

Governor seeks federal disaster designation for state

## 'Assistance is necessary'

By JOAN BARRON - Star-Tribune capital bureau | Posted: Thursday, July 1, 2010



A parking sign is nearly submerged in water as a boat speeds by in the background at Glendo State Park on Tuesday. Gov. Dave Freudenthal has requested a federal disaster designation for Wyoming to cope with recent flooding. (Dan Cepeda/Star-Tribune)

CHEYENNE -- Gov. Dave Freudenthal has requested that President Barack Obama declare a major disaster for Wyoming as a result of flood damage.

The declaration would authorize the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist individuals and businesses that experienced damage or loss due to the flooding that occurred in June.

Freudenthal specifically requested assistance for Fremont County, including the Wind River Indian Reservation. He noted that other counties may be included as flooding continues and additional damages are identified.

The last Wyoming major disaster designation approved was for damage from the tornado that struck Wright in August 2005. The twister ripped through the Cottonwood mobile home park and destroyed about 40 homes.

In his letter sent this week through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's FEMA regional office, Freudenthal certified that the 2010 flood expenses are expected to be or to exceed \$7.64 million. About half of the money is for roads and bridges.

"I have determined this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments, at this time, and supplementary federal assistance is necessary," the governor wrote.

He also pointed out that nearly 400 Wyoming National Guard personnel were deployed to help with the Fremont County flooding while 50,000 volunteer hours were donated by the Fremont County Sheriff's Office and other community and faith-based organizations.

Leigh Anne Manlove, the governor's press secretary, said Wednesday the federal money will be needed for further flood damage in the state.

High water also has caused some damage in Carbon, Natrona and Platte counties.

At the request of the governor's office, a total of \$16.8 million state agency appropriations that were unspent on June 30, the end of the biennium, has been set aside in the governor's office for emergencies such as more flooding.

The governor expects some of the money will also be needed for fire suppression this summer, Manlove said.

Having the money available in the governor's office will enable quick acquisition of firefighting equipment, for example. The FEMA money would reimburse the state for these expenses.

Original FEMA flood estimates included \$3.9 million for damage to roads and bridges, \$1.4 million for protective measures, more than \$1 million for parks and recreation facilities, and more than \$625,000 for utility systems.

The federal agency also reported 38 homes damaged but not destroyed.

A number of Wyoming streams recorded record flows in June as a result of both rainfall and a cool, wet spring that added to and delayed snowmelt runoff.

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