

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 2024

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write in support of the State of North Dakota's request for a presidential major disaster declaration submitted by Governor Doug Burgum on November 21, 2024. The major disaster declaration is being requested due to straight-line winds and historic wildfires that occurred on October 5-6, 2024, in McKenzie and Williams counties. We appreciate your consideration of the State's request for assistance.

In the lead-up to the wildfires, much of western North Dakota was suffering from severe or extreme drought. These conditions, coupled with straight-line winds on October 5-6, resulted in multiple wildfires across northwestern and central North Dakota and required an immediate local, state, and federal response. In fact, on October 6, 2024, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 8 declared two Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) for the Elk Horn and Bear Den Fires, the first FMAGs ever approved in the state. Tragically, the Ray, Alamo, and Tioga Fire that broke out in Williams County took the lives of two people and injured 8 others.

Due to the challenging topography of western North Dakota, limited road access required the use of National Guard Black Hawk helicopters, National Forest Service tankers, and Bureau of Indian Affairs coordination for the use of two Super Scooper aircraft. Nearly 150,000 gallons of water from nearby Lake Sakakawea were used to contain the fires, which burned approximately 120,000 acres of land and resulted in excess of \$8 million in damages.

While North Dakotans are extremely resilient, these historic wildfires have deeply impacted the agricultural community and electrical infrastructure. The loss of livestock, structures, equipment, and the destruction of shelterbelts and windbreaks will take years to recover from. We are immensely grateful for the first responders, farmers and ranchers, as well as the local, state, tribal, and federal agencies who swiftly responded to these wildfires, and prevented further loss of life and property.

The counties of Mountrail, Ward, Dunn, and Oliver were also impacted by this disaster event, but did not meet the per-capita impact thresholds required for a major disaster declaration. In line with previous requests, North Dakota is also requesting to be designated as a Public Assistance Managing State, and that the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program be implemented on a state-wide basis.

We support the State's request and urge you to approve it as soon as possible so the necessary Federal resources can be made available to North Dakotans. Thank you for your prompt attention to our request, and do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



John Hoeven
U.S. Senator



Kevin Cramer
U.S. Senator



Kelly Armstrong
U.S. Congressman