



TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR

July 31, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write today as Oregon battles major wildfires across our state, impacting our communities, working lands, and ecological systems. I am making three significant requests:

1. **Secretarial Disaster Designation:** In accordance with 7 C.F.R § 759, I request that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) declare Secretarial Disaster Designations for multiple counties in Oregon currently experiencing devastating wildfires.
2. **Federal Lands Grazing Permits:** In accordance with 36 CFR § 222.3, I request, in coordination with United States Forest Service (USFS) Chief Randy Moore, emergency use authorizations for alternative grazing areas and flexibility in grazing schedules to accommodate recovery across National Forest System lands.
3. **Weed-Free Forage:** In accordance with 36 CFR § 261.50, I request, in coordination with USFS Chief Randy Moore, emergency waivers for the use of non-certified weed-free forage necessary for soil stabilization and livestock feeding.

On July 12, I declared a statewide State of Emergency due to the imminent and ongoing threat of wildfires and have invoked eight conflagration act emergency orders to maximize state resources. As of this letter, Oregon is battling over 120 active fires, including five mega fires, with over 1,076,000 acres burned, impacting Oregon's communities and working agricultural lands. On July 24, the Durkee Fire in eastern Oregon became the largest and highest priority wildfire in the United States. The scope of damages and losses is currently unknown and will likely increase as the wildfire season continues.

Secretarial Disaster Designation

I am requesting disaster declarations for the following counties as of today, with the understanding that additional counties may need to be included as the wildfire season evolves:

254 STATE CAPITOL, SALEM OR 97301-4047 (503) 378-3111 FAX (503) 378-8970

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Baker, Coos, Crook, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler.

In addition to a Secretarial Disaster Designation, I request that the USDA work closely with state and local offices to expedite relief through the following programs:

- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** to assist with repairs to field roads, cross fencing, irrigation, and other impacts on land productivity;
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Emergency Haying and Grazing** to provide relief to livestock producers through emergency haying and grazing acreage;
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock (ELAP), Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), and Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)** to address infrastructure damage affecting critical calving and grazing grounds;
- **Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** to provide financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops affected by the disaster;
- **Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program** to implement emergency recovery measures to safeguard lives and property by removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges;
- **Farm Storage Facility Loan Program** to provide low-interest financing for building or upgrading storage facilities;
- **Any additional USDA-administered programs** to assist in the relief efforts.

Our partnership with the state and local Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff is invaluable, and I want to extend my personal gratitude to you for their commitment and service. Their support is critical to our collective success and their work is well recognized across the state.

Federal Lands Grazing Permits & Weed-Free Forage

I request that the USFS coordinates with Regional Foresters to exercise their authorities to the maximum extent possible to issue or modify grazing permits. This may include flexibility in grazing schedules, modifications to grazing permit conditions, and the use of alternative lands for immediate grazing needs. Oregon's livestock ranchers are stewards of the lands, and temporary grazing permits may provide relief and support as the landscape recovers from the devastating fires.

Additionally, I request a waiver to allow the use of non-certified weed-free forage for necessary soil stabilization and livestock feeding. The control of invasive species and noxious weeds is paramount for the health of our ecological systems. Should the supply of certified weed-free forage become constrained, the utilization of local forage should be allowed to support soil stabilization, erosion control, and livestock feeding in areas impacted by the wildfires.

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Our communities look to us for leadership and action in times of need. The timely review and approval of our request will provide critical support to the affected farmers and ranchers, helping them recover and rebuild. We have seen the positive impact of such designations in the past and are committed to working collaboratively with the USDA to navigate this challenging period.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to continuing our partnership with the USDA to assist Oregon's rural communities during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tina" and last name "Kotek" clearly distinguishable.

Governor Tina Kotek