



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

March 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Lori A. Ehrlich
Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region I
220 Binney Street
Cambridge, MA 02142

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 respectfully request that a major disaster be declared for the State of New Hampshire. This request is due to impacts from severe storms and flooding from January 9-January 14, 2024, that overwhelmed State and local resources requiring an immediate and urgent response and resulted in damages being validated through the Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) process in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Grafton, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, Sullivan, and Strafford counties.

I, hereby request a designation of the full Public Assistance Program for Coos, Grafton, Rockingham, and Sullivan counties, and a statewide designation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

As a direct result of the incident, emergency protective measures were taken to protect life and property, damages to roadways and other coastal infrastructure were sustained, and considerable damage was observed to the utility infrastructure due to the strong wind gusts. State and local culverts along with other drainage structures were overwhelmed from water and debris. In some parts of the State, there was snowpack that combined with the rain resulting in increased amounts of runoff. These damages presented a hazard to the travel of the public, as well as obstacles for first responders in preserving public health and safety. Significant flooding caused extensive destruction and left debris that restricted travel and emergency operations on state, local, and private roadways. Flooding and road damage left residents trapped in their homes and prevented access by emergency personnel. The impact of the response to this event was felt throughout the local mutual aid and state systems as personnel and assets were diverted to the incident area.

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A Weather Impact Summary, which has additional information, was requested and received from the National Weather Service (NWS) and has been provided as an enclosure to this letter. The State of New Hampshire began to see impacts from the strong low-pressure system on January 9, 2024, through January 14, 2024.

On January 9, the Department of Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) conducted several weather briefings with NWS Gray, Maine, due to the anticipated impacts of the system. NH HSEM hosted three different calls, first with the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), next with the Emergency Management Directors from local communities, and lastly with public and non-public school officials.

NWS Gray utilizes a scale from none to extreme to denote the anticipated impacts of an approaching storm and gives a percentage of its confidence in the forecast. Prior to the start of the storm, NWS Gray forecast the wind, marine conditions, and coastal flooding were going to be the greatest impacts with a 75% percent confidence in its forecast. The initial briefing package described the storm as “multi-faceted,” which proved to be entirely accurate.

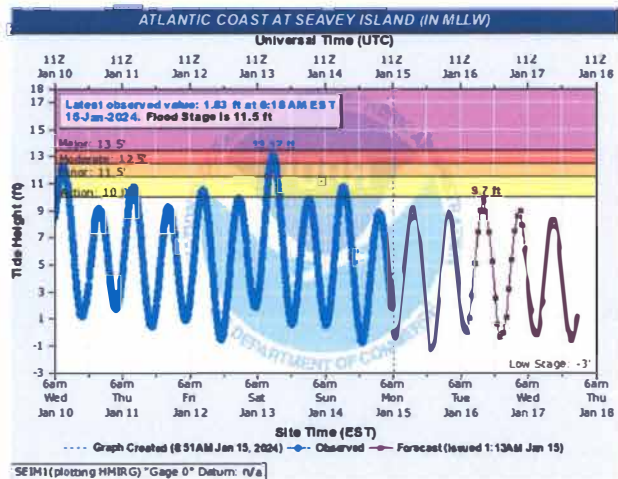
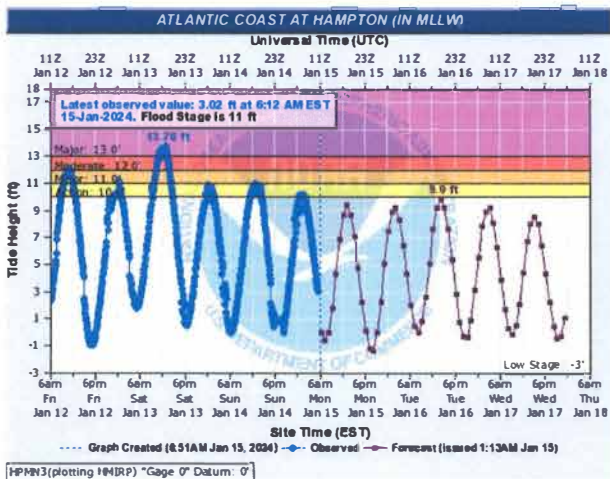
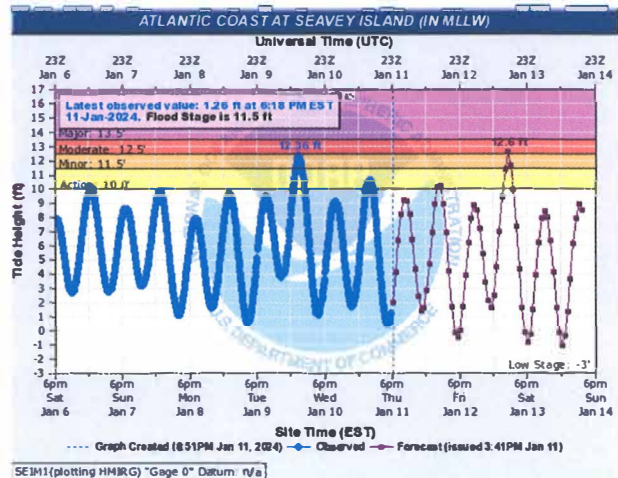
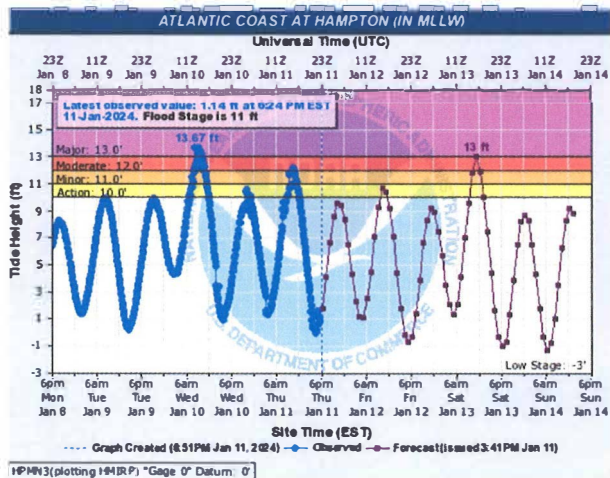
Weather briefings throughout the duration of the incident period continued to provide new and valuable information to stakeholders. In a briefing issued on January 11, 2024, NWS Gray stated, “Bottom Line: Coastal Partners need to prepare for the potential for major coastal flooding due to 2-3 feet of surge expected at the time of high tide...”. NH HSEM issued several news releases highlighting the continued impacts the State of New Hampshire experienced.

In the Weather Impact Summary provided by the NWS, they stated, “Along the New Hampshire Seacoast, moderate to major coastal flooding occurred due to the alignment of a high astronomical high tide cycle, storm surge and large battering nearshore waves.” The coastal impacts were just a portion of the low-pressure system that impacted the State of New Hampshire. Additional data is

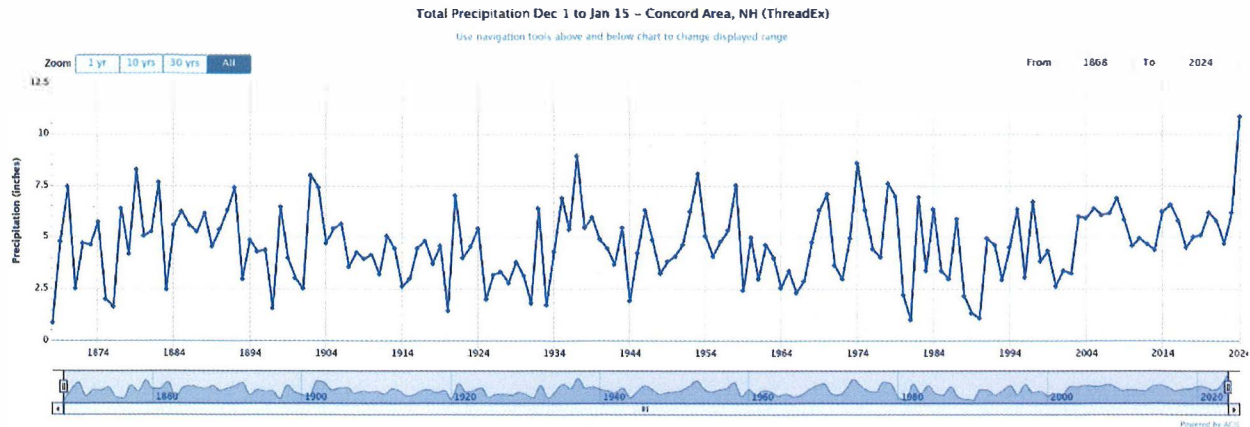
captured within the Weather Impact Summary which highlights coastal/tidal hydrographs, coastal/tidal flooding reports, wind damage reports, maximum wind speed measurements, inland flooding reports and precipitation amounts, river hydrographs, and snowfall measurements.

NWS additionally stated within the Weather Impact Summary that, “New all-time records for water level were set at Seavey Island, and the highest water level since the installation of the NERACOOS tide gauge in Hampton, NH in 2012.”

The two Coastal/Tidal hydrographs provided below highlight the impacts on the Atlantic Coast during the entire incident period.



On January 17, 2024, NWS Gray posted on their social media website a graphic highlighting the total precipitation from December 1, 2023, to January 15, 2024. Within the post, NWS Gray stated that Concord has recorded its wettest first half of winter, which includes both rainfall and liquid equivalent of snowfall of 10.87 inches.



Prior to 2024, the next closest record was in 1937 where the total precipitation was 8.92 and after that was 1974 with a total 8.59. On February 3, 2024, NWS Gray posted on their social media website a graphic titled, “January 2024 Climate Summary,” which showcased that this past January was the second wettest on record.

NH HSEM staff began the Initial Damage Assessments (IDAs) while response efforts were still ongoing knowing the magnitude of impacts to local and state infrastructure was so severe. Based on IDAs reported by local communities and state agencies, the Director of HSEM Robert M. Buxton, requested the Joint PDA process on February 7, 2024, and they began on February 20, 2024.

On February 13, NH HSEM staff and FEMA Region I Recovery staff completed a coordinating call discussing the onset of the Joint PDAs. It is important to note that when this meeting was conducted, NH HSEM staff were still completing the Joint PDAs from the impacts of the late December 2023 storm, which has now been approved as a Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4761-DR-NH).

The Joint PDAs were requested for the following counties: Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, Strafford, and Sullivan. More than a dozen Joint PDAs were completed that captured damages in four different counties. From data collected during the IDA process that the State of New Hampshire completed, it was believed that the statewide indicator to access the Public Assistance Grant Program would be surpassed.

Current local and state damages have been validated and exceed the State indicator of \$2,534,653 (\$1.84 per capita). It is understood that the figures captured in Enclosure B reflect uninsured losses and the overall costs were significantly higher. The Joint PDAs validated damages to Category A - Debris Removal, Category B - Emergency Protective Measures, Category C - Roads and Bridges, Category D - Water Control, Category E - Buildings & Equipment, Category F - Public Utility, and Category G - Parks & Other. At the conclusion of the Joint PDAs \$3,004,838 (\$2.18 per capita) were validated in eligible Public Assistance damages.

Emergency protective measures were widespread throughout the entire incident period. Multiple types of emergency responses were performed in several different locations throughout the incident period:

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- Nearly 40% of entities that completed an Initial Damage Assessment with NH HSEM reported that they had individuals cut off from critical services. Many of the responses from local public safety officials were even able to provide an accurate estimate of individuals cut off from critical services due to the changing conditions at the time of the incident.
- On January 10, in Hampton (Rockingham County) the Fire Department responded to numerous flood-related incidents.
- On January 13, in Rye (Rockingham County) the Fire Department responded to a report of a structure fire.
- On January 13, in Exeter (Rockingham County) the Fire Department was notified of a parking lot that was flooding where vehicles were located.
- On January 13, in Haverhill (Grafton County) the Fire Department responded to an incident where a tree and powerline had reportedly fallen onto a residence.
- On January 13, in Shelburne (Coos County) the Fire Department responded to a motor vehicle accident where a tanker truck had gone off the road. No injuries were reported.
- On January 14, the National Weather Service activated the Emergency Alert System for a series of snow squalls moving through the entire State of New Hampshire. The notification advised drivers to slow down or delay travel and be ready for a sudden drop to near zero visibility and icy roads in heavy snow. Numerous reports were received of motor vehicle accidents and vehicles off the road on Interstate 89 between mile markers 50 and 60 (Grafton County).

Unfortunately, there were three deaths recorded by the NH Department of Justice, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) during the date range of January 9 - January 14, 2024 where the individual accidents were related to the severe storm and flooding that occurred.

NH Electric Co-Op (NHEC), Multiple Counties | Due to the impacts from the incident period, NHEC experienced damages to Category F – Public Utility. NHEC in their impact statement to NH HSEM stated the weather impacts were substantial, especially the 60-80 mile per hour wind gusts that were recorded in many locations within their service territory. This incident resulted in downed trees and limbs causing damage to their distribution system including 41 broken poles, crossarms, and more that resulted in nearly 30,000 power outages. At the peak of the incident, approximately 13,000 residents were without power. The timing of this incident in mid-winter made it especially impactful due to loss of heat, well water, and other essential services. Prolonged power outages during this time of the year can be devastating, so restoration efforts must move efficiently. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, NHEC had \$1,347,312 in validated damages.

Rye, Rockingham County | Due to impacts from the incident period, the Town sustained damages to Category B - Emergency Protective Measures, Category C - Roads and Bridges, and Category D - Water Control. The Town reported that individuals were cut off from critical services due to flood waters and damages caused throughout the incident period but were unable to quantify exactly how many or for how long. The Town reported the Fire Department responded to numerous calls for service during the incident period. Damages were sustained to the Harbor Road bridge, which required an inspection post-incident, and there also were damages to the seawall. Fire Department apparatus and equipment also was damaged with several quarts of saltwater removed from one truck. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, the Town had \$257,131 (\$46.39 per capita) in validated damages.

Hampton, Rockingham County | Due to impacts from the incident period, the Town sustained damages to Category A - Debris Removal, Category B - Emergency Protective Measures, Category C - Roads and Bridges, Category E - Buildings & Equipment, Category F - Public Utility, and Category G - Parks & Other. The Town reported that individuals were cut off from critical services due to flood waters and damages caused throughout the incident period but were unable to quantify exactly how many or for how long. Within the Weather Impact Summary from the NWS, it was stated that, "Hampton Beach was completely cut off...with all roads in and out of the area submerged in water. Numerous water rescues occurred as people were trapped in their homes with water entering." The Fire Department reported during the entire incident period they responded to between 20 and 30 calls for service. The Local Emergency Operations Center was opened for approximately 18 hours during the incident period. The Fire Department sustained damages to their secondary fire station and more than a half dozen pieces of apparatus. In addition to those items being damaged, the Town had to remove a large quantity of debris and after the storm ended began assessing the damages to roads, Bicentennial Park, and even its wastewater facility. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, the Town had \$329,830 (\$20.34 per capita) in validated damages.

New Castle, Rockingham | Due to impacts from the incident period, the Town sustained damages to Category A - Debris Removal, Category C - Roads and Bridges, and Category G - Parks & Other. The Town reported that residents along River Road and Cape Road were temporarily blocked off from essential services. Most of the impacts were sustained along the immediate shoreline which included: Ocean Street, Great Island Commons, New Castle Beach, and the intersection of River Road and Oliver Street. At the conclusion of the Joint PDA, the Town had \$76,000 (\$76.00 per capita) in validated damages.

Though unable to provide per capita impacts several other entities within Rockingham County sustained significant impacts. Damages captured during the Joint PDA process from NH Department of Transportation (DOT), NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, the University of New Hampshire, and the Division of Ports and Harbors totaled \$945,250. These in addition to those reported by the local communities in Rockingham County alone totaled \$1,657,525 (\$5.28 per capita) in validated damages.

Though the United States Coast Guard (USCG) is not an eligible agency to participate in the Joint PDA process, the damages sustained at Portsmouth Station are significant. Their IDA reported millions of dollars in damages sustained to Portsmouth Station due to the severity of the storm. The Station had waves crashing over the seawall on property resulting in standing water atop a two-story building. Portsmouth Station is an integral part of the coastal safety and security to residents and visitors. Though these damages are unable to be captured as part of the request for a Major Disaster Declaration, I ask that additional Federal resources be provided so Portsmouth Station can make the necessary repairs in a timely manner.

In total, approximately 85 Individual Assistance requests from residents have been managed by the State of New Hampshire with the assistance from 211 NH. Local communities reported damages to private properties, including basement flooding, washed out driveways and a few residences being reported as uninhabitable due to impacts. NH Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is being utilized to assist with coordinating assistance, where appropriate.

Impacts though significant are not enough for the State of New Hampshire to have requested the Individual Assistance programs through FEMA. NH HSEM has been in regular communication with the United States Small Business Administration regarding the opportunity of pursuing a Rural Agency Declaration should a Public Assistance declaration be granted.

Pursuant to the intensity of this severe storm and flooding, from January 9-January 14, 2024, I executed the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) with the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). While I did not declare a State of Emergency in New Hampshire, the nature and amount of State and local governmental resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster are as follows:

1. The SEOP was executed on January 9, 2024, and I instructed the Director of NH HSEM to prepare activation of the SEOC. At 0600 hours on January 10, 2024, the SEOC opened at an Enhanced Monitoring activation level. The SEOC returned to Steady State as of 1600 hours on January 10, 2024. At 0800 hours on January 13, 2024, the SEOC was again opened at an Enhanced Monitoring activation level. The SEOC was activated to monitor the situation, coordinate state response activities and to respond to local requests for assistance and resources, if necessary. The SEOC returned to steady state at 1900 hours on January 13, 2024, and did not reopen.

The Director was in contact with the appropriate Emergency Support Function (ESF) lead agencies to ensure an adequate and timely response to the needs of our state, should a need have been identified. NH HSEM utilizes WebEOC, which allowed state and local agencies to log requests or actions taken because of the incident.

A total of five communities activated or partially activated their local emergency operations centers to coordinate their response efforts, assess damages, monitor road closures, and respond to emergency calls for service.

A half dozen mission task requests were entered into WebEOC due to needs in local communities. These requests varied from the Town of Seabrook (Rockingham County) indicating a need of sandbags for a resident or the Towns of Rye and North Hampton (Rockingham County) needing a heavy equipment loader due to large volumes of debris in the roadway. The SEOC Mission Task Coordinator handled these requests with the appropriate ESFs.

Though at the State level Community Lifelines remained green throughout the entirety of the incident, individual communities were unable to maintain a green status for their individual lifelines. Impacts were experienced in all eight of the Community Lifelines.

Power outages and the associated impacts were monitored by staff in the SEOC. The outages peaked on January 13, 2024, around 12PM with nearly 17,000 outages reported across the four utility companies. A news release was issued due to these conditions.

Before and after the SEOC activation, the NH HSEM Duty Officer remained on an on-call basis 24/7, to coordinate the needs of local communities during the recovery phase.

2. ESFs that were coordinated with during the Activation included: Transportation (ESF 1), Communications & Alerting (ESF 2), Public Works and Engineering (ESF 3), Emergency Management (ESF 5), Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services (ESF 6), Health and Medical (ESF 8), Energy (ESF 12), Volunteer Management (ESF 14), and Public Information (ESF 15).
3. The NH DOT coordinated transportation, public works, and engineering needs across the state. Numerous roads across the state required debris removal and repairs to infrastructure.

The NH DOT Division of Operations Bureau of Transportation Systems, Management & Operations (TSMO) maintains 24/7 staffing to address needs immediately as they arise within the State. Between the hours of midnight on January 9, 2024, and midnight on January 14, 2024, an average of eight staff were on duty in the TSMO each day. These staff members answered over 1,000 phone calls and nearly 8,900 radio communications. Two days during the incident period, nine staff were utilized and on the first day 10 staff were utilized to maintain adequate staffing levels. There were an additional six district offices that supported the operations throughout the event. Their data is not represented within the previous information.

In total, more than 75 roads were logged in WebEOC as having been impacted during the incident period. The road closure board in WebEOC documents impacts to both local and state roadways and is monitored by the NHTSMO and the SEOC.

4. From January 9, 2024-January 14, 2024, the Department of Safety, Division of Emergency Services and Communications (DESC) answered 7,057 calls to 911, which is a 6% increase from the week before. DESC had 91.5 hours of overtime to ensure that staffing was adequate to handle the storm-related calls to the Public Safety Answering Points.

Additionally, DESC assisted in several different mission task requests. Two different NH Alerts messages were sent to the entire Town of Hampton (Rockingham County) advising residents and their guests to stay out of flood waters and to shelter in place, if possible. The second was the temporary installation of pan, tilt, and zoom cameras to allow the SEOC and local public safety officials to better monitor the tide cycle that was coming into the Atlantic Coast tidal gauge.

5. The SEOC maintained situational awareness of the sheltering needs within the State of New Hampshire. A mission task request was fulfilled by ESF 6 to assist in providing sheltering supplies, which included cots, pillows, cases of water and snacks. A warming center was opened at Hampton Academy to allow for individuals temporarily displaced from the flood waters to have a safe location to go to.
6. The American Red Cross was prepared to provide support and resources for unmet sheltering needs within the state, should the need have arisen.

NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery assisted with making phone calls to individuals with immediate needs who were impacted by this incident.

The State of New Hampshire continues to manage the recovery efforts for disasters, straining state, and local resources. The following is a list of active disasters that the State of New Hampshire continues to work toward close out: FEMA-4329-DR (July 1, 2017-July 2, 2017, Severe Storm and Flooding in Coos and Grafton Counties), FEMA-4355-DR (October 29, 2017-November 1, 2017, Severe Storm and Flooding in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Grafton, Merrimack, and Sullivan Counties), FEMA-4370-DR (March 2, 2018-March 8, 2018, Coastal Storm and Flooding in Rockingham County), FEMA-4457-DR (July 11, 2019-July 12, 2019, Severe Storm and Flooding in Grafton County), FEMA-4516-DR (January 20, 2020-May 11, 2023, COVID-19 statewide), FEMA-4622-DR (July 17, 2021-July 19, 2021, Severe Storm and Flooding in Cheshire County), FEMA-4624-DR (July 29, 2021-August 2, 2021, Severe Storm and Flooding in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties), FEMA-4693-DR (December 22, 2022-December 25, 2022, Severe Storm and Flooding in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties), FEMA-4740-DR (July 9, 2023-July 17, 2023, Severe Storm and Flooding in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Cheshire, Grafton, Rockingham, and Sullivan Counties) and FEMA-4761-DR (December 17-December 21, 2023, Severe Storm and Flooding in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties).

Calendar year 2023 was an extremely impactful year on state and local resources due to several serious weather events. The State of New Hampshire submitted a disaster declaration for eight Counties due to a severe winter storm and snowstorm that impacted communities from March 13, 2023-March 15, 2023. At the initial conclusion of Joint PDAs more than \$2,649,138 in damages were validated by FEMA. In late December 2023, I received notice that the original decision of a denial was upheld despite the submission of an appeal by our state.

On July 28, 2023, I submitted a major disaster declaration request due to severe storm and flooding that impacted communities on April 30-May 1, 2023. Though we did not exceed the Statewide indicator, the local impacts in communities especially within Carroll County were substantial. The Town of Ossipee (Carroll County) had a total of \$1,188,207 in validated damages, \$271.78 per capita and the Town of Madison had a total of \$116,215 in validated damages, \$45.31 per capita. FEMA issued a denial of this major disaster declaration request, too.

The State of New Hampshire maintains a State Hazard Mitigation Plan that was approved and adopted on September 27, 2023, under the 2023 State Mitigation Planning Policy Guide issued by FEMA. This updated plan outlines an over-arching goal to identify how climate change impacts natural hazards, as well as mitigation strategies. The plan addresses the impacts of the ever-changing frequency, timing, location, and extent of inland flooding. Additionally, the plan added a section that addresses high hazard potential dam vulnerabilities.

The impacts from the January 9, 2024-January 14, 2024, severe storm and flooding could have been more severe if mitigation work was not previously accomplished. The State of New Hampshire, in collaboration with the FEMA, has had progressing success in making use of available funds via Section 404 mitigation programs. Since Tropical Storm Irene (August 28, 2011), the State of New Hampshire has utilized over \$18,900,000 in Section 404 funding toward mitigation projects throughout the State.

The State remains committed to pursuing funding available through Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) programs including the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC). Both HMGP and BRIC share a common goal of increasing the resiliency of the towns within our State. For example, in February 2023, the State submitted applications under the Notice of Funding Opportunity for BRIC Federal Fiscal Year 2023 in the amount of \$1,583,793.32, which includes several projects and local hazard mitigation plan updates. Furthermore, the State applied under HMGP 4693 for the sum of \$191,086 and over \$6.5 million in applications under the Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams program. Furthermore, through the FEMA Public Assistance Program, the State strongly encourages communities to participate in Section 406 mitigation programs. Since 2011, nearly \$2 million has been obligated through the Section 406 mitigation program. Mitigation continues to be an important conversation that takes place with communities early in the recovery process.

Given the severity and magnitude of this natural disaster and the events that have transpired from the January 9, 2024-January 14, 2024, incident and since then, Federal assistance is necessary to supplement the efforts and available resources of the state and local governments to recover from disaster related losses. Additionally, as required by 44 CFR § 206.36 (c)(5), I certify that all state and local government obligations and expenditures for the current disaster will comply with all applicable cost sharing requirements of the Stafford Act.

For New Hampshire local jurisdictions, the greatest remaining unmet recovery need associated with this severe storm and flooding is financial assistance to help avoid economic shock to businesses and families through local property taxes. Without federal assistance, the ability of the communities within the State of New Hampshire to recover in a timely manner and avoiding long-term economic damage is severely hindered.

Thank you for your consideration of this Major Disaster Declaration Request. I look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor

Enclosures: OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
B: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance
C: Estimated Assistance from Other Federal Agency Programs
National Weather Service, Weather Impact Summary