

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 20, 2018

Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for recently visiting Oregon, where you had the opportunity to hear firsthand the efforts underway to provide a more coordinated and data-informed approach to wildfire and forest management. Your attention to Oregon wildfires is timely, as wildfire season is well underway in our state. In addition to the nearly 200 lightning-start fires burning in southern and central Oregon, the fast moving Substation Fire is currently engulfing wheat fields in eastern Oregon. Right now, that fire is the number one national priority.

This type of fire has not been seen in decades and has done untold economic damage to Oregon's farmers. Wheat is a top ten Oregon commodity, valued at nearly \$186 million, and this year's wildfires are expected to have a significant impact on our statewide economy. It is with urgency we write to request that the Department of Agriculture provide any emergency assistance possible for farmers affected by wildland fires in Oregon.

As you are well aware, this summer's wildland fire season is off to a hot, dry, and active start. Already, several fires, including the Substation Fire in Wasco and Sherman counties made worse by high winds, have burned tens of thousands of acres in Oregon, including significant amounts of farmland. The fire has already claimed the life of one farmer. The state of Oregon has declared a statewide emergency.

Our concern is that federal programs such as crop insurance, or even normal disaster assistance, are not sufficient for this type of disaster. Highly rural areas like Sherman County rely on volunteers for firefighting, and very few farms in the wide open wheat fields of Eastern Oregon are prepared for the type of fast-moving fire that has engulfed these counties this week. The community needs provisions for fighting fires, reimbursement for costs already incurred, and assistance to either replant or otherwise stabilize the soil until the next planting season. We hope that the Department of Agriculture works closely with the affected farmers to determine the best aid possible.

Please provide any and all possible emergency assistance for these farmers, including reimbursement for firefighting costs.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon