

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

January 26, 2017

Michael Young, Acting Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250


Dear Acting Secretary Young:

We are writing to encourage the United States Department of Agriculture to formally declare a Secretarial Disaster Designation for Malheur County, as well as other Eastern Oregon counties affected by severe, historic and prolonged winter weather from December through the present. These communities have already suffered significant losses, including the collapse of roofs on onion packing facilities, hay barns and small businesses due to extreme snow loads. For instance, the night of January 18, it is estimated that an additional 12-16" of snow dropped on top of significant existing snows in areas around Nyssa and Ontario.


We understand the full tally of these losses cannot yet be compiled since many roads, including Interstate 84, have been intermittently closed and local citizens are still digging out to care for their animals, stabilize their operations and determine the damage. Further, there is serious concern about flooding risks as the frozen rivers thaw, as well as livestock and calving losses connected to the extreme and prolonged cold weather.

As you know, a Secretarial Disaster Designation sets in motion the ability for farmers and local businesses to be eligible for loans, insurance relief, and other assistance. This relief is desperately needed by these communities, to rebuild and get back to a normal routine. We thank you in advance for your expedited review of this designation request and look forward to working with you to rebuild Oregon's towns and economies.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator