Simultaneously, there are three other major fires larger than 50,000 acres burning out of control at the same time. As of August 22, 2021, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) reported 13,712 personnel, 1,031 engines, 257 hand crews, 337 bulldozers, 344 water tenders, and 87 helicopters assigned to battle and suppress wildfire incidents across the State, with additional fixed-wing aircraft assigned daily. The California National Guard (CNG) has 910 personnel and 133 out-of-state Air National Guard personnel activated for the wildfire firefighting effort. Activated

aircraft include 11 helicopters for fire suppression and medical support, as well as five Modular Airborne Firefighting System aircraft for fire suppression. California has requested 150 engines from neighboring states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and to date has received 22 engines and 26 personnel. Additionally, pre-positioned Cal OES Fire and Rescue and local government mutual aid resources include multiple engines and water tenders.

The State of California has established numerous evacuation centers to serve over 42,531 residents affected by mandatory evacuations. The American Red Cross is currently operating and/or providing support to seven shelters across five counties, with an overnight count of 534 survivors as of August 23, 2021.

## **DISASTER IMPACTED POPULATION PROFILE**

Demographic data from Lassen, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties indicates significant and disproportionate impacts to vulnerable populations, including individuals who are elderly, disabled, medically dependent on electricity, and low income.

Of note, the Plumas County town of Greenville has a poverty rate of 28.8 percent – far above the state and national average – and a median household income of \$26,875.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, as the employment rate was only 46.5 percent pre-disaster, the destruction of much of the vital economic infrastructure suggests that future employment rates will fare even worse.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC's) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), Siskiyou, Lassen, Tehama, and Trinity Counties represent communities with a high level of overall social vulnerability compared to the median across all U.S. counties. These rankings indicate that Siskiyou, Lassen, Tehama, and Trinity Counties may require enhanced support from emergency planners, public health officials, and other State and local agencies when responding to a disaster or emergency. Also, while Nevada, Placer, and Plumas Counties have a relatively low level of overall social vulnerability, they have a high level of vulnerability in the category of Minority Status & Language, meaning that segments of the community may require targeted support to ensure equitable distribution of recovery resources.

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<sup>5</sup> "Census – Geography Profile: Greenville CDP, California." U.S. Census Bureau.  
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=1600000US0631162>



The potential disaster-related unemployment situation in Plumas County is dire, as the pre-disaster economy was heavily dependent on tourism for revenue. The travel, recreation, and tourism industry is the second largest employer in Plumas County. Tourists formerly visited the Gold Rush era town of Greenville and the surrounding Plumas National Forest, infusing the small rural communities with much-needed income. Historically, Greenville's residents relied on employment at local sawmills, which have slowly closed over the decades, contributing to the community's already-economically disadvantaged state. Today, tourism accounts for 40 percent of the local economy, which is significantly inhibited by wildfires in the short term due to evacuation orders and hazardous air quality. In the long term, wildfire impacts of burned acreage and destroyed destinations all but eliminates potential revenue. Further, Lake Almanor is a top tourism destination in Northern California, significantly contributing to the local economy. The Dixie Fire has almost completely surrounded Lake Almanor, which will certainly result in long-term impacts to the region and its economic health.

As California shifts into a recovery phase for the subject fires, the state will continue to face enormous challenges. Based on current information, thousands of residents have been displaced, and many will be left homeless. Plumas County was a relocation destination for at least 68 Camp Fire survivors who established residences in several of the currently impacted areas, leading to compounding economic and emotional damage. Further exacerbating the effect of this disaster many, if not most, survivors will be underinsured or uninsured. Rising costs of materials, and a labor shortage have resulted in significant delays and sometimes insurmountable resource gaps for fire survivors to rebuild.

An analysis of average fire insurance levels<sup>6</sup> in Lassen, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity compared to the estimated total number of homes<sup>7</sup> in the counties reveals a significant shortfall in insurance policies. Of those that are insured, recent research shows that 60 to 80 percent of Californians are underinsured<sup>8</sup> by approximately 20 percent of the costs to

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0200-studies-reports/0250-homeowners-study/upload/C-Policy-Count-by-County-2\\_v1.pdf](http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0200-studies-reports/0250-homeowners-study/upload/C-Policy-Count-by-County-2_v1.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Estimates/e-1/>

<sup>8</sup> Wildfire victims are largely underinsured | Insurance Business :

<https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/us/news/catastrophe/wildfire-victims-are-largely-underinsured-116580.aspx>

rebuild after a fire. California's total exposure for underinsurance is expected to be in the billions of dollars. Exposure to wildfire often results in a total loss of property, and the destruction caused by these catastrophic events represent a financial tragedy for many families. In addition, disruption of family income, combined with the substantial loss in property value, often results in mortgage default. This is particularly the case if homeowners are uninsured or underinsured and cannot afford to rebuild.

