

United States Senate

April 23, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Brock Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Zinke, Secretary Perdue, and Administrator Long:

I write today urging your immediate attention to the potential flooding crises facing multiple communities throughout Montana. Specifically, I request that you expedite federal assistance requested by these communities and the State of Montana in cases where rapidly melting snow and flash flooding incur massive damage to homeowners, agricultural land, businesses, and public facilities.

On April 18, Montana Governor Steve Bullock declared a flooding state of emergency due to flooding in seven counties, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and the Town of Chester, with the understanding that these flooding events are not isolated events. The spring runoff and recent rains have led the National Weather Service to issue flood warnings and advisories, warning residents of rising waters. Because of the incredible snowpack this year, tributaries and rivers are expected to remain swollen well into the month of May. Although tribal and county leaders, the State of Montana, and local officials are conducting life-saving work to assist where possible, this work is costly and time-consuming. It is possible that these floods will outstrip their ability to pay for response and recovery efforts, particularly given the length of time they will be required to conduct such efforts.

Immense snowfall on the Blackfeet, Fort Belknap, and Northern Cheyenne Reservations over the course of this past winter poses an increased possibility of flooding. We are already seeing impacts of snowmelt in Fort Belknap. It is critical appropriate response support is provided to the impacted Tribes and the Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, effectively coordinates with interagency partners.

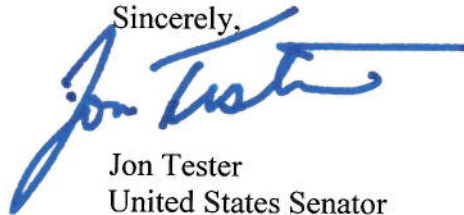
Following record snowfall this winter, flooding will disrupt agriculture operations in Montana this Spring as the snow melts and floods Montana's valleys. It is critical that sufficient technical assistance is delivered to affected producers to ensure that programs like the Emergency Conservation Program, the Livestock Indemnity Program, and the Non-insured Crop

Disaster Assistance Program are fully utilized if necessary. Agriculture is vital to Montana's economy. We must ensure that our farmers and ranchers have the tools and resources to deal with challenges presented by Mother Nature.

I also request that FEMA be on call for any recovery efforts. Should a major disaster declaration be required as a result of excessive flooding throughout the state, I would request that Administrator Long expedite any assistance required by the residents of these communities, including Individual Assistance, Individual Housing Assistance, or Hazard Mitigation Assistance. Moreover, I appreciate the efforts of Administrator Long and FEMA Region VIII to enhance coordination with state, tribal, and affiliated partners, including the Army Corps of Engineers, to provide equipment and personnel in the state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I appreciate the opportunity to work together in the swift response and recovery for these Montana communities and thank you in advance for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jon Tester
United States Senator