

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2022

Mr. Randy Moore
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: U.S. Forest Service Burned Area Rehabilitation at Bolt Creek Fire in Washington State

Dear Chief Moore,

We write to request immediate support from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Burned Area Rehabilitation Program for the Bolt Creek Fire in Washington state. To protect U.S. Highway 2 and surrounding communities from landslides and flash floods, it is critical lands affected by the Bolt Creek Fire are treated as soon as possible.

The Bolt Creek Fire is one of the largest fires to burn in Washington state this fire season, and has burned more than 14,000 acres of land that are along a key east-west connector for our state—U.S. Highway 2 (US-2). This fire has burned for almost two months, resulting in at least seven closures of US-2. US-2 is the main evacuation path and a critical route that carries 3.6 million tons for freight each year, and over 22,000 vehicles that use the road every single day throughout communities along the Highway-2 corridor. It is widely known that wildfires will have lasting effects on the landscape, including increased risk of severe flooding, erosion, landslides, and other geo-hazard activity.

We appreciate that USFS sent a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team to the area on October 25, 2022 to evaluate the post-burn landscape. The Initial USFS BAER team report illustrates that locations downhill and downstream from burned areas are highly susceptible to flash flooding and debris flows, especially in and near steep terrain. In addition, a significant amount of watershed land has been recorded as burned—potentially impacting water quality, soil stability, and vegetation in the area. According to this report, nearly 23,000 acres of watershed burned and at least 47 percent of acres have a high to very-high risk of erosion hazards from the Bolt Creek Fire. These factors are likely to result in multiple high risk hazards throughout the US-2 corridor, including high magnitude of consequence events such as runoff, road washout, debris flows, tree and rock falls, snags, and decreased hydrologic function that can all have consequences to our communities, culture, and economy in the Pacific Northwest.

Winter weather is fast approaching, likely resulting in increased precipitation and other weather events that can induce geo-hazards under these conditions. We request the immediate treatment of these USFS lands under the Burned Area Rehabilitation Program. Early action is critical to preventing harm to local communities, Washington state, and commerce throughout the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress