

United States Senate

September 7, 2018

The Honorable Robert J. Fenton, Jr.
Region IX Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
1111 Broadway
Suite 1200
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Administrator Fenton, Jr.,

I write to you today regarding the State of Nevada's recently rejected application to receive assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program pertaining to the devastating effects of the South Sugarloaf Fire.

The South Sugarloaf Fire was first reported on August 17, 2018, and has scorched over 237,000 acres of land in Northeastern Nevada. Exacerbated by the topography and high winds associated with the Great Basin region, this fire has caused ample destruction to personal property and public lands, affecting ranchers, agriculture, recreation, and wildlife habitat. Due to the fire's severity, roughly 75 to 100 Nevadans were forced to flee their homes, while an additional 40 households were placed under voluntary evacuation orders. At its worst, the South Sugarloaf Fire consumed 30,000 acres in a day, forcing state highways and over 750,000 acres of neighboring U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land to be closed.

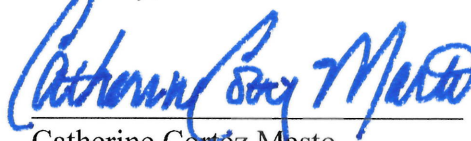
Similar to other states across the West, Nevada has experienced its share of devastating fires this year. Just last month, the Martin Wildfire in Northern Nevada quickly became the largest wildfire in Nevada's history, charring more than 400,000 acres of animal habitat and range land, while leaving family-owned ranches to cope with overwhelming losses. However, Nevada's vast size, large federal land footprint, and low population density have caused Nevadans to fall short on qualifying for FMAG funds. Nevadans whose livelihood is tied to our public lands, whether for grazing, energy development, conservation, and other purposes are particularly impacted when natural disasters occur, leaving them with few options for recourse when these lands become devastated by floods and fires. Remote fires and other natural disasters deep within the public range often do not meet the FMAG program's criteria, especially as it can be difficult to fully quantify the economic impact when a region's livelihood is so deeply tied to public lands. Nevertheless, the destruction of rangeland property, on both private and public

land, causes deep distress to my constituents and others across the West, and can often be challenging for first responders to manage without additional resources.

I request that you reconsider the State of Nevada's application, and to help those affected by the South Sugarloaf Fire. Furthermore, considering that FEMA is often limited in their ability to provide emergency assistance in rural communities that are increasingly impacted by devastating floods and fires, I ask that you provide me with an evaluation of how FEMA can become better equipped to assist remote and rural communities in dealing with large scale emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to working with you further on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Catherine Cortez Masto", written over a horizontal line.

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator