

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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August 15, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Through: George A. Robinson
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VI
800 North Loop 288
Denton, TX 76209-3698

SENT VIA EMAIL

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 §206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Louisiana as a result of flooding that occurred along the Mississippi River and its tributaries from December 2018, through August 2019. I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and local governments, and that in accordance with 44 C.F.R. §206.36, supplementary federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the State and local governments, disaster relief organizations, and compensation by insurance for disaster related losses.

I am requesting a Major Disaster Declaration to provide assistance to the State of Louisiana for activities involved in preserving life, health and safety, and improved property. Specifically, I am requesting Public Assistance (Categories A-G) for the Parishes of *Assumption, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Iberville, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Martin, Terrebonne, and West Feliciana*. I am also requesting Hazard Mitigation statewide.

Louisiana has experienced record rainfalls in 2019, leading to record flood levels. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) reports that the winter of 2018 and the spring of 2019 were the wettest periods in U.S. history. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), the Mississippi River remained above flood stage for the longest period in recorded history.¹ The gauge at Red River Landing has remained above flood stage since December 28, 2018, and the

¹ https://www.weather.gov/lix/ms_flood_history

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gauge at Baton Rouge has remained above flood stage since January 6, 2019. Both of those locations reached moderate flood stage in late February, with the Baton Rouge gauge showing a major flood stage from February 27, 2019, through July 23, 2019. The Red River Landing gauge remained at moderate flood stage from February 22, 2019, until July 29, 2019. River gauges at Vicksburg and Natchez, MS, showed the river fluctuating between moderate and major flood stages from late February to late July. These flood stages have surpassed the records set by the 1927 Mississippi River flood, which was the event that led the federal government to create the current system that includes 2,200 miles of levees, floodwalls, and diversion structures. Federal, State, and local government agencies have been fighting the resulting floodwaters in areas surrounding the Mississippi River for months.

This historic rainfall led USACE's New Orleans District to declare an emergency in November 2018, thus triggering their flood fighting activities. Since that date, USACE has spent \$30 million to reduce the detrimental effects of the floodwaters. Their actions include opening the Bonnet Carre Spillway twice in 2019, the first time that spillway has ever been operated twice in one year. USACE has also approved approximately 100 permits for local entities to take safety measures against the water. Local levee districts and parishes have incurred greatly increased personnel costs in order to conduct more patrols within their jurisdictions and to complete temporary repairs to various levee systems.

In May 2019, USACE anticipated having to open the Morganza Spillway in order to relieve stress on the Mississippi River levee system. That projection was based upon floodwaters in multiple tributaries in states to the north. In anticipation of the opening of the Morganza and the localized flooding that would certainly have occurred, Louisiana emplaced a temporary floodwall at Bayou Chene in St. Mary Parish. USACE eventually determined that the Morganza would not need to be opened, at least in part because of failures in the Arkansas River levees that caused devastating floods in that state and led to its major disaster declaration (DR-4441).

In response to this situation, I have taken the appropriate action under State law and proclaimed a state of emergency (33 JBE 2019) and ordered the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan in accordance with Section 401(a) of the Stafford Act. I have extended that state of emergency through five subsequent declarations. Copies of the declarations of the state of emergency are attached. I requested a Presidential Emergency Declaration on May 24, 2019, which was granted May 29, 2019, to provide Direct Federal Assistance for multiple parishes and Category B, Emergency Protective Measures, for St. Mary Parish.

INCIDENT PERIOD

I submitted my initial request for a federal Emergency Declaration on May 24, 2019. That emergency was declared on May 29, 2019. The declaration established an incident period for river flooding beginning May 10, 2019, over two months *after* Louisiana was fully engaged in flood fighting. Through a subsequent amendment, the incident period was closed effective June 17, 2019, when the Mississippi River was still at a major flood stage in several areas. Louisiana does not agree that these two dates appropriately define the flooding incident. If an occurrence

lasts several weeks or months, there is no prohibition under 44 C.F.R. §206.36 against establishing an incident period of several weeks or months, so long as the State submits its request within 30 days of the end of the occurrence. For these reasons, I ask that you establish a new incident period of February 26, 2019, to July 30, 2019, based upon the facts below.

Unlike other disasters that lead to federal declarations, lower Mississippi River valley flooding cannot be defined by a single, brief period of time. According to USACE, the Mississippi River and tributaries drain 41% of all water in the U.S. It is the world's third largest watershed. The increased rainfall in the Midwest and Tennessee, Ohio and Arkansas river valleys, as well as record snow melt in the north since the end of 2018 led to a large increase of water in that system - all eventually draining to Louisiana. For months, those floodwaters continued to impact the levee system in Louisiana. The attached briefing from NWS, given to Louisiana on May 30, 2019, helps illustrate how high river levels in the northern states directly impacts Louisiana's river levels over an extended period of time. Although Louisiana's extensive system of levees, floodwalls, and three major diversion structures were able to contain the heightened river waters, Louisiana's continued flood fighting measures were vital in preventing catastrophic flooding in those areas near the river. Obviously, trying to confine this event and the resulting damages into an incident period of only a few weeks is not appropriate, nor does not take into account costs and damages associated with the entire, continuous flooding event.

When the Emergency Declaration was issued for Louisiana flooding, with an incident period beginning May 10, 2019, the occurrence of river flooding had already been in progress for months. As previously noted, the Mississippi River entered flood stage in Red River Landing on December 28, 2018, and in Baton Rouge on January 6, 2019. The river **remained at moderate to major flood stage until July 30, 2019**. In trying to define an appropriate incident period for this event, I am not basing this request upon the mere fact that the Mississippi River was in a flood stage. In 2011, the incident period for a similar event (DR-4015) was April 29th to July 7th; however, the 2011 flooding was a much shorter flooding event. When I declared a state of emergency for Louisiana effective February 26, 2019, I directed the execution of the State Emergency Plan. At that point, state assets coordinated with and supplemented local assets for the purpose of preserving public health and safety, as well as improved property. Those emergency protective measures continue to this day. However, since the Mississippi River fell below moderate flood stage at all gauges by July 30, I am only asking that the incident period be extended through that date. In summary, I ask that you establish the incident period for this event as February 26, 2019, through July 30, 2019.

STATE, LOCAL, FEDERAL, AND VOLUNTEER ACTIONS

STATE

ESF 3- Public Works & Engineering

- Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) emplaced a barge at Bayou Chene and provided materials to support the closure of the waterway (limestone, rock, etc...).

- This measure was taken in anticipation of the opening of the Morganza Spillway.
- Although USACE ultimately decided not to open the Morganza, the temporary floodwall served to reduce flood levels by 1 to 2 feet in St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Assumption, Lafourche, and Iberville parishes.
- During Hurricane Barry, the floodwall held back 4.3 feet of storm surge from those same areas.
- DOTD installed 5,600 ft. of 4' Barrier Force sandbag installations on Hwy 70.
- DOTD installed approximately 6,000 ft. of Aqua Dam on Hwy 70.

ESF 9- Search & Rescue

- Wildlife & Fisheries deploying numerous boats to patrol and enforce no wake zones.
- On June 13, 2019, Louisiana requested a federal fisheries disaster declaration due to the adverse effects upon fisheries caused by the high river levels for such an unusual length of time. That request is still pending.

ESF 13- Public Safety & Security

- Angola Prison emplaced 63,000 sandbags at slide location on levee.
- Angola inmates assisting Assumption Parish in filling 3,000 sandbags per day.

ESF 16- Military Support & Civic Authorities

- LANG delivered 30,000 sandbags to Assumption Parish.
- LANG delivered 40,000 sandbags to St. Martin Parish.

LOCAL

Assumption Parish - Declaration received

- Multiple state and parish roads were closed due to flooding.
- Three homes have water in them, causing minor damage.
- Flood tubes were deployed in remote areas of Pierre Part.
- On May 22, 2019, Assumption Parish purchased sandbagging machine and placed in Pierre Part.
- Lafourche Parish provided two sandbagging machines and inmates to work them.

Caldwell Parish - Declaration received

- Parish had a continuous pumping operations.
- Road were closed due to backwater flooding.

Catahoula Parish - Declaration received

- Continuous pumping operations by USACE and Town of Jonesville.

- Water covering multiple parish and state roads; some residents using boats to access homes.
- At least one report of a home flooded.
- Some residents and livestock was relocated.
- Tensas Basin Levee District closed 62 levee drainage structures due to high river levels.

Concordia Parish - Declaration received

- Provided sandbags to residents; requested HESCO baskets from the State.
- Emplaced flood barriers at sewage treatment plant in Town of Vidalia. River water seeped into system, causing high levels.

East Carroll Parish - Declaration received

- Road closures due to backwater flooding.

Franklin Parish - Declaration Received

- Continued backwater flooding and multiple roads closed due to the flooding.
- Culverts blew out, cutting off access to homes. At least one culvert collapsed.
- Approximately 72 homes affected.

Iberville Parish - Declaration received

- Emplaced sandbags on Hwy 75 due to high water.

Ouachita Parish - Declaration received

- Made sandbags available to residents. Flooding on roads and road closures due to backwater flooding.
- Damage Assessments: (Estimated) 10 homes with major damages, 15 homes with minor damages, 1 mobile home destroyed, 2 apartments with major damages, 10 businesses with major damages, and 10 businesses with minor damages.
- Several roads and bridges damaged.
- USACE provided 8 pumps to alleviate flooding issues.

Pointe Coupee Parish - Declaration received

- Filled approximately 10,000 sandbags.

Rapides Parish - Declaration received

- Issued a Voluntary Evacuation for those in low-lying areas of Rigolette Bayou which flooded in the past. Multiple roads closed due to high water throughout parish.
- Residents in the Rigolette area voluntarily moved livestock, farm equipment, personal possessions, etc., in preparation for flooding.

St. Martin Parish - Declaration received

- Multiple state and parish roads closed due to flooding.
- DOTD providing sandbags and Aqua Dams.
- LSP providing extra patrols in the area.
- Sewer system working at 5% capacity and public works continuously pumping out water.
- Pumping operations at Belle River Cemetery.
- 5/14- 100 yards of levee collapsed (top part of levee) in Henderson.
- As of 3/17, 47,085 sandbags issued at Stephenville Park location.

St. Mary Parish - Declaration received

- In addition to Bayou Chene barge, parish building berm using 25,000 tons of limestone on Avoca Island Road.

Terrebonne Parish - Declaration received

- Closure of Bayou Black floodgate has led to backwater flooding in local areas.
- Flood tubes used to prevent flooding of homes and businesses in that area.
- Pumped 500 million gallons per day of water out of the Catahoula Basin in the Gibson area due to backwater flooding from the Atchafalaya River.

West Feliciana Parish - Declaration received

- Flooding caused a voluntary evacuation of homes and recreational properties.
 - 9 people voluntarily evacuated.
 - Approximately 10 homes (4 occupied) evacuated.
 - Approximately 60 structures affected.
- Made sandbags available to residents.
- The Louisiana State Penitentiary worked with USACE to make repairs to a slide in the interior levee near mile marker one, which was discovered in December 2018.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

In accordance with 44 C.F.R. §206.48(a), there are several factors to consider for Public Assistance:

(1) Estimated Cost of Assistance

Once the local floodwaters receded enough to inspect the local parishes, both GOHSEP and FEMA representatives visited the areas and conducted Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs). The chart below shows the amount of damages, both for emergency work and permanent work that are directly related to the current incident period of May 10, 2019, through June 17, 2019.

2019 Louisiana River Flooding Event									
Parish	Threshold	Cat. A	Cat. B	Cat. C	Cat. D	Cat. E	Cat. F	Cat. G	FEMA/State Validated Total
Assumption	\$88,531.38		\$ 125,658.58						\$125,658.58
Caldwell	\$38,298.96			\$ 343,707.40					\$343,707.40
Catahoula	\$39,338.46		\$ 122,553.94	\$ 178,060.97			\$ 22,121.10		\$322,736.01
Concordia	\$78,707.16		\$ 135,809.82	\$ 179,336.19			\$ 37,500.00		\$352,646.01
East Carroll	\$29,329.02			\$ 31,360.00					\$31,360.00
Franklin	\$78,499.26	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 204,966.81					\$264,966.81
Iberville	\$126,202.86		\$ 185,420.39						\$185,420.39
Ouachita	\$581,061.60	\$ 152,099.16	\$ 1,570,913.27	\$ 556,856.44	\$ 112,892.00				\$2,392,760.87
Pointe Coupee	\$86,191.56		\$ 266,688.40				\$ 8,412.60		\$275,101.00
Rapides	\$497,497.14		\$ 512,777.84						\$512,777.84
St. Martin	\$197,164.80		\$ 219,009.27	\$ 430,770.19					\$649,779.46
Terrebonne	\$422,830.80		\$ 1,308,592.96	\$ 13,540.68					\$1,322,133.64
West Feliciana	\$59,062.50	\$ 1,629.20	\$ 293,668.37	\$ 159,487.49					\$454,785.06
State Agencies			\$ 796,978.36						\$796,978.36
Total PDA Costs:									\$8,030,811.43
Louisiana Threshold:									\$6,800,058.00

Based upon information from local parishes, there are approximately \$800,000 in costs associated with emergency protective measures that were incurred **prior** to the dates currently established by FEMA, but during the flood occurrence. Additionally, FEMA disallowed more than \$1 million in costs that were incurred by Terrebonne Parish and the Atchafalaya Basin Levee District because they were incurred during June 2019 (while the flood incident was still occurring), but **after** FEMA closed the incident period. Affected portions of Tensas and West Feliciana parishes remain inaccessible because the flood water has not receded enough to accurately assess all the damage. Furthermore, while the roughly \$6 million cost of the temporary control structure installed in Bayou Chene is not included in this estimate (covered by EM-3413), those costs are directly related to this incident and this investment reduced the losses associated with this incident. *In total, I anticipate that in excess of \$2 million in eligible costs will be added to these totals once the incident period is amended to properly define this occurrence and all the damages have been assessed.*

(2) Localized Impact

Due to extensive backwater flooding in areas near the Mississippi River, local jurisdictions have run almost continuous pumping operations to keep floodwaters away from improved property and to keep local highways open. Those efforts have still not been able to keep up with the flow of water, as many roads remained closed throughout the flooding period. Several highways have been restricted due to the emplacement of Aqua Dams and sandbag barriers.

Homeowners and business owners have contacted the State regarding their inability to access their homes/businesses due to the continuing inundation. PDA teams continue to assess low lying areas to determine whether additional programs such as Individual Assistance and SBA loans need to be requested. Should we determine that those programs are justifiably needed, I reserve the right to request them within 30 days of this declaration being issued.

(3) Insurance coverage in force

No Category A or B Public Assistance expenses are expected to qualify for insurance coverage.

All insurance dollars for damages captured under Categories C-G (permanent work) have been taken into consideration, and anticipated proceeds reduced from the PDA estimates.

(4) Hazard Mitigation

The State of Louisiana's Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved by FEMA on April 1, 2019 and is expected to expire in April 1, 2024. It is a "standard" plan. The hazard mitigation plans for the affected Parishes have been approved and adopted. Previous mitigation efforts by the State and local governments undoubtedly contributed to a reduction of both loss to property and injury or death to individuals.

A significant recent mitigation measure taken by the State was the emplacement of a barge at Bayou Chene to serve as a temporary floodwall. That mitigation measure was taken in anticipation of USACE opening the Morganza Spillway, and also served to protect the homes of approximately 8,000 residents by keeping the flood waters from this event at a safe level. Further Hazard Mitigation assistance will continue to create a more resilient region and State.

(5) Recent multiple Disasters

FEMA is well familiar with Louisiana's historic disasters in 2005, followed by multiple hurricanes in 2008. The State has survived additional major disasters within recent years, including the following:

111 JBE 2016 (FEMA-4277-DR)

I declared a state of emergency via proclamation number 111 JBE 2016 concerning the August 13, 2016, flooding which caused major, widespread flooding throughout 14 Parishes. This event resulted in Major Federal Disaster Declaration #DR-4277. Assistance in categories A-G were provided to the State for this disaster, totaling \$742,334,392 in obligated Public Assistance funding. Due to catastrophic flooding, many entities are still operating out of temporary facilities while they are trying to rebuild their permanent facilities.

104 JBE 2017 (FEMA-4345-DR)

On September 25, 2017, I requested a Major Disaster Declaration due to Tropical Storm Harvey. On October 16, 2017, a major disaster was declared and Public Assistance was made available to the several parishes. The declaration also made emergency protective measures including direct federal assistance, under the Public Assistance program available. Assistance was provided to the State for this disaster, totaling \$10,965,000 in obligated Public Assistance funding.

127 JBE 2017 (FEMA-3392-EM)

A state of emergency was declared on October 6, 2017, as a result of Tropical Storm Nate. Emergency assistance was issued for the parishes of Assumption, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne and Vermillion. Public Assistance was obligated for this disaster totaling \$4,664,621.

Louisiana is also currently operating under two (2) states of emergency as outlined below:

91 JBE 2019 (FEMA-4439-DR)

On May 21, 2019, I requested a major disaster declaration for Individual and Public Assistance due to severe storms and tornadoes that catastrophically affected the parishes of Lincoln, Morehouse, and Union. A major disaster declaration was subsequently declared on June 3, 2019. Currently, Public Assistance has been designated for this incident.

33 JBE 2019, 42 JBE 2019, 63 JBE 2019, 77 JBE 2019, 92 JBE 2019, and 114 JBE 2019 (FEMA-3413-EM)

An emergency declaration was requested and declared on May 29, 2019, as a result of historic and continuous flood fighting. Currently, flooding is occurring along the Mississippi River largely due to record rainfall in 2019 and also due to floodwaters from rivers in other states that are pouring into the Mississippi River which are causing a rise in the river level. Parishes affected by this disaster include Assumption, Catahoula, Concordia, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, and West Feliciana.

As previously discussed, Louisiana has continued to experience flood fighting since December 2018. The Mississippi River has been above flood stage for the longest period in recorded history. State and local governments have devoted significant manpower and resources to prevent disruptions to local infrastructure. More specifically, in order to help combat the rising levels of the river, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) decided to open the Bonnet Carre Spillway (twice in one year) in order to lower floodwaters in the New Orleans area. The State also took preventative measures with the emplacement of a barge at Bayou Chene to serve as a temporary floodwall.

111 JBE 2019 (FEMA-3416-EM)

On July 11, 2019, I requested and was granted an emergency declaration in anticipation of Hurricane Barry's landfall. Since that date, Louisiana and FEMA conducted joint PDAs, determining that more than \$17 million in eligible costs were incurred as a direct result of that event. Accordingly, I have requested and anticipate a major disaster declaration for the incident.

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(6) Programs of other federal assistance

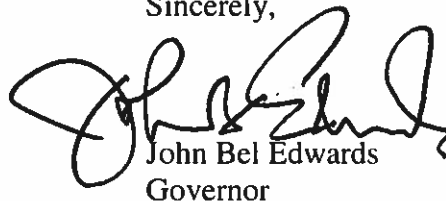
In compiling its list of eligible damages and costs, Louisiana has taken into consideration those facilities and programs for which other federal agencies are responsible, and has excluded those facilities and costs from this request.

SUMMARY

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective recovery is beyond the capabilities of the State and local governments and that supplemental Federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration for Public Assistance (Categories A-G) for the following Parishes: *Assumption, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Iberville, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Martin, Terrebonne, and West Feliciana*. Additionally, I am requesting that the incident period for this event be established from February 26, 2019, through July 30, 2019.

I have designated James B. Waskom as the Governor's Authorized Representative ("GAR") and Casey Tingle as the Alternate GAR. Casey Tingle is also designated as the State Coordinating Officer ("SCO") for this request. Director Waskom and Mr. Tingle will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and will provide further information and justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards
Governor

Enclosures: FEMA Form 010-0-13

Enclosure B: 2019 LA River Flood PDA Costs

Additional Supporting Documentation:

- (1) State Emergency Declarations (33 JBE 2019, 42 JBE 2019, 63 JBE 2019, 77 JBE 2019, 92 JBE 2019, 114 JBE 2019)
- (2) USACE Event Synopsis
- (3) 2019 Spring Flooding Timeline
- (4) 053019 NWS Atchafalaya River Brief
- (5) 061319 Louisiana Request for Federal Fisheries Disaster Declaration
- (6) CPRA Summary
- (7) GOHSEP Executive Summary of West Feliciana PDA Concerns