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October 11, 2016

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

Through: Regional Administrator Andrew Velasquez III
FEMA Region V
536 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605-1521

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 § Major Disaster citation (206.36), I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Wisconsin as a result of the heavy rains and flash flooding during the period of September 21-22, 2016, with flooding through September 29, 2016. This request encompasses the counties of Adams, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, Lacrosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau and Vernon.

Beginning on Wednesday, September 21 and extending through Thursday, September 22, 2016, multiple rounds of severe thunderstorms impacted much of west central through southwestern Wisconsin. During this two day period, the area received over ten inches of precipitation; the heaviest rains resulted in flash flooding throughout the evening hours. Since the area experienced saturated soils and vegetative conditions due to high rainfalls over the preceding month, stream, riverine, and urban flooding developed faster than normal, resulting in mudslides, washouts, and flooding on roadways.

The result was widespread flash flooding across the region, causing numerous road closures, including the multiple-day closure of State Highway 35, a major transportation corridor along the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin. Closing main roads at this time was especially troubling, since these storms and resulting road closures coincided with a peak tourism weekend in western and central Wisconsin.

Tragically, this event included the loss of two lives in Vernon County. On September 22, 2016, a man died after a mudslide swept down a hill and destroyed his home while he was inside. A second man died on September 23, 2016, while pulling a horse trailer with his pickup truck; he drowned after swiftly moving water on top of a road surface swept his vehicle downstream.

Immediately following the storm, many volunteer organizations and private sector partners assisted residents impacted by the rainstorm and flooding. The American Red Cross opened and managed a

Multi-Agency Resource Center, provided direct assistance to flood-impacted households, and compiled a list of health services contacts for residents. The American Red Cross also distributed recovery booklets, clean-up kits, comfort/hygiene kits, bulk items such as shovels and work gloves, and served thousands of meals and snacks to people impacted by flooding as well as relief workers. In addition to the American Red Cross response, volunteers from local fire departments, spontaneous volunteers, and Team Rubicon, assisted residents in the affected areas.

On September 22, 2016, I issued Executive Order #215, proclaiming that a State of Emergency existed in Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Columbia, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Sauk, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties. In this Order, I directed all state agencies to assist those counties as appropriate to support response and recovery efforts. Locally, Adams, Buffalo, Clark, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, Richland, and Vernon counties declared states of emergency by September 24, 2016, along with a number of municipalities.

Ongoing disaster recovery efforts to this weather event revealed that this weather event severely impacted additional counties. On September 30, 2016, I issued Executive Order #216 to amend my previous declaration, in order to add Adams County to the State of Emergency proclamation. On October 11, 2016, I issued Executive Order # 217 to amend my previous declaration and to include Juneau County.

This event and the resulting damage created significant negative impacts on the residents and communities of the area. Communities and agencies closed state highways, county highways, and local roads that the storms inundated with water and debris. The storms washed out and severely damaged many culverts and bridges throughout the area, resulting in long detour routes for residents and trucking industry firms and employees. Highway crews continue to implement road closures, make temporary road repairs, and removing debris. School districts closed schools due to access challenges for bus companies transporting students and staff attempting to come to work.

This event impacted over 485 homes and left behind tens of millions of dollars in public sector damage. Both the initial storm and the flooded rivers through September 29, 2016 caused excessive road damage and generated large amounts of debris. For many of these counties, this was the fourth major storm and flood event since June 2016, resulting in intensified stresses for citizens and local emergency response efforts.

Communities rescheduled tourism events or operated with significant drops in attendance, creating losses for tourism revenues in these areas. One Crawford County community, Gays Mills, rescheduled its biggest event of the year: Applefest. Hosted annually, Applefest brings in significant economic spending to the whole area; a change of date adversely impacts village revenues. Another major event occurring in Monroe County, the annual Cranberry Festival, typically brings approximately 100,000 visitors countywide. With widespread road closures throughout the county from flash flooding impacts, the estimated attendance was reduced by 40% from previous years. In a typical year, Monroe County receives a \$4 million boost in economic revenues thanks to hundreds of thousands of visitors filling hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, stores and gas stations. A 40% drop in attendance equates to a direct loss of \$1.6 million to the local economy of Monroe County. Notwithstanding the severe storm damage in west central and southwest Wisconsin, the resiliency of the affected communities is apparent and they continue to welcome visitors

Annually, visitors travel to west central and southwest Wisconsin to camp, hike, ride All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and bicycle across the thousands of miles of local, county, and state park trails and

roads. Although repairs are underway throughout the region, damages and closures to roads and trails occurred during prime fall weekend recreation season, resulting in a significant negative impact on local economies.

Of the twelve counties impacted during this weather event, three in particular – Clark, Crawford and Vernon – sustained the most severe damages. The following impact statements provide an overview of the damages they have experienced from this event:

Clark County

Clark County relies heavily on the economic impact of tourism and recreation. Closures of boat landings and ATV trails resulted in an impact on tourism dollars that is yet to be determined. The County closed boat landings, forest roads and ATV trails because of damage and concerns about dangerous conditions and accessibility. Damaged or missing boat barriers on Lake Arbutus remain unplaced.

Municipalities experienced major damages: road surface damage, shoulder and embankment washouts, and culvert washouts. During the worst conditions, over 100 locations had water over the roadway, washouts or road closures due to the flooding. Preliminary cost estimates for public sector impacts of the storm are approximately \$1,253,000.00.

Crawford County

Over 60 residential homes reported damages in excess of \$1,475,000, including two destroyed and eleven homes with major damages. Three school districts canceled at least one day of classes from the communitywide impacts. Eight out of ten Villages in Crawford County were affected by the flash flooding, with estimated damages totaling \$1,014,950. All eleven Townships in Crawford County experienced an estimated \$2,013,000 in damages.

A bridge belonging to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad washed out, which led to a derailment along State Highway 35 and a spill of 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel into the Mississippi River.

Vernon County

Sadly, Vernon County suffered two fatalities from this event. The loss of life carries a heavy toll on the survivors. 185 of the 485 impacted homes in the state were in Vernon County: 27 destroyed homes and ten with major damages, with the residents of Bluffview Mobile Home Park in De Soto suffering the most from this flood event. Three school districts remained closed for two days.

The 86th annual Viola horse and Colt Show was cancelled this year. Lost revenue from the cancellation had a direct impact on the community businesses along with student clubs in the Kickapoo School.

On September 30, 2016, I requested a joint federal, state, and local survey of the damaged areas. FEMA, Wisconsin Emergency Management, and local officials conducted a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) for Public Assistance (PA) during the period October 4-8, 2016. Teams surveyed damages to the public sector in Adams, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, Lacrosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties. We greatly appreciate the three assessment teams, external affairs personnel, and support staff that FEMA provided to conduct the PDAs.

As previously stated, the flooding resulted in many road closures, washouts, and detour routes of up to an hour in additional travel time. We believe that additional public infrastructure damage may be revealed, as several areas were not accessible. We will provide any information on those sites following the declaration when sites may be safely accessed.

The complete findings of the PDA are in Table A-1 (Enclosure B). The state total for public damage was \$11,340,370. Of note is that the indicators range for the counties, from \$3.51 per capita in Eau Claire County to \$162.31 per capita in Vernon County. These counties are amongst the poorest in the state and lack assets to bounce back rapidly from an event of this magnitude. Additionally, the state per indicator of \$1.99 per capita is significant, as this is the second request for PA in just over two months. In between, the state provided assistance to two counties impacted by flooding on August 11, 2016; one county impacted by flooding on September 8, 2016; and deployed the National Guard on August 14, 2016 in response to civil unrest in Milwaukee. These findings will be discussed in detail later in the letter.

The following information outlines the nature and amount of state and local resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster. Local governments responded to the immediate needs of those impacted and coordinated the flood response. County and local law enforcement, emergency medical services, and fire personnel responded to emergency calls throughout the crisis period, with longer response times due to the number of calls for service and the many detours on major routes. Public works and highway crews conducted damage assessments and worked to maintain essential services in the face of numerous road washouts, blown culverts, impacted bridges, and dam breaches threatening. Local emergency responders and public works crews cleared debris from roadways, following both the initial event and the continued flooding, and established emergency protective measures to prevent loss of life. County health departments provided bottled water, supplies, cleanup kits, and well testing kits to their residents, and coordinated volunteers to assist with home cleanups. Most counties established call-in numbers for residents with flood damage.

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activated to Level III early on September 22, 2016 for this event and did not scale back to a Level V until the evening of September 26, 2016. Wisconsin Emergency Management acted on requests for assistance, obtained necessary personnel and equipment, and coordinated the compilation of damage assessment information from local damage assessment teams. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Response Section Supervisor and Regional Directors deployed to the hardest-hit counties to provide guidance and assistance to county directors and elected officials. The team also relayed information back to the SEOC and played a major role in allocating vital state assets to the areas that needed them. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Geographic Information System staff provided up-to-date road closure maps and event maps with aerial photos, in addition to supporting the PDA by configuring ESRP's Collector application. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Public Information Officers shared information with counties, municipalities, and the 211 program, monitored media reports, and issued regular press releases.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provided three boats and wardens to Richland County to assist with evacuation of residents stranded during the flooding. They also monitored all dams throughout the affected area. State aviation assets from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources produced high resolution photos to provide situational awareness, support planning for response and recovery efforts, and damage assessments.

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections provided four eight-man strike teams to assist with sandbag operations in Vernon, Sauk and Columbia counties, as well as the Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution for Crawford County. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services coordinated with American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other voluntary organizations active in disaster partners to support families of fatalities and provide water, water testing kits, and flood cleanup kits. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection monitored food, animal and agricultural resource issues, including addressing calls from impacted farmers.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Division of Highways worked with county highway commissioners to assess damage to state, county, and local roads, culverts, and dams. They delivered barricades, detour signs, and other resources to affected counties. Their 511 service provided up-to-date information on road conditions. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation also provided information to the public on the status of road closures, worked with county highway departments and law enforcement agencies to coordinate detours and evacuation routes, and assisted with the PDA. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation worked with county crews and contractors to make emergency road repairs.

