

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We would like to thank you and your administration for your timely and critical assistance to the State of Vermont in the wake of disastrous flooding this spring. The Major Disaster Declaration has made available the help needed to enable our state, municipalities, businesses and affected property owners to begin to recover from a continuous series of natural disasters.

Many Vermonters who sustained severe damage to their property, however, are still awaiting word on whether or not they will qualify for assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Pending before FEMA is an amended request from the Governor of Vermont to extend the incident period of the disaster to May 27. The current declaration applies only to damage sustained between April 23 and May 9.

Some of the most severe flooding damage happened in mid- to late May, when heavy rain fell on swollen rivers, saturated soil, and a lake that was well beyond flood stage. In Washington County, for example, the rivers overflowed and flooded the cities of Barre and Montpelier. Mobile home parks in nearby Barre Town were left in ruins by rivers that exceeded their flood stage by nearly three feet. Further north, in Caledonia County, flash flooding wiped out hundreds of thousands of dollars in public infrastructure. Neighborhoods along Lake Champlain in Chittenden County were severely flooded after the Winooski, the Lamoille and other major rivers emptied flood waters from mid to late May into the lake.

While an amended declaration will be helpful to towns, residences and businesses in each of the declared counties, it will be of critical importance to residents of Washington, Caledonia and Windham Counties. These counties were included in the Governor's original request, and assistance is urgently needed in each one, especially for Washington and Caledonia Counties. We urge that each county be designated for both Public and Individual Assistance. The request for Windham County remains for Public Assistance only.

We appreciate the hard work of the FEMA team here in Vermont that is coordinating relief with the State. On behalf of our constituents who are still waiting for word on whether there will be help for them in the wake of this disaster, we request your timely response and assistance. Thank you.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Representative

Cc: Mr. W. Craig Fugate, FEMA Administrator



State of Vermont
Agency of Administration
Office of the Secretary
Pavilion Office Building
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609-0201
www.adm.state.vt.us

[phone] 802-828-3322
[fax] 802-828-3320

Jeb Spaulding, Secretary

June 20, 2011

Mr. Don R. Boyce
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region I
99 High Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02110

Through: Craig A. Gilbert
Federal Coordinating Officer
FEMA-1995-DR
Joint Field Office
128 Lakeside Avenue
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Dear Mr. Boyce:

I respectfully request the Incident Period for disaster FEMA-1995-DR which occurred in the State of Vermont be expanded from period ending May 9, 2011 to period ending May 27, 2011. During this period the rivers continued to remain at or above flood stage due to spring runoff and record-breaking precipitation as discussed in our original request dated May 27, 2011, and our amended request dated June 3, 2011. The flooding across Vermont and the Lake Champlain basin during April and May was a result of abnormally high winter snowfall, significant melt of the snowpack and record rainfall for meteorological spring (March, April, May), especially April and May.

The winter of 2010-11 was an "old-fashioned" North Country winter with abnormally high snowfall and the lack of a significant mid-winter thaw. The NWS Burlington office measured 128.4 inches of snowfall (Normal is 81 inches), the third highest totals since records have been established in 1883. In mid-March, snow depths in Vermont ranged from 8 to 20 inches in the valleys, 18 to 36 inches between 1000 to 2000 feet and 40 to 80+ inches above 2500 feet. Water equivalent of this snow pack ranged 2 to 6 inches, 4 to 8 inches and 10 to 15+ inches respectively. During late March-early April, snow melt and rainfall was routine with streams and rivers running at or above normal. Lake Champlain's level rose from 96 feet in early March to 99 feet by April 10th. Flood stage is considered to be 100 feet.

Between May 14th and 16th, two to three inches of rainfall occurred across much of Vermont. This rainfall created very wet antecedent conditions that were a primer for any possible flooding with additional rainfall. On May 20th, narrow bands of showers and localized thunderstorms with very heavy rainfall moved southeast to

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northwest across portions of central and northwest Vermont. Localized rainfall amounts in excess of 2 inches within 3 hours caused flash flooding in all of Washington, Caledonia, and Windham counties.

Between May 22nd and 23rd, a prolonged thunderstorm and with winds of 20 to 30 mph, peaking to 40 mph on the 23rd, created 3 to 5 foot waves along south-facing shorelines, especially the northern end of Lake Champlain. The initial lake level at Rouses Point prior to the seiche was 102.55 feet but climbed to 102.9 feet at its peak during the afternoon of May 23rd. Lakeshore flooding was equivalent or exceeded the wind-driven episodes of April 23rd and May 2nd.

During the afternoon and evening of May 26th, a series of severe thunderstorms moved across much of central and northern Vermont. There were several reports of damaging winds, numerous reports of large hail ranging from quarter (1 inch diameter) to greater than golf ball size (> 1.75 inches diameter) with reports of damage to siding, lawn furniture and vehicles. These reports were concentrated in Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans and Washington counties.

In addition to the severe weather aspect of these storms, torrential rains accompanied these storms with rainfall rates of 1-2 inches per hour, including more than 3 inches in a three hour period in Montpelier and St. Johnsbury. During the late evening and overnight hours, numerous thunderstorms continued to "train" across central Vermont from Granville/Warren northeast across the Route 2 corridor from Middlesex/Montpelier through Plainville, Cabot, Danville, St. Johnsbury to Lunenburg in Essex county.

Severe flash flooding occurred in many of these communities and led to very significant rises in two watersheds (Winooski and Passumpsic). The magnitude of this flooding was large in part to an abnormally wet spring, more than 200 percent above normal.

The Winooski River at Montpelier increased from near 5 feet at 7 pm EDT to 10 feet at 11 pm, exceeding flood stage of 15 feet at 1245 am EDT before cresting at 17.6 feet at 5 am EDT. The Passumpsic River at Passumpsic rose from 7 feet at 1230 am EDT to surpassing flood stage of 14 feet at 230 am EDT before cresting around 19 feet at 530 am EDT.

The Winooski River at Montpelier witnessed its first crest above flood stage since the Montpelier Ice Jam in March 1992 and its first crest above flood stage due to rainfall since June 30, 1973. The 17.6 feet crest is the highest ever recorded and 2nd all-time to the estimated 27.1 feet from the 1927 Flood. The Passumpsic River at Passumpsic crest of 18.95 feet was the 4th highest recorded crest.

The weather during this period caused large amounts of public infrastructure and private damages. During the storms of May 20th public infrastructure was severely damaged and power was cut to thousands of customers. Road washouts and trees down closed roads in Addison, Franklin, Lamoille, Washington and Windham counties. Many of these washouts caused roads to be closed for days. Rain continued throughout the week and culminated in more flooding beginning on May 26th. A series of severe thunderstorms moved through the state dropping 3 to as much as 6 inches of rain in localized areas of Central Vermont. The rain fell in a short amount of time causing a rapid rise in the Winooski and Passumpsic Rivers. People in Barre, Berlin, St. Johnsbury, Northfield, and the capitol city of Montpelier had to be evacuated to two shelters. Several of those people have remained in the shelter since because their homes were destroyed. There were road closures in over two dozen different towns and power outages that lasted a few days. State government was closed in Central Vermont for the day as much of it is centered on the worst-hit streets. Schools in Washington and Caledonia counties were



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also closed for the day. The streets of Montpelier and Barre hit the hardest are also streets where there is a high business concentration. Many of these businesses were not open for days and some remain closed, which adversely affects the economy in this highly populated area. Swift water assets had to be deployed to Washington and Caledonia counties to assist with stranded people and evacuations. The Vermont National Guard was also deployed to assist with these missions. The State Emergency Operations Center activated to a Level 3 (partial activation) to support the ongoing flooding issues.

If and when this request is approved, please consider this expanded incident date in the following counties and programs that were requested but not declared and are still under review; Caledonia and Washington for Individuals and Households Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Disaster Legal Services, and Internal Revenue Services and Caledonia, Washington, and Windham for Public Assistance.

After careful review of the information stated in this request along with verification attached from the National Weather Service I hope you look favorably upon my request. Thank you for this reconsideration. If you have any questions, please contact Michael O'Neil, Director, Vermont Emergency Management at 800-347-0488.

Sincerely,



Jeb Spaulding
Secretary of Administration
Governors Authorized Representative

Attachment:

Weather Summary of Multiple Flood Events across Vermont from 23 April 2011 to Present (On-going Event)