Governor Polis Requests Major Presidential Disaster Declaration to Unlock Federal Support for Southwestern Colorado Flood Recovery

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2026

DENVER — Today, Governor Jared Polis formally requested an expedited Major Disaster Declaration (MDD) from President Trump through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support recovery from devastating flooding and debris flows in Southwestern Colorado. The request seeks FEMA Public Assistance (PA) and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for Archuleta and Rio Grande Counties following severe storms that occurred from October 22-25. If approved, the declaration would provide federal assistance to help repair damaged infrastructure and reduce future flood risks.

“Devastating flooding has damaged homes and businesses, washed away roads, and disrupted the basic services Southwestern Colorado families depend on.

Colorado has deployed rescue teams, delivered supplies, quickly restored use of roads, and committed state funding to help communities respond and recover. The damage documented so far exceeds what state and local resources can address alone. I am asking President Trump to swiftly approve this request to help restore essential services, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and support these communities on their road to recovery," said Governor Polis.

The State worked quickly with FEMA and local partners to validate almost $27 million in PA eligible damages in Archuleta and Rio Grande Counties alone. Due to the magnitude of the damages, the State made this request on an expedited basis to receive support as quickly as possible. The State will continue the joint damage assessments with FEMA and local governments in additional impacted counties and will add those to the request as those damages are identified.

On October 22, Governor Polis declared a disaster emergency for Alamosa, Archuleta, Dolores, Hinsdale, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, Ouray, Rio Grande, San Juan, and San Miguel Counties and amended the declaration on October 23 to include Conejos County. These declarations activated the State Emergency Operations Plan, authorized emergency spending and purchasing, and authorized Colorado National Guard support for flood response, evacuations, and search and rescue. Colorado mobilized nearly 100 National Guard members with aviation and ground resources, rescued 48 people and 31 animals, deployed incident management teams and state field personnel, and delivered food, water and supplies. State agencies worked alongside local officials, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and community organizations to reach stranded residents, support evacuations and sheltering, and restore access to areas cut off by the flooding.

Joint damage assessments conducted by state, federal and local officials have already identified $26.989 million in PA-eligible costs across Archuleta and Rio Grande counties alone. This preliminary estimate reflects only sites that assessment teams could safely inspect during the initial assessment period. Approximately 100 homes in Archuleta County remained inaccessible as of October 29, meaning that additional damage and costs estimates will be documented as access in the area improves. State, federal and local officials are continuing the work to identify damages in the other impacted counties.

The assessments identified approximately $10.6 million in damage to local roads, bridges and culverts; $2.44 million in damage to public utilities; and $8.59 million in damage to parks and recreation facilities. Emergency protective measures account for another $4.16 million, with additional costs identified for water control facilities, public buildings, and debris removal.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe, whose lands were also impacted by severe flooding, will pursue FEMA assistance independently from the State's request. Colorado has worked closely with Tribal leadership throughout the flood response and recovery planning and supports the Tribe's chosen path to securing federal assistance. State

officials and resources remain available to assist with coordination of recovery needs.

The Governor's MDD request seeks:

- Public Assistance, Categories A-G: This includes support for eligible recovery efforts that threaten essential public infrastructure. Eligible support includes debris removal, emergency protective measures, and repairs to roads, bridges, water control facilities, public buildings, utilities, parks, and other public facilities.
- Hazard Mitigation Grant funding for affected jurisdictions: This includes support for efforts to reduce future flood and debris-flow damage, including larger culverts, riverband stabilization, and infrastructure improvements.

Rather than waiting for every damaged site to become accessible, Colorado is submitting this request on an expedited basis so that federal resources can arrive sooner. Additional costs and jurisdictions may be added as assessments are validated. FEMA, the State, and local partners will continue to conduct assessments for additional PA and HMGP funding. Joint damage assessments will also include assessments of damages to individuals' properties and homes to determine what federal assistance can be made available for families, homeowners, and businesses. State and local partners are actively working on setting up Disaster Assistance Centers to connect Coloradans directly with available resources to help with needs including property remediation, crisis counseling, evacuee resources, insurance resources, and more.

"The catastrophic damage from this disaster has had widespread impacts on community members and local, state, and Tribal infrastructure. This request will help to rebuild this infrastructure, and speed up the recovery process," said Trevor Denney, Director of the Colorado Office of Emergency Management.

In addition to the response resources, Colorado has also committed state resources to emergency repairs in the region. On October 26, the Transportation Commission approved $5 million in contingency funds for the initial transportation response. CDOT crews and contractors have worked to stabilize damaged highways and restore access, including reopening routes to alternating traffic and beginning temporary access repairs along CO 151. On October 28, CDOT requested approximately $65 million in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) emergency relief funding based on preliminary estimates of damage to federal-aid roadways. On October 30, the FHWA approved CDOT's request, authorizing $6.5 million in quick release funding for repairs to US 160, US 550, and Colorado Highway 151 before winter. These highway costs are separate from the FEMA PA costs included in the Governor's MDD request.

The Major Disaster Declaration request is awaiting federal approval. Residents are encouraged to document damage and submit reports through county damage-reporting systems. Submitting a damage report is not an application for financial assistance. Further information on the status of the state's request, and updates to

any request for Individual Assistance, will be shared as soon as they become available.

Resources for affected Coloradans

- Sign up for emergency alerts: Sign up to receive emergency alerts in your area.
- Assistance, shelter and temporary lodging information: Call 2-1-1, text your ZIP code to 898-211, or visit 211 Colorado's disaster response page.
- Road conditions and closures: Visit COtrip.org or use the COtrip Planner app.
- Volunteer cleanup assistance: Call Crisis Cleanup at 970-283-7325 to request free volunteer help.
- Local updates, damage-reporting links and additional resources: Visit DHSEM's regularly updated State Emergency Operation Center Updates page. Immediate emergencies: Call 911.

Contact Governor Polis

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