## **IMPACT TO COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

### Dixie Fire

Significant impacts occurred to lifesaving, life-sustaining, and essential community services throughout Plumas County due to the ignition and unprecedented growth of the Dixie Fire. The Plumas County Sheriff's Office, overwhelmed with life-saving measures and evacuations over the last three weeks, has utilized state Law Enforcement Mutual Aid resources to support their efforts. Unfortunately, the Sheriff substation in Greenville as well as the Greenville fire station, including a fire engine were destroyed in the blaze, while the Seneca Hospital in Chester, a California Critical Access Hospital, was evacuated for an extended period of time, requiring the relocation of essential services. Further, as communications infrastructure was destroyed, Cal OES provided portable communication equipment, such as Cell on Wheels and Cell on Light Trucks, to minimize disruptions to communications. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads are also experiencing systemwide disruptions due to damaged infrastructure. Initial reports indicate that the Greenville Learning Center is destroyed, and the Greenville Elementary and the Junior/Senior High School have sustained damage, impacting 249 students in the Plumas Unified School District. Additionally, the Greenville Roundhouse, an American Indian Education Center, along with the Sierra Cascade Head Start center, have been destroyed. Other essential community services, such as the Greenville Library and five churches, are also destroyed.

Lassen County experienced power disruptions early in the Dixie Fire when PG&E's transmission line, the primary power source for the county, was damaged. The county's backup power source, Honey Lake Power, also failed causing widespread power outages, and disrupting critical services in Susanville, including the hospital, a skilled nursing facility, an assisted living facility, and its water system. Cal OES assisted Lassen County in obtaining generators to power a shelter established for medically fragile citizens and the assisted living facility.

Power was restored after four days; however, the area remains under voluntary power restrictions to ensure Honey Lake Power remains online.

Throughout all of the counties impacted by the Dixie Fire, road closures disrupted fuel delivery and transport trucks were unable to meet the daily demand. The Dixie Fire is now threatening both Highway 44 and Highway 395, which could have an enormous impact not only on travel, but fuel delivery and power availability. The California Department of Transportation has identified \$87,028,000 in costs due to the Dixie Fire, of which \$43,192,000 is non-Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) eligible costs.

Finally, Lassen County is providing assistance to approximately 250 survivors displaced by the Dixie Fire and continues to support the survivors of the Beckwourth Complex Fire that burned throughout July 2021 and destroyed an estimated 40 homes in the Doyle area.

In Tehama County, Highways 32 and 36 have been closed to non-emergency vehicles for multiple days, disrupting commerce deliveries. Multiple police roadblocks and roving patrols are in place to provide life and property safety of those under the evacuation warnings and orders. Due to fire impacts to transmission lines, the power has been out for many areas of Tehama County for multiple days, causing the loss of food and other perishables.

### River Fire

At the peak of the River Fire, Placer and Nevada Counties had an increased demand for lifesaving and life sustaining services to evacuate and secure over 6,000 homes, staff roadblocks and checkpoints, and conduct structure protection. All local fire stations were activated during this response. The local school district has delayed the start of the school year as facilities are being utilized to support sheltering operations, community meetings, and the local assistance center for disaster survivors.

Electricity and water service were disrupted. Drinking water infrastructure inspections and tests continue, and assessments are underway to ensure hazardous waste and debris is mitigated before it compromises the area's drinking water supply. Placer County is working diligently to repair a sewer lift station damaged during the fire. Additionally, there are concerns of contamination to the Bear River Watershed.

## Antelope Fire

Siskiyou County has experienced the compounding effects of fires throughout the summer. The still burning Lava Fire destroyed 26,409 acres, and the Tennant Fire, which started in early July, prompted the evacuation of the towns of Bray and Tennant and the surrounding areas, ultimately destroying two residences and at least one commercial building near the floor of Butte Valley. With the ignition of the Antelope Fire, the communities of Bray and Tennant were forced to evacuate once again, and local farmers and ranchers worry their livelihoods will be destroyed. Thus far, the Antelope Fire has destroyed 11 homes and numerous outbuildings in the Tennant community, as well as much of the area's summer grazing land.

## Monument Fire

Trinity County anticipates an increase in demand for social services programs, as the Trinity Alps Unified School District has delayed the start of the school year. With school out of session, Adult Protective Services and Child Welfare Services are monitoring for an increase in needs for children and adults.

Trinity County anticipates increased utility disruptions while PG&E continues to prepare power poles in potential threat areas. Trinity Public Utilities District assures it will only disrupt service for those under fire threat and subsequent evacuation.

Currently, crews are actively working to protect critical public safety communications infrastructure.

