



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

August 7, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue North West
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through:

James K. Joseph, Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region V
536 South Clark Street, Floor 6
Chicago, Illinois 60605

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 you declare a major disaster for the State of Minnesota as a result of severe thunderstorms with heavy rain, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding statewide during the period of June 15 through July 12, 2018.

The early summer of 2018 was exceptionally stormy and rainy in Minnesota. Starting in early June and running through mid-July, a stubborn weather pattern settled over the state consisting of an unusually warm and humid air mass, combined with repetitive pressures troughs and surface fronts moving from west to east across the state. Parts of the state received as much as 400 percent of normal rainfall during that period. The system repeatedly generated severe storms every 24 to 72 hours that produced deluge rains, strong winds, tornadoes, and flooding. Nationally, meteorologists referred to the hot, humid, high pressure ridge that kept this pattern in place over Minnesota for nearly a month as a “ring of fire.”

This incident started on June 15 with three days of heavy precipitation falling over 70% of the state that dropped 6 to 10 inches of rain locally. Northeast Minnesota took the brunt of that wave and on June 17 Minnesotans saw dramatic images of the State Highway 23 Bridge washout, cutting off the town of Holyoke and forcing residents to take a 30-mile detour. These initial widespread rains set the stage for major flooding in the coming weeks by filling streams and rivers and saturating the soils.

Although storms continued firing up nearly every day, a series of particularly violent thunderstorms moved across northern Minnesota on June 28-29. That round of storms generated derecho winds of more than 80 miles per hour that caused extensive damage to trees, powerlines, and structures.

Thunderstorms produced massive rainfall amounts across southwest Minnesota on July 3. Trained observers in the city of Wabasso in Redwood County recorded 10.5 inches of rain during the day. Many rivers in southern Minnesota rapidly rose above flood stage, some of them doing so two or three different times, as waves of heavy rains persisted across the region. On July 6, the Cottonwood River at Lamberton rose 10 feet in a matter of hours to a record level of 19.85 feet. A number of rivers reached major flood stage and some broke record levels. A least one gauged river was in major flood stage on July 11.

The system delivered one last punch to the state when another heavy rainstorm hit northcentral Minnesota late on July 11. That storm moved south and continued dropping rain on east central Minnesota into the early morning hours of July 12. Kanabec County was the bullseye for that storm, where 7.5 inches of rain over a six hour period. The deluge drove the Snake River well out of its banks and caused Lake Mora to flood in the city of Mora. Minnesota Highway 65 overtopped with water and was closed for days. After that storm cleared out, this destructive weather pattern was finally broken.

In response to earlier storms, the Minnesota Emergency Operations Plan was implemented on June 12. Our state emergency operations center became operational that same day and remained activated until July 16. On July 5, I issued an emergency executive order declaring a peacetime state of emergency in Minnesota. In the end, this event significantly affected one-third of the counties across our state.

A preliminary damage assessment (PDA) conducted jointly by FEMA and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, along with tribal and county emergency managers was completed July 19-31. The time it took to conduct the PDA is indicative of the widespread damage and major impacts the state sustained from mid-June to mid-July.

The teams completed Public Assistance (PA) program PDAs for 29 counties and three tribal nations. Damage surveys provided visual observation of the extent of debris, emergency protective measures, and public infrastructure damage and verified \$21,755,330 in eligible damages, compared to Minnesota's statewide damage indicator of \$7,743,730.50.

Murray County was hardest hit with per capita losses of \$222.23. Eleven other counties recorded per capita losses exceeding \$36.80, or more than ten times the FEMA county multiplier.

Regrettably, the FEMA PDA team would not include Kanabec County in the final Table A-1, Summary of Eligible Public Assistance, because those damages occurred on July 12, one day outside the informal incident period the teams were working with. I strenuously object to that exclusion because the storm that impacted Kanabec County formed to the north on July 11 and dropped deluge rains during the early morning of July 12 – a time gap of a mere four hours. The damages suffered by that county are clearly connected to the overall event and resulted in per capita losses of \$48.66. I respectfully ask you establish the incident period through July 12 and include Kanabec County, using the following data gathered by the joint federal-state PDA team. The addition of the county and its eligible damages increases the state's total of Table A-1 to \$22,818,360.

