

# RECOVERING & REBUILDING FROM OREGON'S 2020 WILDFIRES



## KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Report Presented by the Governor's Wildfire  
Economic Recovery Council

January 4, 2021



KATE BROWN  
Governor

January 2021

Dear Oregonian,

The 2020 wildfire season was unlike any Oregon has experienced in recent memory. Horrific wildfires decimated forests and communities, places so many of us love and call home. With over a million acres burned and thousands of homes and businesses destroyed, the impacts of last year's wildfires on communities, jobs, and local economies will last for months and years to come.

The challenges presented by the devastation of last year's wildfires—combined with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic—have upended the stability of families across Oregon and altered many aspects of daily life we once took for granted. Additionally, the pandemic and the fires exacerbated existing racial disparities, disproportionately impacting Oregon's Black, Indigenous, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Tribal communities. Oregon will recover from the wildfires, and as we do, our decisions and priorities must reflect, support, and honor the communities who bore the brunt of the devastation.

While I saw firsthand how fires can quickly and completely alter our landscapes and our communities, amidst the ash and char I also saw what makes our state great—Oregonians coming together to support one another in their greatest time of need. I thank all Oregonians who donated their time, money, and personal items to those who lost everything in the wildfires; you truly reflect the Oregon spirit.

I would also like to thank the members of the Wildfire Economic Recovery Council for their work over the past several months in addressing economic recovery for impacted communities, including centering equity, fairness, and justice in their decision making. This report reflects the community voices heard and the needs identified throughout their process. The Council's recommendations can guide us as we navigate the state's continuing recovery and rebuilding process.

Despite all the challenges, I remain hopeful as I think about the new growth that will eventually sprout and take root on the forest floor. Some types of trees actually come back stronger after fires— with the right support, our communities can do the same. I look forward to working with the Oregon State Legislature and other partners in taking action on the Council's recommendations and rebuilding an even stronger, more inclusive, more resilient Oregon.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
IMPACTS, BARRIERS, & NEEDS.....	3
KEY FINDINGS & ACTIONS TAKEN.....	4
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES .....	5
GOVERNOR’S WILDFIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY COUNCIL .....	7
COUNCIL MEMBERS.....	8
THE AFTERMATH: IMPACT, BARRIERS, & NEEDS .....	10
BARRIERS & NEEDS .....	11
RECOVERY & RESILIENCE: KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS TAKEN .....	14
THE GOVERNOR’S RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR WILDFIRE RECOVERY.....	14
HOUSING & WRAPAROUND SERVICES .....	14
DEBRIS & CLEANUP.....	17
RECOVERY & REBUILDING .....	18
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) PARTNERSHIP .....	19
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (OEM) ACTIONS .....	20
REGIONAL PARTNER ACTIONS .....	22
LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS & POLICIES .....	22
SOLUTIONS FOR OREGONIANS: RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES .....	23
HOUSING & SHELTERING .....	23
DEBRIS & CLEANUP.....	24
RECOVERY & REBUILDING .....	25
CONCLUSION.....	28
APPENDIX .....	30
1. TIMELINE OF IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNOR AND STATE AGENCIES PRIOR TO THE CREATION OF THE WILDFIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY COUNCIL.....	30
2. OREGON 2020 WILDFIRE RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART.....	31

*This report was written and compiled by Matthew Garrett and Ariane Le Chevallier in close collaboration with the co-chairs and members of the Governor’s Wildfire Economic Recovery Council.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, wildfires in Oregon burned more than 1.2 million acres statewide, with some of the largest and most devastating fires worsened by a severe windstorm on Labor Day that spanned eight counties (Clackamas, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, and Marion). In the aggregate, these fires destroyed more than 5,000 homes and commercial structures. The impact to communities across the state was devastating.



Wildfires wiped out entire towns, leaving wildfire survivors to pick up the pieces of their lives, while also navigating complications related to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as systemic inequities. Communities that were already vulnerable, including undocumented workers and families in low-income communities, were among the hardest hit—and they are struggling the most to recover and rebuild. That so many wildfire survivors were already living in high-risk conditions is a direct result of systemic inequities that have been perpetuated by racism and poverty.

With over a million acres burned and thousands of homes and businesses destroyed, the impacts of this wildfire season on jobs and local economies will last for months and years to come. Southern Oregon was especially devastated, with entire communities being wiped out and Oregonians being left without homes, jobs, or even local businesses to go to.

The recovery requires an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to meet people where they are, assess their needs, and work collaboratively for the best solutions in each community. In addition, it will be critical to listen to individuals in communities to gain a deep understanding of barriers and needs.

### Impacts, Barriers & Needs

In a matter of weeks, wildfires across the state burned more than 1.2 million acres of land and took the lives of nine Oregonians. In all, these fires destroyed more than 5,000 homes and commercial structures, and displaced thousands of Oregonians.

Based on a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) conducted by FEMA, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and other state agencies and local governments, the state estimates a total cost of \$1.15 billion in wildfire/wind damage, response costs, and debris removal.

“For many evacuees, the crisis heightened mental health issues and their ability to cope. At a time when families need the most support, they are also facing multiple hurdles to maneuver around. We need to help people through those hurdles, so they have less obstacles.”

~ Melissa Bauer, Santiam Hospital,  
Stayton, OR

Faced with an urgent need to provide immediate, short-term, and long-term support for wildfire survivors, Governor Kate Brown created the Wildfire Economic Recovery Council to build a

roadmap for recovering and rebuilding from the 2020 wildfires. Some of the greatest impacts and barriers to recovery that emerged from the Council's work include:

- **Loss of homes and affordable housing:** The biggest community impact was the loss of at least 4,021 homes. Southern Oregon was particularly hard hit, and some of the housing that was destroyed was also among the most affordable for families.
- **Debris and cleanup:** Debris and hazardous materials, such as fallen trees and destroyed buildings, covered many affected areas across the state, leaving entire communities with overwhelming amounts of wreckage. This has prevented some families from beginning the rebuilding process.
- **Lack of financial resources:** Many of the residents who were the most affected by this disaster were already living in inequitable conditions prior to the wildfires. Some families had lost jobs due to the pandemic, and many families were already vulnerable prior to the fires.
- **Citizenship status concerns:** Undocumented residents have been substantially affected due to language barriers and citizenship status concerns related to FEMA funding and lack of translation of resources and information.
- **Lack of individualized case management:** Many residents have struggled to find resources and information about available programs, including FEMA programs, shelter, housing resources, food, and other basic necessities.
- **Rebuilding obstacles:** Many residents have had issues with starting the rebuilding process, from debris covering land, to accessing homeowner's insurance, to accessing FEMA resources, to contractor and land availability/use issues.
- **Lack of emergency alerts:** Residents in some counties, and specifically in Jackson County, reported that they did not receive any emergency alerts at all.



## Key Findings & Actions Taken

The Governor's Wildfire Economic Recovery Council began meeting on October 5, 2020 to evaluate the economic and community needs of Oregonians.

The Council established a regional response team that included representatives from FEMA, Regional Solutions, and key state and local agencies. The regionally focused recovery and rebuilding approach enabled federal, state and regional partners to respond to the unique impacts, barriers and needs



of the communities most impacted. Nonetheless there have been limitations. The Council identified three key areas of focus:

1. *Housing and sheltering*: More than 2,000 people sought emergency shelter following the fires. The state worked with the American Red Cross early on specific to sheltering wildfire survivors. Beginning December 31 sheltering responsibilities transitioned to the Oregon Department of Human Services and Oregon Housing and Community Services to identify needs and develop creative solutions for both temporary and permanent housing and sheltering. The availability of affordable housing continues to be a barrier.
2. *Debris and cleanup*: The state worked with FEMA and other partners to identify resources to assist Oregonians with debris removal.
3. *Recovery and rebuilding*: With more than 5,000 homes and structures lost, the Council worked with community leaders and state and local agencies to assess the damage and begin providing resources and information for communities to start the recovery and rebuilding process.

Over the past three months, the Council received presentations from wildfire survivors, community organizations, federal, state and local government agencies, nonprofits, business leaders, elected leaders, and other community leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers and needs. A more detailed summary of actions that have been taken since the Council's creation are included later in this report.

## Key Recommendations & Opportunities

The recovery has required a specific focus on real people and the real impacts of the wildfires. The Council identified recommendations and next steps needed to get Oregonians on a more hopeful and sustainable path to recovery and rebuilding. Highlights of some of the recommendations are as follows (*see the full list of 23 recommendations later in this report*):

### *Housing and Sheltering*

- Leverage public investment to rebuild the housing units that were lost in our impacted communities. Building back our communities in a way that provides equity.
- Support the Oregon Community Foundation's \$30 million Project Turnkey Wildfire Response investment.
- Pending approval of the state's application to FEMA for grant funds, implement the Disaster Case Management program as outlined in the state's funding application.
- Ensure every Oregonian displaced by the wildfires is provided with safe, temporary shelter, regardless of FEMA eligibility, until more permanent housing can be secured.

### *Debris and Cleanup*

- Provide more state and federal support for residential and commercial debris removal and cleanup efforts.
- Ensure every residential site cleared of debris by the state and at the request of the property owner is left in "ready to build" condition, regardless of FEMA eligibility.
- Review/revision of state recovery plans and the State Debris Management plan.

### *Recovery and Rebuilding*

- Use state funds to fully leverage FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to reduce future wildfire and associated risks, prioritizing communities impacted by the 2020 wildfires.

- Ensure FEMA mitigation funds are considered for all Public Assistance repair or replacement projects.
- Bolster community support and workforce development so that communities are the authors of their own recovery. This is accomplished by identifying federal, state, nonprofit, and philanthropic funds to shore up local jurisdictions in their recovery efforts.
- Address myriad utility issues related to sewer systems, broadband, water quality, and power lines.
- Expand OEM staff to include additional regional staff with a focus on wildfire preparedness, response coordination, hazard mitigation, and recovery. Focus on equitable delivery of emergency preparedness and recovery programs to ensure underrepresented community members have a voice within OEM.

## GOVERNOR'S WILDFIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY COUNCIL

Oregon Governor Kate Brown convened the Wildfire Economic Recovery Council on October 5, 2020. The Council was co-chaired by State Treasurer Tobias Read and Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle. The Governor also appointed Matthew Garrett as the Wildfire Recovery Director to manage the Council. Membership included more than 40 leaders from across the state, including elected officials, business and nonprofit representatives, philanthropy community leaders, Tribal leaders, federal delegation representatives, state agencies, and the Governor's office.



Throughout the recovery, the Governor's office has served as a central repository for key pieces of information, and coordinated efforts with state agencies and local leaders to address issues related to costs, timelines, and contracting. The Governor's Recommended Budget also includes a more than \$400 million investment in wildfire response and recovery—the largest recovery investment in Oregon's history.

The Council was charged with:

1. Assessing the community and economic impacts of the fires and assistance needs;
2. Coordinating community needs and removing barriers with the agencies on the Council;
3. Elevating issues to the Governor's Disaster Cabinet;
4. Identifying budget and policy needs related to wildfire economic recovery for the 2021 Legislative Session;
5. Working with Regional Solutions teams to coordinate state agency tools to help address fire impacts and promote economic stability, public safety, and natural resource recovery (working with local and federal partners); and
6. Apprising the Governor of any further needs.

The Council began its work by identifying a decision-making framework, which included:

- Transparency
- Ready communities to recover and rebuild
- Building back better with a focus on resilience, sustainability, and affordability
- Equity, fairness, and justice
- Providing economic opportunity
- Serving and providing access to information for marginalized groups with appropriate cultural linguistic services



## Council Members

### Elected Officials

**Tobias Read, Co-Chair, Oregon State Treasurer**  
**Val Hoyle, Co-Chair, Oregon Commissioner of Labor**  
State Rep. Christine Drazan, House Minority Leader  
State Sen. Fred Girod, Senate Minority Leader  
State Sen. Jeff Golden, Senate District 3  
State Rep. Pam Marsh, House District 5

### Community Leaders

Bobby Brunoe, Natural Resources Executive Director, Warm Springs  
Robert Camarillo, Executive Secretary, Building Trades  
Kevin Cameron, Commissioner, Association of Oregon Counties  
Mike Cully, Executive Director, League of Oregon Cities  
Jimmy Jones, Executive Director, Mid-Valley Community Action Program  
Anne Kubisch, President, Ford Family Foundation  
Deleesa Meashentubby, Executive Director of Volunteers in Medicine and Pastor at St. Mark's CME Church in Eugene  
Vonnie Mikkelsen, Chair, Oregon State Chamber of Commerce  
Matt Miller, President of Oregon Economic Development Association  
Joanne Mina, Volunteer Coordinator, Latino Community Association  
Gene Pelham, President & CEO, Rogue Credit Union  
Mike Salsgiver, Executive Director, Associated General Contractors, Oregon-Columbia Chapter

### Federal Delegation Staff

Fritz Graham, Field Representative, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden  
Kelli Horvath, Field Director, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley  
Alvin Klausen, Field Representative, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader  
Jason Little, District Director, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer  
Ali Mayeda, Deputy Press Secretary and Field Representative, U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici  
Nick Strader, Central Oregon Director, U.S. Rep. Greg Walden  
Dan Whelan, District Director, U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio

## Advisory State Agencies

Adam Crawford, Government Relations Director, Department of Administrative Services

Chris Cummings, Interim Director, Business Oregon

Peter Daugherty, Director, Department of Forestry

Todd Davidson, Director, Travel Oregon

Cindy Hunt, Chief of Staff, Oregon Department of Education

Karen Humelbaugh, Director of Workforce Investment, Higher Education Coordinating Commission

Mark McMullen, State Economist

Travis Medema, Interim Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal, Oregon State Fire Marshal

Andrew Phelps, Director, Office of Emergency Management

Jim Rue, Director, Department of Land Conservation and Development

Margaret Salazar, Director, Oregon Housing and Community Services

Andrew Stolfi, Director, Department of Consumer and Business Services

Kris Strickler, Director, Oregon Department of Transportation

Alexis Taylor, Director, Department of Agriculture

Richard Whitman, Director, Department of Environmental Quality

## Staff Support

Matthew Garrett, Wildfire Recovery Director, Office of Governor Kate Brown

Leah Horner, Regional Solutions Director, Office of Governor Kate Brown

Dmitri Palmateer, Chief of Staff to State Treasurer Tobias Read

Duke Shepard, Chief of Staff to Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle



*U.S. Senators Merkley and Wyden visit with FEMA to assess damage.*

## THE AFTERMATH: IMPACT, BARRIERS, & NEEDS



“So much of our property was scorched that there are a lot of areas where little plant life is left. Now we are living in a 25-foot trailer outside Estacada. Early on, friends and family members provided for food and emotional support and created a phone tree to keep us up to date. The Estacada Resource Center also provided essential items, including resources on recovery.”

~ Wildfire survivors Bob and Cynthia Patterson, Estacada, OR

As Oregonians began assessing the damage caused by wildfires across the state, the losses began to add up. Lives were lost. Homes were destroyed. Businesses were burned to the ground. Entire communities were wiped out. The debris enveloped the communities hardest hit. Thousands of people were left without housing and shelter. As the state began assessing the damage to structures, the focus quickly turned to recovery and rebuilding efforts. As of December 30, 2020:

9	1.2 million	4,021	1,193	2,100	\$1.15 billion	\$32.2 million
Lives lost <sup>1</sup>	Acres of land burned	Homes or housing structures destroyed <sup>2</sup>	Structures destroyed	People sought sheltered	Estimated cost of wildfire response <sup>3</sup>	FEMA Individual Assistance payments to Oregonians (as of January 5, 2021)

The economic destruction was also significant. Many people were displaced, including a large population of undocumented workers with limited English proficiency. Businesses that employed thousands of Oregonians were wiped out, leaving some Oregonians unemployed. Private industry structures including restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and other businesses were destroyed. The impact varied from community to community, and community-based organizations became quickly overwhelmed.

<sup>1</sup> The statewide reported number, in accordance with the State Medical Examiner.

<sup>2</sup> Number of homes destroyed statewide, across all fires and all eight affected counties. Over half of the homes destroyed statewide were in Jackson County. 1,600-1,700 manufactured homes were lost, with the vast majority in Jackson County.

<sup>3</sup> Estimates are based on initial assessments from local and state agencies conducted in October of 2020 and consider response and emergency protective measures. These estimates also reflect costs to repair and/or replace damaged public infrastructure to pre-disaster condition. In addition, these costs are likely to be eligible for partial reimbursement through the FEMA Public Assistance grant program. All cost share calculations are based on the current 75/25% cost share available through FEMA Public Assistance. Once the minimum obligation threshold of \$570 million is reached, there is a potential for an increase in federal cost share to 90/10%. The non-federal cost share can be met through state or local funding, or a combination of the two. Estimates do not include damaged/destroyed privately-owned infrastructure, property or economic losses.

## Barriers & Needs

While complete recovery will take a long time if it is ever to be achieved, there is an urgency in addressing many of the barriers and immediate needs of wildfire survivors. Many residents are left without homes and jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an additional barrier to recovery, with many people having lost jobs as a result of the pandemic, as well as the inability to use congregant housing during and immediately after the wildfires. With state agencies already stretched, it has been challenging to move at the speed needed.

### *Loss of homes and affordable housing*

In the Rogue Valley, the Almeda fire destroyed housing for agricultural and migrant workers and their families, many of whom may not have been insured or who face barriers to accessing governmental recovery resources. Of the roughly 2,500 homes destroyed in the Rogue Valley, an estimated 1,800 were manufactured homes or RVs, which represented most of the affordable housing stock in the area.



“My family lost our home in Talent on September 8 in the Almeda Drive Fire. I am a parent with children ages 9, 5, and 2. We were already having a tough year with the pandemic and no childcare. Early on in the pandemic, my 5-year-old started having panic attacks. After we lost our home, she started having intractable panic attacks and had to be sedated for more than a week. And a week after, she had to start kindergarten online.”  
~ Wildfire Survivor  
Courtney Bucolo, Talent, OR

Early on, the American Red Cross stepped in to assist with feeding and sheltering. However, due to the pandemic, they were unable to provide congregant housing, and had to use hotels to shelter people, which was extraordinarily costly.

As of January 5, 2021, more than 1,000 people are still sheltered in hotels. For families that are paying out of pocket, \$125 per night for a hotel room is quickly adding up and becoming cost prohibitive. As of December 31, 2020, the Oregon Department of Human Services took over responsibility for supporting those who are in temporary sheltering. The legislature will need to account for the projected cost.

Families are also facing housing insecurity due to the extraordinarily high cost of housing. While some people have places to stay and are getting food and necessities, many Oregonians are living in temporary housing, such as recreational vehicles and hotel rooms, or doubling up with others in limited accommodations.

### *Debris and cleanup*

The 2020 wildfires constituted the biggest and most expensive disaster in Oregon history. The current total cost for debris cleanup—which includes hazard trees, ash, and debris—is estimated at \$622 million. Debris and hazardous materials have left entire communities with overwhelming wreckage. This has prevented some families from beginning the rebuilding process.

### *Lack of financial resources*

Many of the residents who were the most affected by this disaster are also those who can least absorb the impacts. Some families had lost jobs due to the pandemic and many families were already stretched. Those with the fewest resources are left to depend on state support and community resources until they are able to get back on their feet.

Federal requirements for FEMA assistance are also different than some state programs. This has been particularly challenging for those with citizenship concerns or mixed family status. As people learned they were not eligible, they didn't have resources at the ready or programs to fill in the gaps to keep them in their communities.

The state's Disaster Response Fund has not had funds regularly appropriated, which also made it difficult to get resources from state agencies into the hands of Oregonians. With any emergency, it is hard to predict how and which communities will be impacted, which meant state and local agencies had to spend a lot of time understanding and researching local capacity and what resources existed within which agencies.



### *Citizenship status concerns*

Undocumented worker residents have been disproportionately impacted due to language barriers and citizenship status concerns. Many undocumented workers did not apply for FEMA funding, in part because they thought they were not eligible, but also for fear of data sharing with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Others were concerned about the "public charge" or the "public charge test," which is used by immigration officials to decide whether a person can enter the United States or get lawful permanent resident status (i.e., a green card).

### *Language barriers*

Emergency alerts and information were not provided in languages other than English in all communities, leaving communities at a higher risk. Utilizing English as the main or only language to communicate emergency alerts or share resources and available programs created barriers for non-English-speaking residents. As impacted Oregonians began reaching out for resources and information, they found materials in English only and weren't able to access language translation services when working with local response teams.

### *Lack of individual case management*

While Regional Solutions teams and community-based organizations were engaged in the key impacted geographic areas, many residents have struggled to find resources and information about available programs, including FEMA programs, shelter, housing resources, food, and other basic necessities. There is an urgent need for case managers to be assigned to wildfire

survivors. Some case workers were themselves displaced. The lack of appropriate multicultural and multilingual case workers can be attributed to institutional racism. Equitable hiring practices that change the demographic of our state’s institutions and better reflect the people they serve needs to go beyond case workers to all sectors.

### *Rebuilding obstacles*

Many residents have had issues with starting the rebuilding process, from accessing homeowner’s insurance and FEMA resources, to issues related to manufactured home park barriers, to utility issues with sewer, water, and broadband access, and to contractor and land availability/use issues.

“More than 70% of the destruction in Talent was in mobile home parks and we don’t get the option to rebuild. At least half of my neighbors didn’t have homeowner’s insurance, in part because [mobile homes] are hard to insure. We had it but my mother-in-law and sister didn’t. People don’t have empathy because of that, and they have to deal with the consequences, but it wasn’t an option for them to have it insured.”  
~ Wildfire Survivor Jocksana Corona, Talent, OR



### *Mental health concerns*

On top of the ongoing pandemic and worries about jobs and contracting COVID-19, wildfire survivors have reported experiencing mental health challenges, specifically trauma, and community organizations are seeing those impacts up close.

### *Local government offices and nonprofits are over capacity*

Many of the local government officials and nonprofit leaders in areas most impacted have reported that they do not have the capacity or resources to support the overwhelming need. Their tax bases have also been diminished. From the community perspective, they need resources to be able to begin the rebuilding process, from cleanup to debris removal to rebuilding of homes and structures. Everything takes a lot of time and families are frustrated.



“Eighty percent of structures [in Detroit] burned to the ground. Our city water system was damaged. We have one Recorder, one Clerk, and a Budget Officer. They are overwhelmed with calls. And when we look at city revenues, taxes are going down the drain beginning next year... This community will survive. For the first time, we put up a 20-foot Christmas tree with 500 people present and we will continue to do that. We hope you visit next summer.”  
~ Detroit Mayor Jim Trett

### *Lack of emergency alerts*

Residents in some counties, and specifically in Jackson County, reported that they did not receive any emergency alerts at all. Some residents went door to door alerting their neighbors that a wildfire was coming their way and they needed to evacuate immediately. Others found out via social media.

## RECOVERY & RESILIENCE: KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS TAKEN



The Council established a regional response team that included representatives from FEMA, Regional Solutions, and key state and local agencies. The regionally focused recovery and rebuilding approach enabled federal, state, and regional partners to respond to the unique impacts, barriers, and needs of the communities most impacted.

The Council identified three key areas of focus and created taskforces for each area:

1. Housing and sheltering
2. Debris and cleanup
3. Recovery and rebuilding

### The Governor's Recommended Budget for Wildfire Recovery

The Governor's 2021-23 budget dedicates \$189.5 million for recovery efforts, with \$135 million specifically set aside for Council recommendations. It also includes access to an additional \$170 million of Lottery Bond resources for investment in affordable housing, infrastructure, and community development to help these communities.

### Housing & Wraparound Services

The need for investments in immediate, short-term, and long-term solutions has been a major focus of the Council. More than 2,000 people sought emergency shelter. The Office of Emergency Management worked with the American Red Cross early on, and then began working with the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) to identify needs and develop creative solutions for both temporary and permanent housing and sheltering, as well as wraparound services. The availability of affordable housing continues to be a barrier.

Below is a table that provides the latest numbers of people currently in shelter and receiving FEMA Housing Assistance as of January 7, 2021:

Currently in hotels/motels	1,004
In FEMA Direct Housing Program	178 (71 units)
Receiving FEMA Housing Assistance	2,965
Requested FEMA Housing Assistance	20,913
Determined eligible for Housing Assistance averaging \$13,008	1,947
Deemed ineligible for Housing Assistance	13,721
Pending decision for Housing Assistance	1,992
No Decision-Insured/No Damage	3,304

### *FEMA's Role*

On October 8, 2020, the state requested a direct housing mission to help provide temporary housing for hundreds of Oregonians displaced by wildfires, which FEMA approved. Eligible residents from Jackson, Lincoln, Linn, and Marion Counties who lost their homes in the wildfires were able to apply for support. As of January 7, 2021, FEMA has provided shelter in travel trailers, RVs, and mobile homes to 71 families, accounting for 178 people.

In addition, FEMA provided grants for wildfire survivors to pay for somewhere to live while they work on permanent housing plans such as repairing or rebuilding their homes. Options included renting an apartment, house, or recreational vehicle that can keep survivors near their jobs, schools, homes, and places of worship. Funds can be used for security deposits, rent, and the cost of essential utilities such as electricity, gas, and water.

### **Temporary Gratitude: Simon Turner's Story**

Although the long year of COVID-19 and raging September wildfires left a toll on many Oregonians and made celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday a challenge, Simon Turner and his family had something to be grateful for. Turner recently signed paperwork to move into a new home. It's not a place with a picket fence, but the Turners and two other families completed necessary forms to get the keys to a move-in ready RV in a Jackson County park. They can stay through March 15, 2022, or until they find more permanent housing. The RVs are part of the FEMA temporary housing mission approved for Jackson County. RVs are being located in commercial parks where pads and utilities already exist. FEMA plans to build group sites in the affected areas so survivors can remain close to their communities, schools, and places of worship.



## *Oregon Department of Human Services and American Red Cross Sheltering*



Early on, ODHS worked closely with the American Red Cross to provide temporary housing, which was complicated by the inability to provide congregant housing in places like conference halls and schools due to the pandemic. The Red Cross ended up housing people in hotels to adhere to social distancing standards, which was extremely costly and logistically challenging.

ODHS worked with the Red Cross, counties, Tribes, and community-based organizations to support equity by extending mass care and sheltering to all populations in culturally informed ways. ODHS assessed that mass care and sheltering would be necessary well into 2021 until intermediate housing is available.

On December 31, 2020, ODHS assumed day-to-day management of shelter for people impacted by the wildfires. This work is currently being done through a contract with the Red Cross. Under Oregon's Emergency Operations Plan, ODHS is responsible for supporting the sheltering (mass care), feeding, emergency assistance, and human services needs of people impacted by disasters. In this role, ODHS will coordinate efforts among local and Tribal governments, and other nongovernmental organizations.

### *Oregon Housing and Community Services*

OHCS, which administers programs that provide housing stabilization, has played a critical role in assessing and securing sheltering and housing, as well as addressing housing affordability issues. They have proposed several solutions for ongoing housing issues as a result of the wildfires, which are included in below recommendations.

In response to the wildfires, OHCS prioritized placement of impacted households into existing projects. Under the OHCS Pipeline Affordable Rental Housing Under Development program, 3,710 units currently in the development pipeline are in wildfire-impacted counties; a portion of those are going to have units placed in service over the next 18 months. OHCS has engaged with owners of projects that will have units to place in service over the next 18 months to support them in creating priorities for housing wildfire survivors.

In addition:

- OHCS is convening the Oregon Disaster Housing Task Force as called for in State Recovery Function 5 and is developing a Disaster Housing Recovery Action Plan. This plan will help local communities by coordinating relevant state agency resources and programs that will be needed for rebuilding and recovery. Alignment of land use, zoning, insurance, building codes, environmental clearance, and the complex web of

affordable housing finance tools will all be needed as community leaders start the long-term rebuilding process.

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has deployed a disaster recovery team to assist with analysis of the wide-ranging housing impacts, and strategic deployment of available HUD resources to address unmet needs - both short-term and long-term.
- OHCS has allocated more than \$1.2 million from the \$10 million allocated by the Legislative Emergency Board for Wildfire Damage Housing Relief Program in direct payments to survivors to assist with immediate housing needs for low-income wildfire survivors. OHCS is working with the Oregon Latinx Leadership Network for assistance with this program to ensure access to state resources when survivors are not eligible for FEMA resources. OHCS has hired a bilingual temporary employee to process applications and provide communication in Spanish.
- OHCS is implementing funding “preferences” for Federally Declared Wildfire Disaster Areas to support development of affordable housing and long-term recovery efforts, beginning in 2021. The preference will be available in funding offerings for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the Local Innovation Fast Track (LIFT) program, and other housing development programs for a minimum of three years. In addition, the recent passage of the federal COVID-19 relief package includes an additional allocation of non-COVID “Disaster” Low-Income Housing Tax Credits for 11 states, including Oregon. In 2021, OHCS will also allocate existing resources specifically dedicated to manufactured housing.
- OHCS is securing the services of consulting firms with disaster housing recovery and finance expertise, using funds authorized by the E-Board.

## Debris & Cleanup

FEMA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are playing a critical role in providing financial support to states and local governments in the wake of natural disasters. In Oregon, as of December 30, 2020:

- The EPA reports that it has removed more than 300,000 pounds of household hazardous waste.
- Approximately \$25 million in federal and state funding has been spent, with debris removal just beginning.

On November 19, 2020, the state announced that no-cost wildfire ash and debris cleanup for all homes and businesses in the eight counties most affected by the wildfires would be provided. This cleanup includes manufactured home parks, second homes, businesses, and other structures. All homes and businesses destroyed by the fires will be eligible for state-led cleanup, regardless of FEMA eligibility.

Clackamas, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, and Marion Counties are eligible for the service. Home and business owners that opted into this government-led wildfire cleanup program pay no upfront costs for any cleanup work. No government agency – state, federal, or contractor – will seek payment from any



insurance policy unless it is specifically designated for debris removal or left over after the home or business is completely rebuilt.

Oregon's cleanup and recovery efforts are led jointly by the Office of Emergency Management, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Department of Environmental Quality. These agencies formed a Debris Management Taskforce to coordinate and lead debris cleanup. The debris cleanup is happening in two steps:

- **Step 1 – Household Hazardous Waste Removal (Completed):** Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) represents a public health hazard (e.g., asbestos, paint, propane). Removal will be completed by the EPA and will result in a 25% non-federal cost share responsibility. To date, the EPA has retrieved and removed HHW from more than 2,300 fire-affected parcels in eight Oregon counties and stabilized and consolidated ash and debris from more than 230 parcels along Oregon waterways, protecting water quality from toxic runoff.
  - Approximately 2,285 Right of Entry (ROE) forms were received.
- **Step 2 – Hazard Tree and Structural Debris Removal (In process):** ODOT is leading the state's efforts in the areas of hazard tree and structural debris removal. General debris removal can be covered by FEMA via reimbursement; the required non-federal cost share starts at a standard 25%. ODOT can use State Highway resources for removal of hazard trees, but removal of ash and structural debris will require other funding sources as it is not eligible for highway funding under the Oregon Constitution. The entirety of the Phase 2 work will take approximately six to 18 months to complete.
  - Approximately 1,400 ROEs have been received for Step 2, which is set to begin in January.

#### Getting the word out to affected communities

Because FEMA was supporting debris cleanup efforts, residents who sought out the services needed to fill out Right of Entry forms. When enrollment was low, OEM broadcasted ads in key counties in three different languages encouraging residents to fill out the forms, which significantly increased form completion.

## Recovery & Rebuilding

With more than 5,000 structures and homes destroyed, FEMA—alongside community and civic leaders and state and local agencies—is working with communities to start the long-term recovery and rebuilding process. Many barriers to rebuilding still exist and are outlined in more detail in the previous section.

Wildfires burn indiscriminately, but not all Oregonians have access to the resources available to recover from them. It is critical to address risks of wildfire, especially in communities that are excluded from traditional recovery methods, and those that have been disproportionately impacted by wildfire devastation. The state also needs to protect Oregonians by investing in fire-adapted communities when working toward a more resilient landscape.

Some of the key themes that have emerged related to recovery and rebuilding are:

- The importance of providing means of helping people to remain in their communities.
- Rebuilding homes and structures that are both cost effective and more energy efficient.
- Rebuilding in an equitable way that ensures communities have better access to affordable housing and other programs.

- Using this opportunity to build back better by asking communities—and especially rural communities—what opportunities are needed to lift them up in a way that hasn't been available before.
- Considering how and where we build: rebuilding more fire-resistant communities with risk reduction and mitigation in mind to avoid other hazards and threats, like floods and landslides.
- Shoring up important utility services such as power lines, sewer/septic systems, and broadband services.
- Addressing short-term revenue losses for cities and special districts due to property tax and other revenue losses.
- Updating and strengthening Wildland Urban Interface strategies codes.
- Updating hazard mitigation plans in partnership with local governments and Tribes.
- Reviewing assessments/priorities for natural and cultural resource recovery, public safety and infrastructure, source water watersheds, cultural resources, and riparian/aquatic habitat.

### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Partnership

Governor Brown requested a federal Emergency Declaration via the Stafford Act, which was approved by the President on September 10, 2020, which activated FEMA and other federal assistance for the state. The Governor then requested a Major Disaster Declaration under the Stafford Act on September 13 and received a declaration from the President two days later.



The Major Disaster Declaration makes three primary federal funding programs available to some or all counties and Tribes in Oregon through the Stafford Act:

1. The Individual Assistance program, which provides direct funding for housing and other expenses to individuals, families, and households impacted by the disaster.
2. Public Assistance, which provides direct federal assistance to local, Tribal, and state jurisdictions to offset costs associated with response and publicly owned repair and replacement.
3. Hazard Mitigation Assistance, which provides funding to reduce the future impacts of hazards.

The state estimates that there could be as much as \$220 million in Hazard Mitigation Assistance funds available to the state. The program provides FEMA funds to state or local governments for sustained measures to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people and property from natural hazards and their effects.



The program is usually engaged roughly a year out from the initial disaster and may fund projects for protecting or purchasing public or private property that experienced, or is in danger of experiencing, repetitive damage; infrastructure retrofits; soil stabilization; making homes more resistant to floods and earthquakes; using fire-resistant materials on the outside of a home; and clearing trees and brush around it. Federal funds provide up to 75% of the cost, and state and local governments provide a 25% match from local, non-federal government funds or in-kind

contributions. To receive this benefit, states are required to file a State Mitigation Plan that summarizes the hazards faced, assessment of the risks and vulnerabilities to those hazards, and a strategy for reducing those impacts.

As of January 5, 2021, FEMA has approved more than \$32.2 million in disaster assistance for homeowners and renters. When combined with low interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration totaling nearly \$50 million and an additional \$33 million in salaries, services, and goods contracts, more than \$113 million in federal funding has been approved for residents and businesses across Oregon. All told, more than 350 federal staff were deployed throughout the state.

FEMA Programs (as of December 30, 2020)	
FEMA Public Assistance	
Number of eligible applicants registered for assistance	154
Amount distributed <sup>4</sup>	TBD
Individual Assistance	
Number of people applied/receiving	25,216
Amount distributed	\$32.8 million
Community Disaster Loans	Pending <sup>5</sup>
Small Business Administration Loans	
Amount distributed	\$57.1 million
Number of businesses & households receiving	2,548

### Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Actions

OEM has played a critical role in both the response and recovery efforts from the 2020 wildfire season. For recovery, OEM has:

- On behalf of all impacted Oregonians, and through direct relationships with FEMA, OEM initiated provision of federal assistance and integrated federal programs with state response and recovery efforts, maximizing federal investments in Oregon’s recovery.

<sup>4</sup> In process, not at this stage of overall recovery effort.

<sup>5</sup> Pending – this is a government-to-government process, no applications have been submitted as of yet.

- Led and facilitated discussion amongst all state, federal and local partners to help navigate complex policies and expedite processes to ensure access to all available resources and benefits.
- Informed key decision and policy makers and established statewide priorities.
- FEMA programs initiated:
  - Individual Assistance (Including rental and housing assistance, critical needs direct payments to survivors, crisis counseling and disaster legal services).
  - Public Assistance (Including debris mitigation and removal, emergency protective measures, direct federal assistance via the National Urban Search and Rescue Program and other federal resources, and funding to assist with repair and rebuild of damaged publicly owned infrastructure).
- Identified and raised policy concerns around disaster recovery.
  - Recognized eligibility gaps and confidentiality concerns with vulnerable populations.
  - Identified and determined impact of the state's assumption of non-federal cost share to benefit and support local communities.
  - Identified duplication of efforts amongst partners to economize resources
- Implemented Oregon's Statewide Recovery Action Plan
  - Leveraged resources amongst state agencies.
  - Prioritized work by immediate, mid and long-term needs, and associated goals and objectives.
  - Coordinated with counties and municipalities to support their intermediate and long-term recovery planning efforts and operations.
- Coordinated with FEMA, EPA and co-led state agencies (DEQ/ODOT) to secure debris removal and cleanup resources.
  - Brought in disaster consulting firm (ACDC).
  - Co-led briefings for State leadership – Legislature, Governor's Office, CFO/LFO.
  - Assisted with obtaining \$55 million from Emergency board to initiate recovery operations.
- Served as statewide strategic communications lead and public information source (in direct partnership with FEMA), transitioning Joint Information Center to long-term Recovery Information Center:
  - Created and implemented statewide Strategic Communications Plan, ensuring messaging discipline and alignment of communications with statewide recovery functions and operations. All communications efforts focused on equitable distribution of wildfire recovery information deliverables and resources for all Oregonians.
  - Created and maintained of statewide recovery website, featuring current resources, guidance and information for impacted Oregonians.
- Provided direct support of information resources to local jurisdictions, both responsive to specific requests and proactively in anticipation of next steps in recovery operations.
- Educated Oregonians on available FEMA programs, including who is eligible and how to work with FEMA to obtain maximum benefits.
- Created Wildfire Recovery Dashboard, integrating multiple data sources to ensure verifiable, consistent and accessible information for decision and policy makers, media and general public.
- Hired Equity & Inclusion Coordinator to ensure translation and access services are equitably provided.

- Coordinated with FEMA, DHS and OHCS to secure immediate, short-term and long-term housing and sheltering for impacted wildfire survivors.
  - Bridging federal, state and public/private gap to align objectives.
- Began a cross-agency collaboration on emergency alert and resource translation services.

### Regional Partner Actions

In response to the recovery efforts, a regional approach quickly became necessary as each region was impacted differently. The Council established a regional response team that included representatives from FEMA, Regional Solutions, and key state and local agencies.

It has been critical to have regional teams on the ground, living and being available to assist residents in affected communities. Across the state, there are currently eight Regional Solutions coordinators, four of whose geographic areas of responsibility include fire-impacted communities. The Regional Solutions teams were activated when a state of emergency was declared, and the Governor created the Council. This allowed Regional Solutions teams to stand up regional councils and elevate issues to the Governor’s Council. Four regions were activated:

- Metro region, which covers Clackamas County
- Mid-Valley region, which covers Marion County
- South Valley/Mid-Coast region, which includes Lane and Lincoln Counties
- Southern Oregon region, which covers Douglas and Jackson Counties

### Legislative Actions & Policies

Beginning in late September, the Emergency Board started making investments in the recovery, and it is estimated that roughly \$164 million has been dedicated to date.

09.25.20 Eboard – OHCS – Wildfire Damage Housing Relief Program	\$10M
10.12.20 Eboard – ODE - Schools impacted by wildfires	\$20M
10.12.20 Eboard – OHCS - Federal Funds/FEMA Consultant	\$0.5M
10.12.20 Eboard – OHA Safe Drinking in Wildfire Counties	\$0.75M
10.23.20 Eboard – DAS Wildfire Alert System Modernization	\$1.4M
10.23.20 Eboard – ODOT - Debris Removal	\$50M
10.23.20 Eboard – OHCS Shelter Money for Wildfire Communities	\$10M
10.23.20 Eboard – Project Turnkey Wildfire Response	\$30M
12.11.20 Eboard – OSFM 2020 Fire Season Costs	\$6.6M
12.11.20 Eboard – ODF 2020 Fire Season Costs	\$29M
12:11.20 Eboard – ODOT Debris Removal	\$7M
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$164.25M</b>

# SOLUTIONS FOR OREGONIANS: RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Housing & Sheltering

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) is the lead agency responsible for sheltering, feeding, and the mass care of individuals impacted by the wildfires.

ODHS and Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) are working together on interim and long-term housing options that would—over time—transition people receiving shelter (an ODHS responsibility) into housing (an OHCS responsibility). The Council acknowledges the critical need to address and invest in the sheltering/housing crisis in the immediate, mid- and long-term.



“Manufactured home parks were equitable, at around \$350-650 per month. That is not available anywhere in our region. Affordable housing won’t come back without public investment. We also need to prepare communities for future fires, so they are better prepared for the impact of climate change. The communities most impacted had the least number of resources.”  
 ~ Hannah Sohl, Rogue Climate

Long-term, full community recovery will require replacement of lost homes, and also a commitment to creating more housing options for people of all income levels. The Oregon Disaster Housing Task Force provides the table for state agencies to align resources and programs in support of local jurisdictions efforts to work productively with homebuilders and developers in order to achieve resilient and equitable communities, and where all people have the opportunity to thrive.

Much work needs to be done and additional resources are required to restore affordable housing and protect low-income Oregonians displaced by the wildfires. Of note are manufactured home park residents. In Jackson County, of the 2,500 homes lost, roughly 1,800 were manufactured homes or RVs. These affordable homeownership opportunities may disappear without action from state and local governments.

<b>1</b>	Pursue statutory changes to HB 2896 (2019) to expand eligible uses of existing manufactured home park acquisition funds to allow purchase of land investment in infrastructure.
<b>2</b>	Provide resources to partner with Public Housing Authorities and nonprofits to acquire available land to use for manufactured home parks and/or affordable homeownership and rental housing. With a sense of urgency, securing an investment of \$10-15 million would allow OHCS and partners to begin this work this biennium. As identified in the Governor’s Recommended Budget, OHCS’s Land Acquisition and Manufactured Parks Program and Business Oregon’s Wildfire Recovery Grants and Special Public Works Fund offer revenue streams for this purpose.



3	Engage local governments in the wildfire impacted areas to review the potential of zoning restrictions or Rights of First Refusal regulations for manufactured home parks to ensure they are not redeveloped as homes unaffordable to prior residents. In reality, the private parks may not be as affordable to prior residents. The state, local government and non-profits must protect individuals from predatory practices as we rebuild.
4	Fully support the Oregon Community Foundation's efforts related to the \$30 million Project Turnkey Wildfire Response investment to secure units available for immediate occupancy.
5	Along with sheltering and feeding wildfire survivors, ODHS is responsible for disaster case management and should immediately apply for FEMA's Disaster Case Management Grant Program. Many survivors are dealing with a significant number of needs and stressors such as financial, physical, or emotional well-being. Individuals who may have suffered losses not covered by state or local government programs, as well as those whose homes were damaged by the wildfires, will certainly benefit from this type of individualized case management assistance.
6	Coordinate congressional lobbying efforts for additional federal resource allocations in support of long-term housing recovery needs, including Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) assistance.

### Debris & Cleanup

The state will incur costs outside the scope of FEMA eligibility to become Rebuild Ready. The scope of those ineligible costs is coming into clearer focus but will remain estimates until cleanup can begin and, in some cases, conclude.

In each area of the state, a specific case must be made for debris cleanup of private and commercial properties, generally based on a threat to public health and safety and/or economic recovery. Not all properties are likely to be considered eligible for FEMA reimbursement.



The Council received policy and financial questions from the Governor's office regarding what should be included as part of the Oregon debris cleanup effort. Council guidance and direction on these questions will alter the scope and cost of the Step 2 cleanup work (i.e., hazard trees, ash, and structural debris) and will ensure Oregon's cleanup efforts support the long-term recovery and rebuilding of communities across the state.

7	<i>Should the state include commercial property cleanup in its Step 2 cleanup efforts at a cost to the state currently estimated at \$44 million? Yes, the state should clean up commercial properties using funds from the \$135 million set aside in the Governor's Recommended Budget for the Council. As the state and its partners begin removing hazard trees and residential structural debris in communities across Oregon, the state should support commercial businesses becoming Rebuild Ready. Commercial insurance payments may cover the cost of commercial property cleanup for some businesses. With this recommendation, the state will incur costs for any commercial properties cleaned and look to offset those costs by recovering from commercial property owners' private insurance.</i>
---	---

8	<p><i>Should the state remove damaged concrete foundations in its Step 2 cleanup efforts at a cost to the state currently estimated at \$21 million?</i> Yes, the state should clean up concrete foundations damaged by the fires using funds from the \$135 million set aside in the Governor’s Recommended Budget for the Council. While concrete foundations may not be eligible for FEMA reimbursement on all properties, removal of concrete foundations is necessary to support rebuilding of residential homes in fire-impacted communities. Performing cleanup work without removing concrete foundations may further delay the process of community rebuilding. However, Oregon should seek FEMA reimbursement for all possible aspects of concrete foundation removal.</p>
9	<p><i>Should the state clean up all Oregon homes destroyed by the Labor Day fires, regardless of FEMA eligibility?</i> Yes, the state should clean up all destroyed residential properties, leaving properties “ready to build” if an owner requests state assistance. This recommendation would provide an equitable benefit to all homeowners impacted by these fires. It is assumed that FEMA may not approve 100% of all residential properties for debris removal, as some rural properties pose a less significant threat to public health, safety, or economic recovery. The state will incur costs for residential cleanup ineligible for FEMA reimbursement.</p>
10	<p>The Council believes a review and/or revision of state recovery plans, as well as statutory clarification on manufactured home parks destroyed in this kind of disaster, and the State Debris Management plan, is in order to capture many of the lessons observed in the wildfire cleanup. Specifically, incorporating the Right of Entry process and complications around commercial properties and manufactured housing communities. The current plan does not provide much detail around the ROE process or the legal responsibilities of park owners.</p> <p>Additional information regarding a phased or stepped approach for debris (Household Hazardous Waste, then ash and other debris), and addressing hazard trees on federal property should be considered for incorporation. Clearer roles and responsibilities for the state agencies, local governments, Tribes and organizations identified in the plan should be added. An updated plan should also reference FEMA-ineligible debris and the process/considerations for requesting waivers from FEMA or the mechanisms for the state/local jurisdiction to assume responsibility for FEMA-ineligible debris.</p>

**Recovery & Rebuilding**

Based on current estimates of FEMA eligible costs, Oregon could receive more than \$200 million toward hazard mitigation projects to reduce future risks and minimize or eliminate the impacts of hazards in the state.



This federal program requires a 25% non-federal cost share, creating a potential total mitigation fund of more than \$250 million. Hazard mitigation projects could include wildfire reduction initiatives, creation of wildfire defensible spaces around communities, and infrastructure and repairing of fire-damaged landscapes to reduce future threats of landslides, erosion, and flooding and undergrounding utilities

11	<p>Secure \$50 million from the \$135 million in funds set aside in the Governor’s Recommended Budget for the Council to fully leverage FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, prioritizing mitigation initiatives to reduce risk of wildfires and associated hazards such, as flooding and landslides. Communities impacted by recent wildfires should also be prioritized for funding.</p>
----	---

<b>12</b>	Acknowledge local capacity challenges and address the diminished tax base and supplement locally assessed property tax revenue to assist local governments in pursuing their core missions.
<b>13</b>	The 2020 wildfire season has negatively impacted many elements of municipal and Tribal infrastructure, including water/wastewater systems, municipal building, and community facilities. Attention needs to be afforded, not only to local human capacity to effectuate recovery, but to short- and long-term financing options. The state should form a Wildfire Community Capacity and Financing Team to assist impacted municipalities with navigating public rebuilding efforts.
<b>14</b>	Expand OEM staff to include regional members with a focus on wildfire preparedness, response coordination, hazard mitigation, and recovery. Coordination of assistance from FEMA requires time and expertise to the detriment of other vital recovery functions. Benefits will accrue to communities and its residents, as well as better collaboration with counties as they respond to wildfire disaster events.
<b>15</b>	Provide wildfire impacted school districts funding security and stability for at least three years. Pursue legislation to create a school district stabilization fund of \$7.5 million as their communities rebuild.
<b>16</b>	Without state assistance, cities that were devastated by the wildfires will be forced to cut services just as their residents need them the most. The state should consider backfilling fire impacted cities and special districts' short-term property tax and other revenue losses.
<b>17</b>	The Beachie Creek Fire compromised efforts underway to improve the sewer and water quality infrastructure in the North Santiam Canyon. The project is at a critical juncture in the recovery effort. The Council recommends an investment of \$10 million from the Special Works Fund to accelerate this project forward.
<b>18</b>	The Council appreciates and strongly supports the investment to fund a statewide alert system for notification to Oregonians related to COVID-19 updates, wildfires, natural disasters, and other warnings and alerts. The Council has heard from individuals about the complete lack of, or at best the inconsistent, access to multilingual emergency communications, alerts, and warnings during the Labor Day wildfires. Put simply, the need to alert residents of dangers from these unprecedented disasters has never been greater.
<b>19</b>	Multilingual, multicultural services must be strengthened to ensure all voices are heard and communicated with (written or oral) in a culturally appropriate manner and language. The Council supports additional resources be made available to ensure appropriate translation services are provided for communities impacted by disasters. In addition, emergency alert notifications need to be translated into languages other than English.
<b>20</b>	<p>Underground utilities and broadband access opportunities. Wildfire impacts to utility infrastructure were widespread. If above ground utilities were damaged in the wildfires and are to be repair or replaced, the cost to underground can be included in the repair cost through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Program (see Recommendation #11), provided the benefit/cost analysis results in a positive evaluation. This provides an opportunity to expand broadband in the impacted areas.</p> <p>The Governor's Recommend Budget includes funding the Broadband Office in Business Oregon to coordinate broadband infrastructure deployment, \$100 million for broadband service infrastructure loans and grants, and broadband service assistance. Additionally, the recently passed omnibus COVID-19 Relief bill allocated \$7 billion to increase access to broadband services for families with low incomes, rural addresses, and homes on Tribal lands. The state should aggressively pursue funding elements in the bill, including the \$1 billion to support those living on Tribal lands, plus \$300 million to bring broadband to rural communities.</p> <p>The Council strongly encourages Business Oregon and the state to work with the federal government and both public and private utilities to explore and make investments to ensure access to broadband services and underground utilities and coordinate the placement of broadband fiber in wildfire-impacted communities.</p>

<b>21</b>	The fires have brought both economic and humanitarian costs to the state, Tribes individuals, and businesses. The state should pursue a contract for an independent economist to perform work related to wildfire impacts to key business and economic sectors. Economic impacts can either be direct, where losses are the direct consequence of the fire, or indirect, where changes in business and consumer demand affect specific sectors. New data collection efforts, or a compiling of existing data sources, may be needed to support this effort.
<b>22</b>	Workforce/Equal Employment Opportunity. The state's goal is to create a qualified, broad-based workforce and a diverse pool of prime contractors. Additionally, the state must optimize opportunities for subcontractors to ensure that the benefits of any construction work are shared among the whole community. The state must actively engage the subcontracting community to help grow opportunities for minorities, women, and small businesses on all of its projects. The state must meet the workforce challenges of today as well as the future, thus it must partner with industry groups to achieve high levels of apprenticeship opportunities on its projects. Finally, it is the responsibility of all state contracting agencies to make sure that workplaces are free from all forms of harassment and provide programs to assist members of equal employment opportunity groups to overcome past or present disadvantage or discrimination.
<b>23</b>	In the Governor's Recommended Budget significant investments are directed to agencies responsible for safe and effective fire suppression and response. The Council wants it understood that this level of financial investment must come with accountability obligations for these agencies to implement financial and performance management oversight tools to ensure all objectives are understood and achieved and that all are held accountable to clear and consistent performance metrics.

## CONCLUSION

The primary goals of the Governor's Wildfire Economic Recovery Council were to assess the impacts of the 2020 wildfires, understand the barriers and needs to start on the road to recovery and rebuilding, and make specific recommendations that would allow wildfire survivors and affected communities to get back on their feet, stronger than before.

The magnitude of the devastation continues to remain a challenge. Most notably, the loss of homes and housing, as well as the loss of businesses, has severely impacted entire communities and their economies. Oregonians are still dealing with the fallout and the trauma of lost lives and property, and many are unable to meet their basic needs. Oregonians need immediate assistance and long-term solutions that will lift them up and build back better.

Many families were already living in inequitable conditions, which is a direct result of systemic barriers that have been perpetuated by racism and poverty. That Oregonians with language barriers and citizenship status issues are among those struggling and have the most barriers is a clear indication that the state still has a lot more work to do to advance racial justice.

What gave the Council hope was the stories of the wildfire survivors who advocated for their communities and asked for more than just replacing lost belongings. They want their communities to be built back better and stronger—and they want their community members to come back and stay in their communities. In addition, community organizations were lifelines for so many families. This is both inspiring and indicates that the social safety net needs to be shored up, especially in times of crisis.

This report summarized key findings, actions taken to date, as well as key recommendations for building a more resilient and hopeful road to recovery. In assessing the Council's work, the focus is on what the Council was originally tasked with and the status of each of these tasks:

1. **Assessing the community and economic impacts of the fire and assistance needs.** The Council gained a much deeper understanding of the impacts on the various communities that were most devastated by the wildfires. There is still more listening and learning needed to truly understand specific barriers that are complicated and part of larger systemic inequities, particularly with issues related to citizenship status and socioeconomic status impacts.
2. **Coordinating community needs and removing barriers with the agencies on the Council.** The Council was able to effectively coordinate among state agencies to remove many barriers, particularly related to FEMA programs and debris cleanup. Council members worked diligently to bring the right voices to the table and to listen to their concerns and needs. The high need, combined with the ongoing pandemic and the magnitude of the devastation, has challenged state and local officials to find the right level of resources to meet the need.
3. **Elevating issues to the Council.** The Council proactively reached out to and heard from professionals from neighboring states on their wildfire response and recovery experiences, received briefings from state agency leaders directing efforts related to sheltering, housing, mass care of wildfire survivors, debris cleanup, and recovery activities, as well as heard from community members and organizations serving those most impacted.

4. **Identifying budget and policy needs related to wildfire economic recovery for the 2021 Legislative session.** The recommendations in the previous section offer budget and policy opportunities.
5. **Working with Regional Solutions teams to coordinate state agency tools to help address fire impacts and promote economic stability, public safety, and natural resource recovery, working with local and federal partners.** Coordination within regions to remove barriers, particularly related to individualized case management, and support for local governments and community organizations could have worked more effectively. The Council believes the right combination of people served in the regional recovery teams. However, coordination and communication needed to be more consistent.
6. **Apprising the Governor of any further needs.** The appointment by the Governor of Wildfire Recovery Director Matthew Garrett allowed for a clear line of communication between the Council and the Governor. The Governor was briefed weekly on the Council's work.

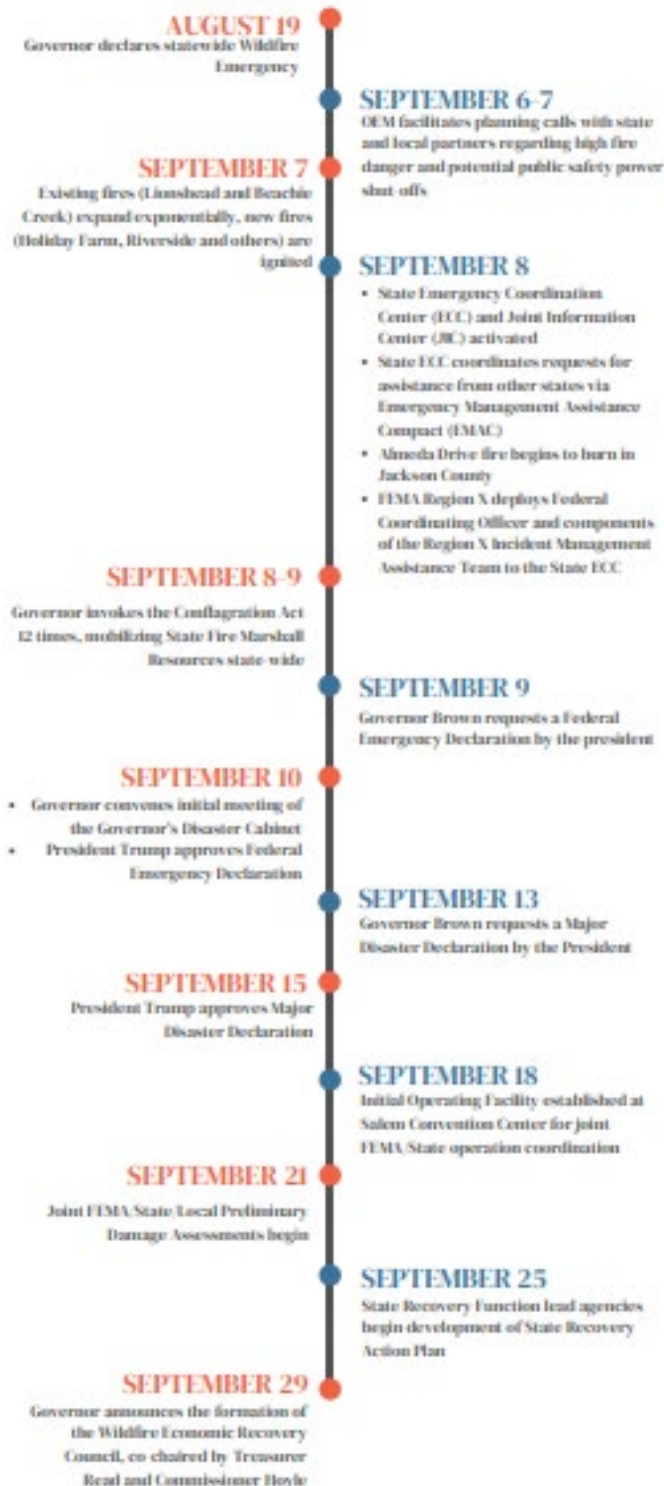
The most immediate needs, which were identified by the Council and served as the focus of the recommendations, are issues with housing and sheltering, debris and cleanup, and recovering and rebuilding. The most critical next step will be engaging the Oregon State Legislature. It is the Council's sincere hope that the recommendations outlined in this report will provide the Governor and the Legislature clear direction on how the state can most effectively help Oregonians to build back better and stronger than ever before.

*Please contact the Governor's Wildfire Recovery Director Matthew Garrett at [matt.garrett@oregon.gov](mailto:matt.garrett@oregon.gov) if you have questions about this report or would like to speak with someone about the state's wildfire recovery efforts.*

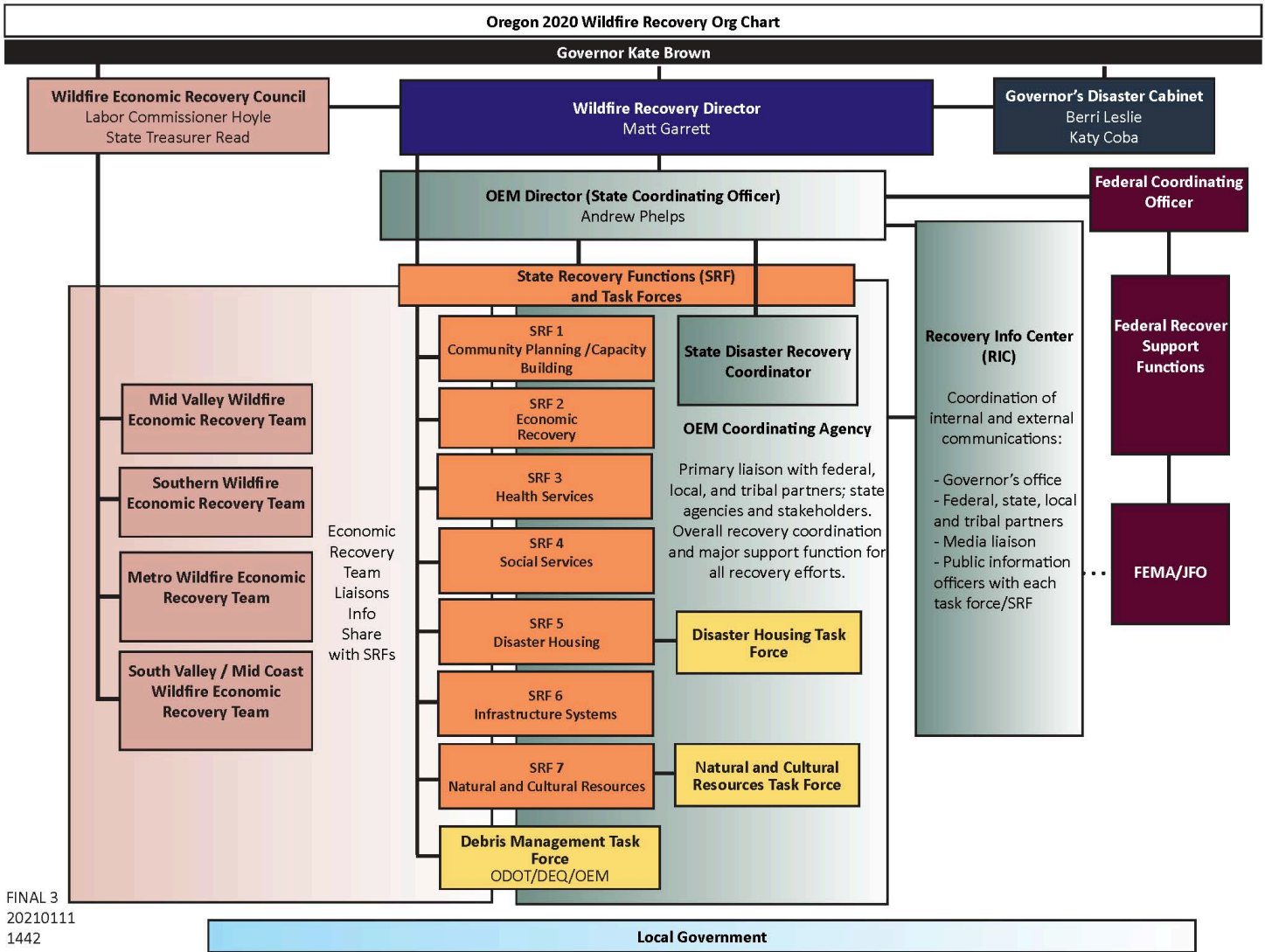
## APPENDIX

The appendix includes two additional documents:

1. Timeline of immediate actions taken by the Governor and state agencies prior to the creation of the Wildfire Economic Recovery Council.



## 2. Oregon 2020 Wildfire Recovery Organizational Chart



FINAL 3  
20210111  
1442