Unfortunately, this is not the only event to recently draw on the resources and capacity of the State and its counties. In the previous 12 months, the State of Wisconsin has been impacted by a number of events that have required response by one or more counties. The recovery for many of those weather events has been supported by state disaster funds. In the past year alone, the local applicants reached the damage indicator of \$3.57 per capita on five separate occasions, making them eligible to receive assistance from the Wisconsin Disaster Fund due to:

- Flash flooding in Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau Counties on September 6, 2015;
- Flooding due to spring thaw and heavy rains in Douglas, Price, and St. Croix Counties on March 16, 2016;
- Tornado and straight line winds in Buffalo, Monroe, Pepin and Pierce Counties on July 5, 2016;
- Flooding in Buffalo and Trempealeau counties on August 11, 2016; and
- Flooding in Richland County on September 8, 2016

Current eligible damage requests for the Wisconsin Disaster Fund total over \$817,000, without including the damages from this event.

The PDA for this event presents a clear justification for a major disaster declaration. The information below is extracted from Table A-1 (Enclosure B) and warrants expansion. The PDA conducted to develop Table A-1 included the participation of twelve counties. The damage indicator for the State of Wisconsin amounts to \$1.99 per capita based on the results of the PDA. This amount of damage exceeds the state indicator of \$1.43 per capita:

- **Vernon County** – Of the twelve counties, Vernon County reported the highest damage dollar amount. Verified damages in Vernon County currently amount to \$4,832,558, resulting in an extremely high damage indicator of \$162.31 per capita. The total includes \$4.2 million in Category C damages. The impacts go beyond roads, as the DeSoto Area School district had their football field washed away and it may never be rebuilt in the same location.
- **Crawford County** – Verified damages in Crawford County currently amount to \$2,056,508, resulting in a high damage indicator of \$123.56 per capita. The total includes more than \$1.8

million in Category C. Crawford County verified damages in every category of work except for Category D.

- **Jackson County** – Verified damages in Jackson County currently amount to \$882,701, resulting in another very high damage indicator of \$43.17 per capita. Most of the damages occurred in Category D, which included the Black River Falls Dam.
- **Clark County** – Verified damages in Clark County currently amount to \$1,239,089, also resulting in a damage indicator of \$35.72 per capita. The total includes more than \$1.1 million in Category C. Clark County also incurred damages in Categories A, B, D and G.
- **Richland County** – Verified damages in Richland County currently amount to \$435,350, resulting in a very high damage indicator of \$24.16 per capita. The majority of this amount consists of Category C.
- **Adams, Chippewa, Juneau, La Crosse, and Monroe Counties** – The remaining counties exceeded their damage indicators, with Adams County at \$6.91 per capita, Chippewa County at \$7.14 per capita, Juneau County at \$5.87 per capita, La Crosse County at \$4.02 per capita, and Monroe County at \$5.73 per capita.
- **Eau Claire and Trempealeau Counties** – Verified damages in Eau Claire County currently amount to \$346,629, resulting in a damage indicator of \$3.51 per capita. Verified damages in Trempealeau County currently amount to \$55,443, resulting in a damage indicator of \$1.92 per capita. Damages were spread across six of the seven categories of work, with no verified damages in Category D.

It is important to note that at the time of the PDA, many local units of government remained active in addressing emergency repair needs. Category C (Roads and Bridges) damages generally comprise the largest portion of total damages throughout the impacted areas.

Since this Public Assistance declaration request largely affects public road infrastructure, insurance coverage only pertains to the Black River Falls Dam in Jackson County and the De Soto Area School District. While there significant damages to homes and businesses occurred, our current assessments do not indicate the eligibility for an Individual Assistance request; however, most homeowners are without flood insurance and the damage costs will fall to the owner's expense.

I request that the Public Assistance Program Categories A through G be made available in Adams, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties. Public Assistance costs in the state exceed \$11.34 million. Enclosure B contains a spreadsheet of estimated damages to the public and is provided as further evidence of the impact of this devastating event.

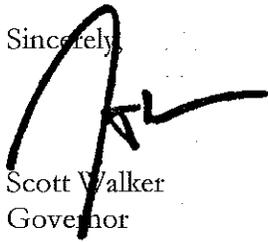
I request that you make the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program available statewide. The State has an approved Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan.

I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shares of costs required by the Stafford Act.

I have designated Brian Satula as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

In closing, I want to reaffirm the urgency of this request and emphasize the need to assist the victims and municipalities as quickly as possible so that life can return to normal. I therefore respectfully request that you review this documentation and act quickly to declare a major disaster.

Sincerely,


Scott Walker
Governor

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

Encl B: Public Assistance Table A-1