County	Emergency Work		Permanent Work					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Kanabec	\$ 0	\$205,447	\$560,635	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$15,237	\$8,849	\$790,168

Some representative highlights of the damages sustained in Minnesota, by category of work, include:

Category A – Debris clearance was a major issue in Redwood County. The county is partner in a local government-owned rail line that provides transportation for agricultural commodities. The rains triggered landslides onto portions of the railway that had to be cleared away to restore local commerce. The cost for debris removal in Redwood County is \$5.96 per capita.

Category B – Significant emergency protective measures were taken, including building temporary flood defenses, pumping, staffing road barricades, and conducting search and rescue operations. In the Lake Shetek area of Murray County, responders used boats and high-clearance vehicles to rescue residents and campers from flooded areas and maintain emergency services. The per capita costs for this category in Murray County are \$17.21.

Category C – Roads and bridges account for 43% of the state’s verified damages, totaling \$9,350,089. Most of that damage is to township gravel roads. These local roadways are critical to the vitality of the agricultural, forestry, and tourism industries in the impacted areas. Road damage in Murray County is \$149.76 per capita.

Category D – County-maintained drainage ditches are critical water control facilities in the farming country of southern Minnesota. In Martin County, damages for this category are \$28.68 per capita.

Category E – Thankfully, public buildings were minimally affected, but the city of Madelia sustained major damage to the structure that houses its lift station, contributing to Watonwan County’s \$12.62 per capita in this category.

Category F – The severe thunderstorm that hit northwest Minnesota in late June packed straight-line winds in excess of 80 mph that toppled 12.5 miles rural electric cooperative transmission lines and 69 steel towers. Power in that part of the state was out for as long as five days. The costs for utilities damages are \$163.19 per capita in Polk County.

Category G – Many parks and recreation areas were damaged during this event. The public golf course in Madelia was completely inundated by floodwaters, causing an estimated \$184,000 of damage. The cost for this category in Watonwan County is \$12.80.

Despite all the challenges, Minnesotans rose to the occasion and helped each other get through the response phase of the incident and are now working together on recovery. Our voluntary organizations provided meals, drinking water, clean-up kits, home cleanup support and minor repairs, and other assistance to victims for a total of more than 1,100 volunteer hours, so far. When local emergency managers were overwhelmed, their colleagues across the state provided help with getting emergency operations center up and running. As always, neighbors helped neighbors and whole communities responded to fill sandbags and build temporary flood defenses in communities like Windom in Cottonwood County.

The State of Minnesota needs federal assistance to recover from this natural disaster. We continue working to closeout five open Stafford Act disasters. In 2014, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill creating a state-funded account for public disaster assistance when federal aid is not available. I signed that bill into law. Since its enactment, I have authorized state disaster assistance for 28 incidents, providing more than \$22,500,000 in state-funded disaster relief to county, city, township, and tribal governments.

Minnesota's most recent federal disaster, FEMA-4290-DR, was declared in November 2016. Since that event, I have authorized state disaster assistance 15 times to help communities in 21 counties. The State of Minnesota has borne a heavy share of disaster costs on its own in 2017 and 2018. With this unrelenting series of severe summer storms, we now need help from the federal government.

Disaster assistance allowed for under the Stafford Act is clearly warranted. Without it, and given the already heavy burden of previous state and federal disasters, Minnesotans will struggle to return their communities to normalcy. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Mark Dayton
Governor

cc: Commissioner Mona Dohman, Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Director Joe Kelly, Minnesota Division of Homeland Security & Emergency
Management

Attached: FEMA Form 010-0-13, with Enclosure B – Public Assistance