



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
Governor

July 3, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20472

Through: Paul Ford
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 1
99 High Street
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Mr. President:

On May 21, 2014, I submitted a request to declare a major disaster for the State of New Hampshire as a result of a heavy rain event on April 15 and April 16, 2014. The recent notification that the request was denied was disappointing, considering the request clearly met the financial guidelines outlined by FEMA and that the storm was of such severity and magnitude that it exceeded the resources of the communities and the state. I am asking that the denial be reconsidered.

This quick-moving storm produced significant rainfall and was preceded by an unseasonably warm few days that caused rapid melt of the snowpack in the northern New Hampshire counties. This storm caused significant flooding, flash flooding and major road washouts, resulting in tremendous damage to local road infrastructure.

The storm was significant enough to require us to take the following immediate action:

1. The State's Emergency Operations Plan was implemented and the State Emergency Operations Center was activated on April 15, 2014, during this time the Emergency Support Functions were staffed.
2. The NH Department of Transportation responded to a number of state and local road closures to assist locals in barricading roads. The Department of Transportation coordinated efforts throughout the night assisting with infrastructure damage and closures as it overwhelmed the local communities. Many of these road closures were not included in the declaration request as they were flooded for a few days but did not sustain long-term damage.

3. The NH Department of Transportation Bridge Engineering Division provided emergency assessment of the damaged bridge in Columbia and subsequently closed it because severe damage left it unsafe for travel. Additionally, the Department of Transportation provided technical assistance with regard to the temporary bridge installation and related load classification.
4. The NH Department of Environmental Services provided stream monitoring, hydrology reports and dam inspections during and immediately following the weather event.
5. The NH Department of Environmental Services will be providing further assistance to local jurisdictions for stream and river bank failures as well as inspecting failed culverts and water control facilities.

Also worth noting is this damage comes at a time when the State is recovering from damages incurred during two declared disasters in 2013. A blizzard in February 2013 (DR-4105) devastated many communities and resulted in record snowfall levels causing major damage and power outages. A severe rain event in June 2013 (DR-4139) resulted in devastating flooding, loss of life and property throughout the State. Two of the counties included in those declarations are included in this current one. The financial burden for these communities is compounding and exceeded their ability to respond to subsequent storm damages. The northern New Hampshire communities that are continuously hit by these weather events are rural and small in nature with little to no business tax base. Three of the seven towns have fewer than 800 residences.

The consistent damage to their infrastructure weighs heavily on these small towns, which have a minimum of paid staff and rely heavily on volunteer emergency services. Frequently their volunteer elected officials complete basic assessments and provide paperwork.

Two counties in the northern part of New Hampshire experienced heavy damage to their local roads and, in one case, a bridge. While this storm appears to be small in the eyes of those who do not live in a small rural community, the financial and operational impact to these small communities is going to be tremendous.

Of particular concern is the damaged bridge in Columbia, NH which spans Lymann Brook. The Town of Columbia has no financial means to replace this bridge in the near future. This bridge was closed by the NH Department of Transportation (NH DOT) on April 17, 2014 following a request by the Board of Selectman to inspect it. The bridge was found to be heavily damaged and in need of complete replacement. The loss of this bridge caused total isolation for the many residences living on the other side. The bridge is the only means in and out of this neighborhood. School buses and emergency vehicles must be able to get in and out of this area in order to provide these residents with basic services such as a public education and emergency services.

The Town of Columbia has very little flexibility within their day-to-day budget. The members of the Board of Selectmen stated that they had to delay payments to the regional school

District so they could arrange for the delivery of the temporary bridge. The rental fee for this bridge alone will devastate the town financially.

The Town of Columbia has already inquired as to whether or not they could qualify for a bond to help offset these unforeseen expenses in light of this denial. The NH Department of Revenue Administration has indicated Columbia, with its modest tax base, may not qualify for such a large bond.

The State of NH DOT Local Bridge Aid Program cannot take on this large bridge replacement at this time, without a devastating impact to its overall bridge repair and replacement program. Despite a recent increase in the state road toll and an increase in funding for bridge repair, New Hampshire has 140 red listed bridges. Currently, the NH Department of Transportation is working on approximately 20 bridges in State fiscal year 2014. The wait list for the Local Bridge Aid Program is 10 years. Communities have patiently awaited their turn to get their local bridges repaired or upgraded. Adding this bridge replacement to an already burdened bridge aid system will cause great strain, risk public safety and is and is not possible.

The Town of Conway experienced a major culvert failure which has left several large commercial farms, a commercial gravel pit and neighborhoods without adequate access for commercial vehicles. The town was forced to install a temporary bridge, which cannot support commercial, farm or construction vehicles. These businesses must now travel around the affected area, which requires them to obtain oversized transport permits from the State, as well as requiring them to obtain an escort from two States (the road borders Fryeburg, Maine). This is very damaging on the community and businesses; several farms are unable to efficiently access their property with heavy farm equipment, the local gravel distributor is also denied access to its property and these businesses must coordinate for escorts when they need to access their properties further impacting public safety resources.

The Town of Conway does not have funding for this project in their 2014 budget and will have to incur the expense of the temporary bridge and the required bridge maintenance. This will have a devastating impact on the second crop planting. If the town cannot open this route up for these commercial vehicles in time for next year, the economic impact to the farmers is direct loss of revenue. In addition Conway is a thoroughfare to the State's scenic North Country. If the Town of Conway cannot repair their road and bridge damage or has to divert funds (if it was possible) to this project from projects that are critical to our State's tourism then the entire region will be adversely affected in a way that is hard to measure.

Once again I would like to point out that The Federal Emergency Management Agency, the New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and local communities conducted a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) which was initiated on May 12, 2014 to determine the extent of the storm's impact. As demonstrated in the Public Assistance Enclosures, the State threshold is expected to exceed \$1.39 per capita. Current State and local FEMA-verified assessments exceed \$1,900,000.00 in costs associated with this event. These counties include Carroll (\$3.91) and Coos (\$54.49). This clearly exceeds the required and

Published thresholds needed to receive federal assistance.

I continue to stand by my assessment, pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.36, that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of New Hampshire and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives and to protect property, public health and safety.

We respectfully request a reconsideration of your decision and ask that you declare a major disaster in Coos and Carroll County, New Hampshire.

Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor