

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 4, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As members of the Washington state delegation, we write in support of Governor Jay Inslee's October 4, 2023 request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the state of Washington as a result of the significant damages incurred by the Gray and Oregon Road Fires. We urge you to approve the request for assistance as quickly as possible.

Weather conditions have led to an above-normal fire risk for all of Washington state due in large part to extreme heat, unprecedented dryness, and inclement weather such as high wind. To date, there have been 1,855 fires and 155,503 acres burned and the fire season is not over.

Between August 18 and September 4, under these exacerbated fire conditions, the Gray and Oregon Road Fires ignited and rapidly expanded throughout Eastern Washington. Combined, these devastating fires burned more than 22,484 acres and forced entire towns to evacuate. Over 710 structures were destroyed, including 366 homes. In addition to extensive physical damages, these fires tragically claimed two lives.

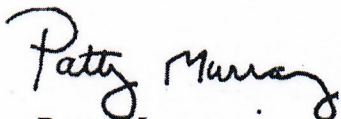
Notably, these fires are the latest in a series of significant disasters Washington state has experienced over the last several years. Since 2018, the state has had to grapple with ten major disaster declarations, 37 Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAGs) and 125 state fire mobilizations—all in addition to being one of the earliest states hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

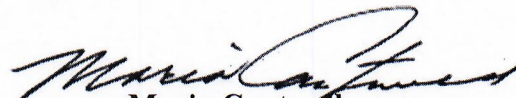
While Washington state's first responders have reacted to these disasters promptly and heroically, the events triggered by the Gray and Oregon Road Fires are quickly exhausting the already-strained capacity and resources of local communities and state agencies.

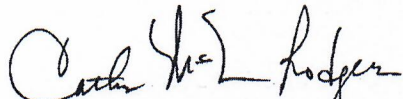
Consequently, we fully support Governor Inslee's request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the Gray and Oregon Road Fires that includes Individual Assistance and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Patty Murray  
United States Senator

  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

  
Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress