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September 28, 2020

Yampue Gontaye
FEMA Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist

Sent via email: Yampue.gontaye@fema.dhs.gov.

RE: Request for Phase 2 Debris Cleanup Funding - Solano County

Dear Ms. Gontaye:

The LNU Fire burned into Solano County on the evening of August 18, 2020 and rapidly spread from the northern end of the Solano County at the border with Yolo and Napa counties southwest of Lake Berryessa to 1 mile south of Interstate 80 by the end of the day on August 19th. The intensity of the fire consumed 42,000 acres of hills and valley floor. CalFire and State OES reports, confirmed by the Local Fire District and the Sheriff, indicate the loss of 2 lives, at least 309 homes destroyed, and 854 structures destroyed with additional loss or damage to related structures and facilities such as septic systems, wells and critical perimeter fencing for agricultural operations. There was also damage to water utilities, with road infrastructure damage encompassing loss of 1,818 feet of guardrail, 6 destroyed culverts and over 1000 burned trees along and within road right of ways that had to be removed. In addition, 1426 power poles were burned and had to be replaced. Other impacts included loss of farm animals/livestock and extensive loss of vegetative cover resulting in exposed soil which may lead to significant erosion problems this winter. Almost all damage in Solano County occurred in the unincorporated area.

The devastation following the fire leaves many residents who lost homes in the burn area facing challenges due to lack of permanent housing for the foreseeable future. The severity of this impact is being exacerbated by the housing crisis being experienced throughout the region and is presenting a challenging situation for these seeking both temporary and permanent housing. With the re-build of permanent homes in the burn area likely a longer-term effort, many residents would like to place RV's or live in residential structures that were not damaged on burn properties where there is debris from other structures that were destroyed. Following the Disaster Declaration by FEMA on August 22, 2020, and based on advice from both Cal OES and FEMA staff, the Solano County Public Health Official declared a Local Health Emergency on August 24, 2020 and the County Board of Supervisors on September 22, 2020 confirmed the continued Declaration of Local Health Emergency and adopted an Urgency Ordinance that precludes residents from re-occupying properties with debris from burned structures in the burn area until a complete and proper cleanup has been cleared by responsible agencies. Re-population of the burn area of undamaged properties was approved by Cal-FIRE in phases with the first phase on August 27, 2020 and the last area authorized for re-population on September 14, 2020. While most residents are understanding of these provisions, the process will likely be time consuming and some have limited insurance that might not cover temporary housing such as motels for a sufficient length of time. This has increased the urgency for the County to move forward with the debris cleanup process as quickly as possible.

Subsequent to FEMA approval of Phase 1 household hazardous waste cleanup on September 4, 2020, the County initiated the work expeditiously and appreciates FEMA's commitment to fund this effort. The cleanup effort began on September 9, 2020 and remains underway. We anticipate completion of Phase 1 by early October. The County is still awaiting a determination on our August 25, 2020 request to FEMA for funding for the Phase 2 debris clean up. While some residents who have lost their homes will opt to clear debris using their insurance or private funding, many others may not have the means to complete clean up on their properties without public funding. A determination from FEMA to fund Phase 2 would provide residents clarity on how they can proceed in the rebuilding process and the type of assistance that would be available. It would also give them a better sense of when they might be able to place temporary housing such as a RV on their property.

The LNU Lightning Complex Fire impacted counties of Solano, Napa, Lake, Sonoma, Colusa and Yolo. Our understanding is Phase 2 cleanup has not been approved for any of those counties and it is unclear what threshold factors will be utilized to determine which, if not all, will be eligible for this funding. We hope consideration will be given to the fact that containment first occurred in Solano County and that we are nearly finished with the Phase 1 cleanup. The County is well positioned to begin Phase 2 cleanup and, given the extent of structure and home loss in the County being the highest in the LNU Complex Fire, there is an urgency to move forward.

Solano County has not experienced a disaster of this magnitude in recent history. Even as of the date of the writing of this letter, our understanding is the LNU Lightning Complex Fire is at 98 % containment. The County recognizes that this has been a historical fire year in California. Many regions and communities throughout the State will be seeking assistance to help their residents recover from losses that are incomprehensible. Like all those communities, Solano County is doing everything possible to help our residents. The County is well positioned to begin the Phase II cleanup process if funding becomes available. The County respectfully requests timely granting of Phase II funding and please be assured we will work cooperatively with Cal OES and FEMA to ensure the process is conducted expeditiously and properly.

Your consideration of our request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Birgitta Corsello
County Administrator

c: Members of the Board of Supervisors
 Senator Bill Dodd
 Assembly member Jim Frazier
 Assembly member Cecilia M. Aguiar-Curry
 Congressman John Garamendi