

October 30, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As members of the Washington state delegation, we write in support of the Colville Business Council's October 17, 2024, request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation due to devastating wildfire damages incurred from July 17 through August 21, 2024. We implore you to approve the request for assistance as quickly as possible.

Before the fire, the Colville Reservation experienced severe drought conditions. This, combined with extreme heat, dry weather, and gusty southwest winds, created dangerous wildfire conditions. On July 17th, lightning strikes ignited fires on the Colville Reservation, prompting the Colville Tribes to activate their Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Many homes were immediately at risk, forcing hundreds of residents to evacuate. The fires caused extensive damage to critical infrastructure, disrupted essential community services, and left residents without power and communication systems, leaving entire communities isolated and vulnerable for an extended period.

An initial damage assessment by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation revealed extensive damage to critical infrastructure and cultural resources, causing significant disruptions to the Tribe's daily life. Over 57,000 acres of land were burned, including rangeland and agricultural areas vital for traditional foods and traditional medicinal plants, posing long-term threats to Tribal food security, health, and cultural practices. Additionally, 61 culturally significant tribal sites were burned, causing profound mental and emotional stress to the Tribe.

We reiterate our full support for the Colville Business Council's request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, including a 10 percent cost-share approval.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress