

**SCOTT WALKER**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
**STATE OF WISCONSIN**

115 EAST STATE CAPITOL  
MADISON, WI 53702

August 3, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Through: Regional Administrator Andrew Velasquez III  
FEMA Region V  
536 South Clark Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60605-1521

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of 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 § Major Disaster citation (206.36), I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Wisconsin as a result of the heavy rains and flash flooding during the period of July 11-12, 2016. This request is for the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe and the counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Iron, Price, Sawyer and Washburn.

Beginning on Monday, July 11 and extending through Tuesday, July 12, 2016, multiple rounds of severe thunderstorms impacted much of east central to northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. During a 24-hour period the area received eight to 12 inches of precipitation with the worst of the heavy rain and resulting flash flooding occurring in the evening hours. As an example, according to the National Weather Service, the area one mile west-south-west of the Town of Saxon recorded 9.80 inches of rain in a 24-hour period ending on July 12, 2016. In the area extending from Danbury in Burnett County to Hurley in Iron County the majority of the total precipitation fell within just eight hours. In addition, a bow echo type storm moved across northern Iron County and caused tremendous amounts of damage at Saxon Harbor. The harbor was devastated by the flooding and debris carried by the many creeks, rivers, and streams that converge in the immediate area.

These storms resulted in widespread flash flooding across the region causing numerous road closures including the multiple-day closure of U.S. Highway 2, a major transportation corridor across northern Wisconsin. The flooding and damage to roadways was so severe in northwestern Wisconsin that residents and visitors were advised not to travel within much of the area due to washouts and inundated roadways. The timing of these storms also came during the peak tourist season in these areas of the state.

Tragically, this event included the loss of four lives. In Ashland County, an 82-year old man died in the floodwaters along the roadway near the Marengo River on July 14<sup>th</sup>. In Bayfield County, an 84-year old man died following failed resuscitation attempts after he and his wife were caught in flood waters during a road washout. In Bayfield County, a 74-year-old woman was killed when she drove into a washed out area of State Highway 63 despite the road barriers that were in place to prevent such accidents. In Iron County, a 56-year-old man drowned when his car was washed away in the flood waters during the torrential rain and powerful winds at Saxon Harbor. This man was assistant fire chief for the Montreal (WI) Volunteer Fire Department and a former mayor of Montreal in Iron County. The incident happened while checking on a person working at the harbor.

The event also resulted in numerous injuries and medical emergency calls to local first responders. Though many minor injuries were not reported, other medical emergencies included:

- One Sheriff's Deputy was injured early in the flooding event and subsequently hospitalized for several days.
- The Wisconsin National Guard transported five patients by helicopter from the Bad River Reservation to a dialysis center in Ashland.
- Some individuals were injured doing recovery activities (debris removal, etc.), including one individual with severe injuries who was flown out by helicopter after the first storm.
- Four injuries were reported at Birch Grove Campground in Bayfield County.

Immediately following the storm many volunteer organizations and private sector partners provided assistance to residents impacted by the rainstorm and flooding. The American Red Cross opened and managed a Multi-Agency Resource Center, provided assistance directly to flood-impacted households, and compiled a list of health services contacts for residents. They also distributed recovery booklets, clean-up kits, comfort/hygiene kits, bulk items such as shovels and work gloves, and served thousands of meals and snacks to people impacted by flooding as well as relief workers. The American Red Cross and local agencies established one shelter in Ashland and one on the Bad River Reservation; and cooling centers in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas and Iron counties and on the Bad River Reservation. In addition to the American Red Cross response, volunteers from local fire departments, AmeriCorps, Team Rubicon, statewide tribal organizations, and Civil Air Patrol cadets assisted residents in the affected areas. Private sector entities such as Kwik Trip, Wal-Mart, and Verizon also contributed to the response efforts.

On July 12, 2016, I issued Executive Order #202, proclaiming that a State of Emergency existed in Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties. In this Order, I directed all state agencies to assist those counties as appropriate to support response and recovery efforts. Locally, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, and Sawyer Counties along with the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe declared states of emergency by July 13, 2016. Florence County declared on July 18, 2016. Local declarations for Ashland, Bayfield, and Washburn Counties were verbal by the county board chairs and are awaiting ratification by their respective County Boards. Price County chose not to declare as they determined within a few days their damage did not rise to the per capita threshold.

On July 18, 2016, I issued amended Executive Order #205 to allow the Department of Natural Resources to waive permit fees for certain work. This order also instructed the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, the Public Service Commission, the Department of Transportation, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development

Authority to identify a point of contact within their respective agency to evaluate the current situation, actively propose and pursue solutions, and take such other actions as may be necessary or appropriate to assist with the response and recovery efforts. As damage assessments revealed other impacted areas, I issued Executive Order #207 on July 28, 2016 to amend my previous declaration and to include Florence County and the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. Both Florence County and the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe have declared local states of emergency.

This event and the resulting damage have had a significant negative impact on the residents and communities of the area. Many of the area's state highways, county highways, and local roads were inundated with water and debris and had to be closed. Culverts and bridges were washed out, resulting in long detour routes for residents and the trucking industry. Highway crews were busy implementing road closures, making temporary road repairs, and cleaning up debris. Multiple harbors and marinas on Lake Superior received significant damage. In particular, Saxon Harbor in Iron County, was housing 70 boats at the time of the July 12 storm. Of these, at least 12 were destroyed, 19 beached, and 6 sunk and later recovered. Two boats remain unaccounted for, while two vehicles and three camper trailers were also lost. Thirty-three floating docks were swept out into the lake and destroyed. The fish hatchery and wild rice operations of the Bad River Tribe also sustained major damage.

This event has impacted over 350 homes and left behind tens of millions of dollars in public sector damage. Both the initial storm and a secondary severe thunderstorm event on July 21, 2016 caused tens of thousands of power outages across the northern part of the state and generated large amounts of debris. The stress on citizens and local emergency response efforts was further intensified by high heat index levels that occurred statewide from July 20-22.

This incident placed at risk \$343 million<sup>1</sup> in annual visitor spending which supports 4,847 jobs in area communities. These jobs are a significant portion of the local economy, making up 6.3% (1-in-16) jobs<sup>2</sup> in the affected communities. Along with my cabinet secretaries and staff, I have made numerous visits to the area to survey damage and recovery efforts, offer assistance, and listen to the needs of the affected homeowners, businesses, and community leaders. Notwithstanding the severe storm damage in northern Wisconsin, the resiliency of the affected communities is apparent and they continue to welcome visitors

Annually, visitors travel to northern Wisconsin to camp, hike, bicycle, ride all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and snowmobile on the thousands of miles of local, county, state park, and forestry trails. Although repairs are underway, the trail damage and closures are occurring during prime vacation season, creating a significant impact on the local economies. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reported that 10 major state and county park trails have been closed for varying periods, while the U.S. Forest Service personnel have been busy assessing forestry roads, trails, and bridges for safe use. They report that more than 1,000 miles of U.S. Forest Service roads and more than 80 percent of the bridges and culverts in the storm area were impacted. Currently, seven motorized and three hiking trails remain closed and the U.S. Forestry Service has offered no anticipated restoration dates.

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<sup>1</sup> Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economic Company. 2015 Annual Economic Impact Study, Wisconsin.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Department of Commerce 2014

Of the nine counties impacted during this weather event, three in particular – Ashland, Bayfield and Iron – sustained the most severe damages. The following statements provide an overview of the damages they have experienced from this event:

### **Ashland County**

The impact on summer tourism has been devastating. With key roads such as U.S. Highway 2 and State Highways 13 and 169 damaged, access into the county was limited with lengthy detours. For those who were able to get in, roads and trails in the Chequamegon National Forest were not useable. Downed trees and washouts precluded ATV activities, hiking, and access to favorite fishing sites. Although Ashland is a four season destination, summer tourism remains the dominant source of income for the county. This is the time of year when many businesses make the money that funds them throughout the rest of the year.

### **Bayfield County**

Many structures in Bayfield County are seasonal homes or cabins used primarily in the summer months. Several of these structures were damaged by trees, water, and flooding resulting in some cases, in total destruction of the infrastructure and personal belongings. Many families plan their summer vacations to the Bayfield County area. For several weeks following the storms, roads were washed out causing some families to reconsider and reschedule their vacation plans.

Snowmobile and ATV trails are also vital to the economic picture in Bayfield County. Many trails were damaged with trees and washouts and will need to be repaired prior to reopening to the public. The Cornucopia Harbor has had silt and debris deposited. Assistance from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers or another appropriate agency to assess the damage and/hazards and to estimate dredging had to be coordinated.

Bayfield County is very concerned about the impact this event and the follow up publicity about the storm will have on tourism. It is the time of year when many businesses make the money that funds their operation throughout the rest of the year. They are asking local media to remind folks from outside the area that we are open for business and recreation.

### **Iron County**

Tourism is Iron County's second largest industry with over 250 employees and nearly \$20 million in visitor spending annually. Many travelers reach our county on U.S. Highway 2. During the period of time when this highway was impassible, travelers bypassed the county entirely, costing several million dollars in visitor spending and impacting many jobs.

The storms also destroyed Saxon Harbor on Lake Superior, which is a harbor of refuge and the largest asset for Iron County's tourism industry. Saxon Harbor is a very large draw during the summer months as it has one of the longest beaches on Lake Superior at over four miles in length and is the best place to find agates, a colorful stone unique to this area. In addition to the other damages to the harbor, its famous beach was destroyed by red silt from the runoff.

The loss of tourism revenue from the Saxon Harbor Campground and boat slips will be significant for Iron County. The campground has 43 sites that are filled throughout the summer season, which brings in \$560,000 in visitor spending to the county, according to research from tourism organizations. Saxon Harbor also has 91 boat slips that generate \$2.3 million in visitor spending each year. Saxon Harbor is also a destination for residents of Iron County, with the pavilion hosting many gatherings. The harbor is a destination even in the winter with snowmobilers seeking the beautiful vistas of Lake Superior.

Emergency management and local officials expressed other concerns related to tourism. Resupplying local businesses takes longer time for deliveries due to road closures and detours. Those businesses close to Saxon Harbor tourism have seen business volume reduced significantly due to the loss of visitor traffic.

On July 17, 2016, I requested a joint federal, state, and local survey of the damaged areas. The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) for Public Assistance (PA) was conducted during the period July 26-29, 2016. Teams surveyed damages to the public sector in Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Iron, Price, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties, as well as the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. We are appreciative of the four assessment teams, external affairs personnel, and support staff that FEMA provided to conduct the PDAs.

As previously stated, the flooding resulted in many road closures, washouts, and detours up to three hours. We believe that additional public infrastructure damage will be revealed as there were several areas in the hardest hit counties that were not accessible. Information on those sites will be provided following the declaration when access can be gained.

The complete findings of the PDA are in Table A-1 (Enclosure B). The state total for public damage was \$25,687,005. Of note is the per capita range for the counties, from \$8.60 in Florence County to \$1,137.34 in Iron County. These northern counties are amongst the poorest in the state and do not possess assets to bounce back rapidly from an event of this magnitude. Additionally, the state per capita of \$4.52 is more than three times the per capita threshold. These findings will be discussed in detail later in the letter.

The following information is furnished on the nature and amount of state and local resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster. Local governments responded to the immediate needs of those impacted and coordinated the flood response. County and local law enforcement, emergency medical services, and fire personnel responded to emergency calls throughout the crisis period, with longer response times due to the number of calls for service and the many detours on major routes. Public works and highway crews conducted damage assessments and worked to maintain essential services in the face of numerous road and trail washouts, blown culverts, collapsed bridges, and dam breaches. Local emergency responders and public works crews cleared debris from roadways following both the initial event and the second July 21 storm wave, and established emergency protective measures to prevent loss of life. County health departments provided bottled water, supplies, clean up kits, and well testing kits to their residents, and coordinated volunteers to assist with home cleanups. Several counties also set up cooling centers during heat advisory days from July 20-22 and established call-in numbers for residents with flood damage.

The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe set up road barricades, responded to a natural gas main break, and arranged for pumping trucks to support sewer system operations when the water treatment plant's backup generators failed. The Tribal Transit System provided transportation to Ironwood, MI for residents to obtain essential items. The Tribe housed displaced families in the Legendary Waters Casino, arranged hotel accommodations for those transported to Ashland for dialysis, and set up a shelter in the Health Center for people in need of electricity for medical devices and cooling. The Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians borrowed generators to support Bad River's response efforts.

The State Emergency Operations Center opened at Level III early on July 12 for this event, before elevating to a Level II later that day through July 22, and finally scaling back to a Level IV from July 23 to July 29. Wisconsin Emergency Management acted on requests for assistance, obtaining needed personnel and equipment, and coordinated the compilation of damage assessment information from local assessment teams. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Response Section Supervisor and Regional Directors deployed to the hardest hit counties to provide guidance and assistance to county directors and elected officials. The team also relayed information back to the SEOC and played a major role in allocating vital state assets to the areas that needed them. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Geographic Information System staff provided up-to-date road closure maps and story maps with aerial photos in addition to supporting the PDA by configuring ESRI's Collector application. Wisconsin Emergency Management's Public Information Officers shared information with counties, municipalities, and the 211 program, monitored media reports, and issued regular press releases.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources assisted 20 people on the Snake River during the initial response and their staff later conducted dam assessments and assisted with the Saxon Harbor cleanup. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources also provided law enforcement to monitor barricades on the Bad River Reservation. State aviation assets from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Civil Air Patrol, Wisconsin State Patrol, and the Wisconsin National Guard produced high resolution photos to provide situational awareness, support planning for response and recovery efforts, and damage assessments.

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections' Gordon Correctional Facility provided a 12-man strike team to assist with sandbag operations in the City of Hayward (Sawyer County). The Wisconsin Department of Health Services coordinated with the Bad River Reservation to ensure resident access to safe water and food. They also coordinated with American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other voluntary organizations active in disaster partners to support families of fatalities and provide water, water testing kits, and flood clean up kits. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection monitored food, animal and agricultural resource issues, including addressing calls from impacted farmers. The Wisconsin Department of Administration provided air imagery and supported the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Division of Highways worked with county highway commissioners to assess damage to state, county, and local roads, culverts, and dams. Their 511 service provided information on road conditions, and they delivered barricades, detour signs, and other resources to affected counties. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation also provided information to the public on the status of road closures, worked with county highway departments and law enforcement agencies to coordinate detours and evacuation routes, and assisted with the

PDA. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation worked with county crews and contractors to make emergency road repairs.

The Wisconsin National Guard conducted air operations, deployed a Wisconsin Situation Awareness Team to the Hayward Armory, provided medevac support for five people on the Bad River Reservation, and conducted 181 road damage assessments with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The U. S. Coast Guard out of Duluth patrolled harbors during the initial flooding to prevent boats from entering or being removed from the area, conducted a preliminary pollution assessment for Saxon Harbor, and worked with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to recover boats and vehicles from the harbor. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers assessed damage to Saxon Harbor and worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to remove swamped and submerged vessels and automobiles. The U.S. Forest Service assisted with road closures and obtained a pump to de-water a flooded gravel pit in order to use the gravel for emergency road repairs.

Unfortunately, this is not the only event to recently draw on the resources and capacity of the State and its counties. In the previous 12 months, the State of Wisconsin has been impacted by a number of events that have required response by one or more counties. The recovery for many of those weather events has been supported by state disaster funds. In the past year alone, the local applicants reached the threshold of \$3.57 in damage per capita on three separate occasions. These counties were eligible to receive assistance from the Wisconsin Disaster Fund due to flash flooding on September 6, 2015 in Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau Counties; flooding on March 16, 2016 due to spring thaw and heavy rains in Douglas, Price, and St. Croix Counties; and tornado and straight line winds on July 5, 2016 in Buffalo, Monroe, Pepin and Pierce Counties. Current eligible damage requests for the Wisconsin Disaster Fund total \$871,464.05.

The PDA for this event presents a clear justification for a major disaster declaration. The information below is extracted from Table A-1 (Enclosure B) and warrants expansion. The PDA conducted to develop Table A-1 included the participation of nine counties and one Tribal Nation. Based on this information, the damage per capita for the State of Wisconsin amounts to \$4.57. This amount of damage per capita is more than three times the \$1.41 state threshold. The majority of the damage was concentrated in the following six counties and one federally-recognized Tribal Nation:

- **Iron County** – Of the six counties, Iron County has reported the highest damage dollar amount. Verified damages in Iron County currently amount to \$7,911,719 resulting in a staggeringly high damage per capita amount of \$1,337.34. The total includes more than \$1.4 million in Category A, more than \$2.6 million in Category C, and more than \$3.6 million in Category G. The damages to Saxon Harbor represent the most significant portion of Iron County's total damage amount. An estimated \$110,000 in damages to the Saxon Harbor restroom building is anticipated to be covered by insurance and is not included in the reported damages.
- **Ashland County** – Verified damages in Ashland County currently amount to \$8,578,868 (includes \$2,042,219 of damages from the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe) resulting in an extremely high damage per capita amount of \$385.24. The total includes more than \$6.1 million in Category C.

- **Bayfield County** – Verified damages in Bayfield County currently amount to \$5,649,783 also resulting in an extremely high damage per capita amount of \$376.30. The total includes more than \$5.4 million in Category C.
- **Washburn County** – Verified damages in Washburn County currently amount to \$2,206,713 resulting in another extremely high damage per capita of \$138.69.
- **Sawyer County** – Verified damages in Sawyer County currently amount to \$494,562 resulting in a very high damage per capita amount of \$29.87. The majority of this amount consists of Category C.
- **Burnett County** – Verified damages in Burnett County currently amount to \$395,539 also resulting in a very high damage per capita amount of \$25.59. The total entirely consists of Category C.
- **Douglas and Florence Counties** – The two remaining counties exceeded their damage per capita by more than 100% with Douglas County at \$13.43 and Florence County at \$8.60.
- **Price County** – Verified damages in Price County currently amount to \$30,677 resulting in a damage per capita amount of \$2.17. This amount is split evenly between Category C and Category F.
- **Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe** – Verified damages for the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe currently amount to \$2,042,219 and were included in with Ashland County. The total includes approximately \$1 million in Category C and approximately \$1 million in Category G. An estimated \$728,200 in damages to the fish hatcheries, Pow Wow Grounds, Community Center, and wastewater treatment plant is anticipated to be covered by insurance and is not included in the reported damages.

It is important to note that at the time of the PDA many local units of government were still addressing emergency repair needs. The current damage dollar amounts generally consist of primarily Category C amounts. It is anticipated that final damage dollar amounts will be significantly higher as the local units of government have an opportunity to gather all the data on debris removal (Category A) and emergency protective measures (Category B) expenditures.

Since the declaration request is for Public Assistance affecting public infrastructure and primarily roads, the insurance coverage only pertains to the Saxon Harbor buildings and the items previously mentioned for the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. While there is significant damage to homes and businesses, our current assessments do not indicate the eligibility for an Individual Assistance request. However, most homeowners are without flood insurance and the damage costs will fall to the owner's expense. For the Saxon Harbor buildings, there was minimal insurance coverage reported by the Harbor Association. Additionally, the damage in Saxon Harbor does not include the portion of the harbor and channel that are the responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I request that the Public Assistance Program Categories A through G be made available in Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Iron, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties, and the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. Public Assistance costs in the state exceed \$25.9 million. Enclosure B contains a spreadsheet of estimated damages to the public and is provided as further evidence of the impact of this devastating event.



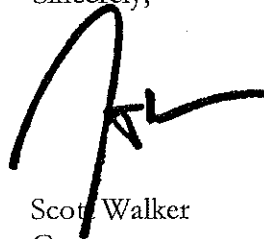
I request that you make the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program available statewide. The State and impacted counties have FEMA mitigation plans. The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe is developing their plan with assistance from FEMA Region V under a PDM14 Grant. The State has an approved Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan.

I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shares of costs required by the Stafford Act.

I have designated Brian Satula as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

In closing, I want to reaffirm the urgency of this request and emphasize the need to assist the victims and municipalities as quickly as possible so that life can return to normal. I therefore respectfully request that you review this documentation and act quickly to declare a major disaster.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Walker', written over a vertical line.

Scott Walker  
Governor

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13  
Encl B: Public Assistance Table A-1