NORTH Dakota | Governor Doug Burgum

Be Legendary.™

August 31, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Lee K. dePalo
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
Building 710, Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-0267

RE: REQUEST FOR A PRESIDENTIAL MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATION

Dear Mr. President:

Please accept my gratitude on behalf of the State of North Dakota's residents for your administration's unwavering support during our response and recovery from the enduring impacts created by COVID-19 and our recent natural disasters.

Over the past two years, the State of North Dakota has received five federal declarations— three of which were for flooding — bringing needed assistance to communities struggling to repair widespread damages to infrastructure. We also received two declarations for COVID-19 which greatly enhanced North Dakota's capability to address the rapidly evolving impacts of the global pandemic. We find ourselves in need of federal assistance again after a severe summer storm destroyed infrastructure and damaged homes when high winds, hail, and more than 8 inches of rain fell within a few short hours throughout northern North Dakota during June 29, 2020, and July 1, 2020.

Pursuant to 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 §206.36, the State of North Dakota requests a major disaster declaration for the June 29, 2020, to July 1, 2020, severe summer storm and subsequent flash flooding for the counties of Benson, Grand Forks, McKenzie, Mountrail, Nelson and Wells. Many of the counties listed in Attachment A, *Jurisdictions Impacted by the June 29, 2020-July 1, 2020, Severe Summer Storm,* were also pummeled by previous disasters that produced catastrophic flooding during the last two years.

600 East Boulevard Avenue | Bismarck, ND 58505-0001 | 701.328.2200 | governor.ND.gov

State Climatologist Adnan Akyüz, Ph.D., North Dakota State University, determined this impactful storm ranked between a 500- to 1,000-year event. As much as 52 times the average amount of rain fell, flooding basements and overflowing infrastructure far beyond designed capacities. Overland floodwaters swamped fields and pastures already saturated from three flood events in 2019 and 2020. Wetlands and sloughs swelled, inundating nearby infrastructure. Subsequent flash flooding resulted in washed out roads, damaged bridges and railroad tracks, destroyed water control structures, and inundated lift stations. Basements filled with water as neighbors and volunteers helped with cleanup and debris removal efforts. Lightning strikes and high winds caused extensive damage to regional Rural Electric Cooperatives, destroying electrical equipment and downing miles of power lines, leaving thousands of residents temporarily without power. Damage to local infrastructure systems exceeded $2.25 million, and damage to the state's Federal Aid System highways amounted to an estimated $2,894,000.

In response to conditions, I issued Executive Order 2020-41, formally mobilizing state resources and ensuring a coordinated approach to the needs of our citizens and their communities in response to the state's recent pattern of severe summer weather.

Severe Summer Storm Analysis

Unusually warm and humid temperatures contributed to North Dakota becoming a hot spot in the nation in June with National Weather Service (NWS) meteorologists frequently alerting local, tribal and state emergency managers to the potential for strong summer storms capable of spawning large hail, tornadoes, gusty winds and heavy rain. As described in Attachment B, *Synopsis of the June 29-June 30 Storm Event in ND*, the state recorded its 12th warmest month on record in June since 1895 and an unusually high number of 211 storms, making it the fifth highest in the nation for tornadoes, hail and wind events. June 2020 also ranked as the fourth-highest number of 90-degree days on record.

On June 29, 2020, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) alerted its public and private partners to the potential for severe thunderstorms capable of producing heavy rain, flash flooding and high winds. By late afternoon, a slow-moving Meso-Scale Convective System formed and began tracking across central and eastern North Dakota, as described in Attachment C, *A Review of the Summer 2020 Extreme Wind, Heavy Rain, and Flooding Across North Dakota.* The analysis, developed by Warning Coordination Meteorologist Gregory Gust and Service Hydrologist Allen Schlag of the Grand Forks and Bismarck Offices of the NWS, respectively, stated, "The size of the system, some 300 miles across, and its slow eastward motion, 30-40 miles per hour (mph), meant that most of the state received multiple waves of large hail, widespread downburst winds, and very heavy rain over one or more periods of four to six hours each, over the two day period."

High winds and hail impacted western North Dakota in the late hours of June 29 through June 30, while heavy rain impacted eastern North Dakota in the late afternoon of June 30 and continued until the morning of July 1. Expansive areas of Wells, Benson, Nelson and Grand Forks counties received 4 to 8 inches of rain, including multiple townships recovering from 2019 fall

and 2020 spring flooding. Areal and flash flooding occurred as the storm moved eastward and persisted for up to 12 hours after the conclusion of rain. Overland and riverine flooding along and near the Turtle River in central and eastern Grand Forks County persisted until July 3, 2020, when the flood crest passed through the City of Manvel.

Data from the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, contained in Attachment B, indicated several areas in the state received rainfall greater than 5,000 percent, or up to 52 times as much rain, as normally falls. Dr. Akyuz placed the 6.27 inches of rain that fell in Wells County at the 90 percent confidence interval for a once-in-500-year event. Additional rainfall on July 1, 2020, exacerbated conditions, "making the bad situation worse without a recovery time," as Dr. Akyuz stated.

In Mountrail County, one of the first areas struck by storm conditions, gusty winds toppled power lines, leaving residents without power and causing extensive damage to the Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative in northwestern North Dakota. Sirens alerted residents to dangerous storm conditions in the City of New Town as well as campers staying at the Van Hook and Parshall Bay Campgrounds. Weather spotters clocked winds of up to 85 mph.

As the storm moved eastward, flash flooding occurred in jurisdictions already severely impacted by repetitive flooding, including Benson and Nelson counties in the Devils Lake Basin region. Devils Lake, which has no natural outlet, began its historic ascent in 1993, rising more than 31 feet to 1,454.3 feet in 2011. The lake remains high today — only a few feet from its record level — with saturated soils throughout the basin. In response to rapid inflows into Devils Lake, the N.D. State Water Commission (SWC) shut down both state-built Devils Lake outlets designed to divert water into the Sheyenne River. Engineers report the increased lake level and lost discharge volume added to the continued long-term flooding situation in the Devils Lake Basin. In Benson County, copious amounts of rainfall on June 30, 2020, produced runoff that flooded roadways, washed out culverts and swamped basements. Impassable roadways delayed emergency responders trying to reach the site of a four-by-four vehicle accident in which a driver was seriously injured. Floodwaters inundated hundreds of highly productive agricultural lands which will have a severe economic impact to the county.

Because of the excessive rainfall, Nelson County officials initiated a pumping operation to divert water off roadways. Residents battled sewer backup in the farming community of Kloten after infrastructure failed to keep up with inflows. Local officials reported multiple culverts were damaged. Floodwaters also temporarily isolated rural residents. In Aneta, the hardest hit area, runoff exacerbated flood-related problems for one family when the basement began caving in and the walls started to separate from the upper levels, making the home unhabitable. Multiple roads and fields remain under water, preventing farmers from reaching crops. Angela Herda, Nelson County Emergency Manager, expressed the concerns of residents and officials when she discussed the impacts of years of sustained flooding. "Budgets are drained trying to fight the flooding that is currently happening. Infrastructure is vulnerable to even more degradation," she said. "Without proper infrastructure the businesses and farms cannot carry on making money for

the county, and it may result in people losing what they have and forcing them to sell their businesses and to leave."

Southwest of Devils Lake in Wells County, basements filled with water as a result of heavy downpours. In the City of Harvey, 6 inches of rainfall infiltrated homes and completely inundated old Highway 52 that winds through the municipality. Water overtopped ditches along the James River and flowed over N.D. Highway 3. Officials attribute saturated soils and the persistent pounding of hail to a small landslide and road erosion.

In Grand Forks County, floodwaters rapidly overwhelmed sewers and lift stations as runoff rushed overland along natural drainage systems toward the Red River of the North. The Red River and streams swelled in response to the rapid influx of water. The sheer volume and intensity of flow caused extensive damage to the county's infrastructure system, resulting in road washouts and gravel washes, eroded roadbeds, and blown-out culverts. Undercut roads resulted in vehicle accidents. Several roads remain inundated today. As Grand Forks County Engineer Nick West explained, most county culverts are designed to handle up to 3 inches of rain in a 24-hour period during a 10- to 25-year event, not a 500- or 1,000-year event as occurred on June 30, 2020.

The volume of runoff also overwhelmed the Grand Forks County Water Resource District infrastructure, forcing box culverts out of place as well as the step-down structures designed to slow the flow of water. Floodwaters overtopped the English Coulee that transects the City of Grand Forks as it flows eastward toward its confluence with the Red River. Breakout waters created a new channel that will require extensive repairs by the Water District to redirect flow back into the English Coulee. In total, the county, its townships and cities recorded more than $1,274,191 in damage to infrastructure, more than the state per capita for damage and an amount characterized by Mr. West and Grand Forks County Emergency Manager Karise Goelz as unprecedented for a county that has sustained extensive damage during four recent disasters.

The residents of the cities of Emerado and Manvel suffered the brunt of storm impacts as dated, clay infrastructure systems failed to keep up with the high volume of runoff. In Emerado, sewage backed up into homes after floodwaters swamped the lift station. Eight inches of rain filled the fire station and flooded the post office, which required residents to travel nearly 30 minutes out of their way for mail service. Floodwaters swamped a community store and isolated residents until water levels receded from access roads. Ms. Goelz estimates nearly 75 percent of homes had basement inundation. The American Red Cross (ARC) volunteers and community leaders determined two homes sustained major damage, two others were inaccessible, and one was affected of the 91 homes inspected. Local officials indicated damage mainly occurred in basements where floodwaters destroyed furnaces, water heaters, cable wiring and electrical panels.

Residents of Emerado, predominantly senior citizens on fixed incomes, pulled together to help remove flooded items from basements, balancing the need for social distancing with the urgency of removing items and drywall to prevent the rapid growth of mold. Ms. Goelz joined

the volunteers who loaded debris from the berms onto trucks and is coordinating with the Red River Valley Community Action Agency and members of the Upper Red River Valley Community Organizations Active in Disaster (URRV COAD) to obtain resources for residents. Additional support came from the Grand Forks Air Force Base as service personnel rallied support for a widow of English descent who relocated to the community, her husband's last duty station. "It was heartbreaking to see all of her photos sitting out on the berm," Ms. Goelz said. "All she has are memories."

Northeast of Emerado, the residents of Manvel also embarked on extensive cleanup efforts after heavy rain in excess of 8 inches filled a ravine used as a diversion for the Turtle River. City officials helped residents to secure pumps and other flood-fighting resources from area farmers and construction companies, including a 16-inch pump used to empty the ravine of floodwaters. Officials quickly mobilized personnel and equipment to build a dike around the north end of town in a successful effort to prevent runoff from entering the sewer system. Manvel Fire Department volunteers checked on residents and assisted with flood fight operations. The ARC assessment of 89 homes indicated two homes had major damage and 31 had minor damage. Officials condemned one home after the kitchen fell into the basement. Another homeowner recorded more than $80,000 in uninsured damages. Septic systems failed as a result of the excessive runoff. Ms. Goelz delivered cleanup kits to a staging area for residents to begin the arduous chore of cleanup.

Throughout eastern North Dakota, the N.D. Department of Transportation (NDDOT) recorded an estimated $2,894,000 in damages to FAS infrastructure, including $250,000 in Grand Forks County and $136,000 in Benson County from the June 30 storm.

A Whole Community Partnership

Nearly every resident of the Grand Forks County cities of Emerado and Manvel experienced flooding of some magnitude, which required a whole-of-community approach to response and recovery operations. Volunteer agencies had a major role in clearing homes of debris and helping to sanitize to prevent mold and long-term damages.

The ARC deployed a team of five volunteers to Manvel and seven volunteers to Emerado to conduct damage assessments. Damage assessments were conducted in collaboration with community leaders for insights on local impacts and areas of concerns. ARC staff also worked with communities to identify potential shelter locations and supplies, recommended precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and placed a non-congregate shelter team on standby. As flooding progressed, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the ARC to limit its physical services and shift toward the use of virtual formats for collaboration, in an effort to meet the required social distancing guidelines.

Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota (LSSND) has been reaching out to residents in Emerado, Northwood and Manvel to help them during the recovery process. LSSND also secured a grant for long-term recovery needs. Similarly, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will

have an impactful role by assisting homeowners with their recovery needs. The ARC continues to work in partnership with other voluntary agencies to help residents recover from flash flood damages. Response to the flash floods would not be the same without the efforts of the North Dakota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NDVOAD) and its members.

The URRV COAD members also served a vital role by coordinating response of its member agencies. The Salvation Army delivered nearly 100 flood kits to Larimore, Emerado and Manvel and dispatched volunteer assistance for cleanup efforts in Emerado. URRC COAD also recruited volunteers to help with cleanup efforts. The Community Action Agency is assisting Emerado residents by providing financial aid. Last but not least, the United Way established a phone number for the URRV COAD to use for volunteer coordination.

Local and state agencies responded quickly to the needs of communities. Auditors, mayors and council members secured resources to help residents with flood cleanup. Emergency managers coordinated with public and private partners to dispatch resources. Fire departments received high praise from civic leaders for their hard work helping communities establish a network of water pumps, conducting welfare checks of residents and helping with cleanup efforts. Community and public health leaders shared guidance with residents on proper disinfection methods to prevent mold growth.

Staff from the Governor's Office supported state operations by analyzing data and assessing the extent of damages produced by the June 29-July 1, 2020, storm. The N.D. Department of Emergency Services (NDDES) provided frequent assessments of storm conditions and damages, as well as coordinated resource requests. In response to heavy rains, the SWC temporarily halted operations of the two Devils Lake outlets until later in July when the lake levels dropped.

The N.D. Highway Patrol and NDDOT collaborated on road closures and alerted motorists to hazards. NDDOT conducted a damage assessment of FAS roads. The N.D. Department of Human Services (NDDHS) provided technical support to the members of NDVOAD and issued frequent progress reports on response and recovery efforts by voluntary agencies. The N.D. Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) served as a resource for environmental concerns related to hot, humid conditions and the potential growth of mold. The N.D. Department of Health (NDDoH) participated in briefings and assessed potential flood-related impacts on residents' health.

Impacts to Our State's Economy

With the assistance of your administration, we leveraged state and federal funding for the ND Smart Restart, an initiative designed to serve as a roadmap to a better, safer and healthier resumption of business as we enter this new normal created by COVID-19. Our business toolkit allows for a systematic and cautious approach to reopening and sustaining operations after the pandemic prompted disruption of commerce. However, our revenue forecasts indicate recovery will take years as we recoup losses resulting from COVID-19, three recent floods, the June 29-July 1, 2020, severe summer storm and an abrupt downturn in the state's oil production.

Data from the North Dakota Office of the State Tax Commissioner shows precipitous drops in oil, fuel and sales taxes during April, May and June this year when compared to the same time period in 2019. The state lost a staggering 74 percent in oil tax revenue, collecting $175.1 million during April, May and June, down $502.1 million from the $677.2 million for the same time period in 2019. Our fuel tax collections dropped $7.3 million and our sales tax collections fell $25.4 million in April, May and June 2020 when compared to the same time period for 2019. Collectively, our state lost $534.8 million from these essential sources of income for our economy. The State Tax Commissioner reports these losses are permanent and will not be made up in future time periods. The state is also experiencing a large reduction in individual and corporate income taxes, the impacts of which will not be fully realized until the next financial quarter.

North Dakota's agricultural industry, the leading contributor to the state's economic vitality, sustained debilitating losses in 2019 and has been struggling to regain its foothold after 2020 spring flooding. The lost revenue of our producers directly impacts the capacity of townships and counties to finance repairs to roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. In spring 2019, North Dakotans engaged in a 39-day battle with floodwaters that resulted in $10.8 million in damages to our state's transportation system. The rural road network our producers rely upon to access fields accounted for 86 percent of the damaged infrastructure repaired through DR-4444-ND. An early October 2019 storm disrupted production at a critical time in harvesting. The October 9-12, 2019, storm generated heavy rain before transitioning to snow containing up to 3 inches of water equivalent. In response, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue issued a Secretarial disaster designation after nearly 30 inches of snow blanketed prime farmland, decimating unharvested crops. Subsequent rapid snowmelt created a rare fall flood that required federal aid provided through DR-4475-ND to address the $8.9 million in infrastructure damages.

Comments from Harrison Weber, Executive Director of the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association (RRVSGA), provide perspective on the impacts experienced by producers. "We are totally at the mercy of Mother Nature. In 2019, we were looking at a near record crop. A couple days after the harvest started, it started raining and it didn't stop," Mr. Weber said. "It was a very historic and disastrous harvest. We faced extreme challenges with mud and the water. We had producers pulling equipment through standing water with no luck. The weather got cold and the beets froze in the ground. We had to leave an unprecedented, one-third of our entire crop in the ground because of the heavy rains, flooding, freeze and blizzard." The RRVSGA represents approximately 2,700 sugarbeet growers from North Dakota and Minnesota who cooperatively own American Crystal Sugar Company. Based on a 2012 study titled *Economic Contribution of the Sugarbeet Industry in Minnesota and North Dakota,* the regional sugarbeet industry generates $1.7 billion in direct impacts, $3.2 billion in secondary impacts and more than 20,000 jobs.

Our state continues to address the financial ramifications of the 2019 flood. Brad Thykeson, State Director for USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), reports his agency has received over 6,600

applications and issued over $55.8 million to date in North Dakota for the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+), one of the federal programs enacted to support our producers. "Crop and livestock prices are low and Mother Nature continues to throw curve balls as we have dealt with abnormally dry conditions early in the growing season in the west while fighting wet and cool spring conditions in the east, along with periodic storms that have oversaturated the soils and caused significant hail and wind damage in some areas throughout the growing season, not to mention this all came after an unprecedented wet fall in 2019 for a majority of the state," Thykeson said.

The counties hardest hit by the June 29-July 1, 2020, storm were also affected by the unprecedented wet fall in 2019 and qualify for the 2019 WHIP+ program. Specifically, FSA received 250 WHIP+ applications and issued $2 million to Grand Forks County producers; 240 applications and $3.3 million to Benson County producers; 145 applications and $2.4 million to Wells County producers; 73 applications and $820,000 to Nelson County producers; and 90 applications and $580,000 to Mountrail producers. County FSA office Loss Assessment Reports from the June 29- July 1, 2020, storm indicate flooding, hail and wind caused damage to crops, farmsteads, homes, roads and livestock grazing lands. The extent of the damage will not be fully realized until after harvest. In addition, North Dakota accounts for one-third of the nation's acreage that producers are unable to plant, referred to as prevent plant. FSA has certified more than 3 million acres due to flooded conditions, the majority of which are located in eastern North Dakota.

Additionally, high ground saturation contributed to spring's severe overland and riverine flooding this year in central and eastern North Dakota, resulting in an estimated $8.3 million in infrastructure damages. We are thankful for DR-4553-ND for the relief it is providing jurisdictions already heavily burdened by recovery costs. Attachment D, *North Dakota Presidential Disaster Declarations 1993 to 2020*, illustrates the frequency of disasters in our state. During the past 27 years, North Dakota has received 37 disaster declarations, including the catastrophic flood event of 2011, DR-1981-ND. Communities are still recovering nine years later from this event in which federal, state, tribal and local costs exceeded $1 billion.

Commitment to Resiliency

The saving grace for the frequency and intensity of disasters in North Dakota is the effectiveness of our mitigation program that is resulting in substantial loss reduction statewide and, in particular, eastern North Dakota, where we have enacted a number of flood resiliency projects. Data from national studies clearly articulates the significant savings resulting from North Dakota's proactive approach to mitigation. In 2018, the National Institutes of Building Sciences in its *Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2018 Interim Report* estimated every dollar spent on federal mitigation grants saves $6 in damages in North Dakota. The following year, the PEW Charitable Trust conducted a state-by-state analysis of the benefit of the Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) and determined the return on investment amounted to $6.53 per every dollar spent on mitigation in North Dakota.

Based on that estimate, a total of $160,207,600.25 invested in 202 mitigation construction projects since 1997 has resulted in a savings of $1,047,757,705.63 in long-term disaster response and recovery costs for our state. The state also experienced a significant savings through its aggressive program to relocate more than 1,400 properties in flood-prone areas, the majority of which had been located in areas impacted by 2019 and 2020 flooding, as well as the June 29-July 1, 2020, storm event. With the assistance of the HMA programs and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the state acquisition program has created green spaces along rivers and lakes for an estimated cost benefit of $386.4 million.

Our federal partners recognize the results-driven mitigation program built through the collaboration of 84 public and private partners committed to protecting our state's residents. Based on the state's history of effectively implementing and managing HMA programs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved NDDES to fully utilize the Program Administration by State (PAS) Program for DR-4323-ND, DR-4444-ND, DR-4475-ND and DR-4553-ND. FEMA also provided Enhanced Status designation to the *State of North Dakota Enhanced Mitigation Mission Area Operations Plan* on February 6, 2019. Based on collaborative efforts by NDDES, all North Dakota jurisdictions either have or are currently developing mitigation plans.

It bears repeating that NDDES attributes the support of FEMA as integral to helping our state build resiliently and implement effective mitigation measures whenever possible to help prevent damage to public and private property, as well as save local, state, tribal and federal taxpayer dollars.

Conclusion

Pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.36, I have determined severe summer storm conditions and subsequent flooding were of such severity and magnitude that effective response and recovery are beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments. For the reasons described in this letter and its supporting documentation, I respectfully request that you declare a major disaster, with an incident period starting June 29, 2020, and ending July 1, 2020, for the counties of Benson, Grand Forks, McKenzie, Mountrail, Nelson and Wells. I also request North Dakota be designated as a Public Assistance Managing State, as it has in previous disasters, and that the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program be implemented on a statewide basis.

I certify for this major disaster that the state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shares of costs required by the Stafford Act 93-288. Enclosure A is my certification that the expenditures and obligations will include the non-federal shares of costs required by PL 93-288, as amended. Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) indicate that damages are expected to exceed $2.25 million as detailed in Enclosure B.

I have designated MG Alan S. Dohrmann and Homeland Security Director Cody Schulz as the State Coordinating Officers (SCOs) for this request. They will work with FEMA to coordinate damage assessments and may provide further information or justifications on my behalf.

Thank you for your consideration of my request for a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration for the State of North Dakota and for your continued support as we recover from an unprecedented number of disasters.

Sincerely,

Doug Burgum
Governor

Enclosures: Enclosure A: Governor's Certifications
Enclosure B: North Dakota Preliminary Damage Assessment

Attachments: Attachment A: Jurisdictions Impacted by the June 29, 2020-July 1, 2020, Severe Summer Storm
Attachment B: Synopsis of the June 29 – June 30 Storm Event in ND

Attachment C: A Review of the Summer 2020 Extreme Wind, Heavy Rain, and Flooding Across North Dakota

Attachment D: ND Presidential Disaster Declarations: 1993-2020

CC: Senator John Hoeven
Senator Kevin Cramer
Representative Kelly Armstrong
MG Alan S. Dohrmann, Director, North Dakota Department of Emergency Services
Cody Schulz, Director, North Dakota Division of Homeland Security
Justin Messner, Disaster Recovery Chief, North Dakota Division of Homeland Security