Furthermore, if the Monument Fire is not suppressed at the Town of Burnt Ranch, officials expect winds and fuel load will drive the fire unchecked through the elderly community of Trinity Village, the towns of Hawkins Bar and Salyer, and cross over into Humboldt County. PG&E reinforced the right of way for its 115-kilovolt transmission line thereby reducing the threat of disruption to western Trinity County and Humboldt County.

Air quality in Trinity County continues to be an issue. The Monument Fire is actively burning in all directions with only very limited containment and with a third fire now pushing its way into the county, the impacts are compounding.

## McFarland Fire

The McFarland Fire has impacted travel along the Highway 36 corridor, an important east/west connection for the coastal region to Red Bluff and

Interstate 5. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest, an integral recreation and tourism locale for the region, remains closed to visitors due to threats to life safety. Similarly, the Harrison Gulch Ranger Station and associated campgrounds are threatened, along with private timberlands, critical wildfire habitats, and power, gas, and communications infrastructure. Local school districts have also delayed the start of the year due to hazardous air quality and unsafe conditions.

In addition, the California Department of Transportation reports these fires have caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to non-FHWA-eligible roads.

Based on the initial reports of damage to eligible public infrastructure, as well as estimated debris removal costs and other response costs, these fires have caused California and its political subdivisions to incur damage well in excess of California's indicator.

## **HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

California continues to recover from multiple, consecutive disasters that received Major Disaster Declarations in recent history. The 2020 wildfires (FEMA-4558-DR-CA and FEMA-4569-DR-CA) were historic events that consumed over 4.2 million acres statewide, destroying over 17,000 structures including over 10,000 homes. Combined, these fires devastated large swaths of arable land and affected crops, including the vital vineyard industries of Napa and Sonoma Counties, forestry operations, and even the homes of agricultural workers – all of which are further impacted by exceptional drought conditions.

Between 2017 and 2019, California received five Major Disaster Declarations that included the February 2019 flooding and mudslides (FEMA-4431-DR-CA and FEMA-4434-DR-CA), the Carr and Mendocino Complex Fires in the Summer of 2018 (FEMA-4382-DR-CA), the Woolsey and Camp Fires in November 2018 (FEMA-4407-DR-CA), and the Thomas Fire and Montecito debris flow (FEMA-4353-DR-CA) in 2017. Collectively, these significant events have claimed lives, destroyed thousands of homes, and disrupted the economic viability of numerous communities across the State, whose long-term recovery will be adversely affected by the ongoing fire siege.

In addition to the recent fires, California is still directing substantial resources to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (FEMA-4482-DR-CA), which has far-reaching impacts statewide. As COVID-19 cases continue to increase due to the Delta variant, the eight counties devastated by the 2021 wildfires have a combined ICU capacity of only 32 beds available.

## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify for this major disaster the state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Stafford Act.

## **CONCLUSION**

In recent years, despite recent investment of billions of dollars on fire prevention and mitigation efforts, the overwhelming challenges of these unprecedented fires continue to expand. Unfortunately, this is the third time in a few short years that northern California communities have been devastated by disaster and revictimized by wildfire. Coupled with the significant impacts to already vulnerable communities and the inevitable loss of homes and critical infrastructure, the Antelope, Dixie, McFarland, Monument, and River Fires will have devastating economic and infrastructure impacts within the affected communities. These wildfires represent another relentless and successive disasters to strike California, coming during the surge of the Delta variant of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and in the immediate aftermath of record-breaking wildfires in 2020.

As discussed, comprehensive preliminary damage assessments are impossible to perform due to inaccessible, unsafe conditions, ongoing life-saving response activities, and because State and local resources being overwhelmed. State and federal officials, however, have visited some of the affected areas, where possible, and observed thousands of private homes either destroyed or with major damage and an enormous amount of public infrastructure damage that officials anticipate will far surpass the State of California's threshold. Given the impacts, including to disadvantaged and senior populations, and the fact these fires have already decimated communities and the Town of Greenville, expedited Individual and Public Assistance is warranted.

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance and all Individual Assistance Programs for Lassen, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties, including the Individuals and Households Program (including Hazard Mitigation), Transitional Sheltering Assistance, Disaster Case Management, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling and Disaster Legal Services, Hazard Mitigation statewide, and any other Stafford Act disaster assistance programs that may be appropriate.

As this disaster progresses, subject to additional programs warranted, I reserve the ability to amend this request for additional federal assistance.

I certify for this major disaster that the state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shared costs as required by the Stafford Act. I have designated the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Mark S. Ghilarducci, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. Mr. Ghilarducci will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in continuing to assess damage and may provide more information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California

Enclosures:

- 2021 Demographics by County
- 2021 Wildfire Social Vulnerability Index
- 2021 Wildfire Acreage and Evacuation Summary
- Stafford Act and State Disaster Declarations for Last 24 Months
- California Fire Weather Events Late July through Early August 2021
- List of Federally Recognized Tribes in California
- OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13