



MONTANA

HAZARD MITIGATION SURVEY TEAM REPORT FEMA DR-1340-MT



FIRE DISASTER DECLARED AUGUST 30, 2000

HAZARD MITIGATION SURVEY TEAM REPORT

IN RESPONSE TO:

FEMA DR-1340-MONTANA

**DECLARED AUGUST 30, 2000
AMENDED SEPTEMBER 19, 2000**



JURISDICTIONS DECLARED:

Beaverhead, Bighorn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Chouteau, Cascade, Custer, Deer Lodge, Fallon, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powell, Powder River, Prairie, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Wheatland, and Yellowstone Counties, and the Indian Reservations of Blackfeet, Crow, Flathead, Fort Belknap, Northern Cheyenne and Rocky Boy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 30, 2000 President Clinton issued Presidential Disaster Declaration DR-1340 for the state of Montana. This declaration was amended September 19, 2000 adding twenty counties and four Indian Reservations making a total of forty-eight counties and six Indian Reservations. The declaration was a result of severe wildfire damage to the state. The following counties and Indian Reservations were declared:

Beaverhead, Bighorn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Chouteau, Cascade, Custer, Deer Lodge, Fallon, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, Madison, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powell, Powder River, Prairie, Ravalli, Rosebud, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Wheatland, and Yellowstone Counties, and the Indian Reservations of Blackfeet, Crow, Flathead, Fort Belknap, Northern Cheyenne and Rocky Boy.

Representatives of Federal, State and local agencies comprising the Hazard Mitigation Survey Team (HMST) met in Helena, Montana on October 25, 2000. This developed nine recommendations that addressed long-term mitigation efforts for the current and future disasters.

The recommendations contained in this report will provide the basis for updating the State's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Because mitigation is ultimately a local responsibility, state and local officials must evaluate all the information and options in this report.

OVERVIEW OF AUTHORITY

STAFFORD ACT

Section 409 of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (as amended) prescribes Federal, State and local hazard mitigation planning responsibilities following the declaration of a major disaster or emergency, or declaration for fire suppression assistance pursuant to section 420 of the Stafford Act.

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

In accordance with the July 10, 1980, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directive, a Hazard Mitigation Survey Team meeting was convened, comprised of Federal, State and local experts.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose for this HMST Report is to identify long and short-term hazard mitigation recommendations for implementation at the Federal, State and local levels of government. The HMST recommendations in this document are intended to provide the framework for hazard mitigation activities and guide the agencies involved in the recovery and reconstruction process. Although the mitigation recommendations were developed through a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach, implementation is the responsibility of the designated lead agencies. The recommendations describe the action, schedule, and potential funding sources that will lead to reductions of future loss and damage.

This report transmits HMST recommendations to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VIII Director, the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR), Federal, State and local governmental agencies and the public. These recommendations will serve as the basis for updating Montana's State Mitigation Plan.

DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

The Montana landscape for the first part of year 2000 could best be characterized by severe dryness. What started in May with two counties, progressed to the point that by the end of summer every county in the state had received a U.S. Department of Agriculture drought designation. The first cutting of hay in most cases was also the last. Ranchers sold livestock at losses. Water became precious, entire streams dried up, and communities enacted water restrictions. A few communities even lost their very sources of water.



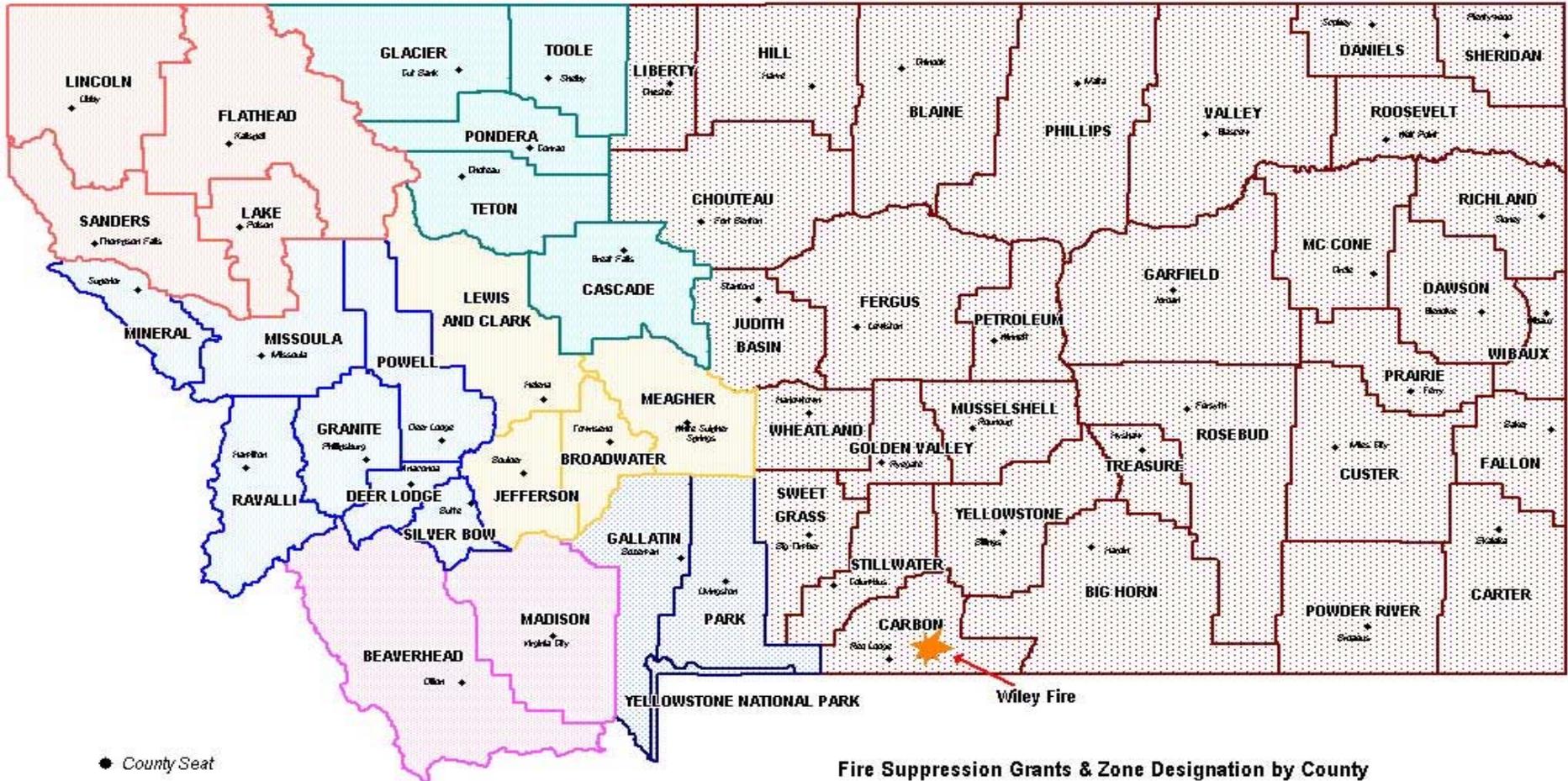
The drought conditions resulted in low fuel moistures. Low fuel moistures and high fuel loads combined with weather conditions to create extreme fire conditions throughout the state. Low relative humidity, limited or no rainfall, thunderstorms with associated dry lightning, and high winds were contributing factors. Some have said the drought and the resulting fires of 2000 is the worst natural disaster in the history of Montana.



More than 11,000 fire-fighters from numerous states responded to the fires. Other nations such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada provided firefighters as well.

The wildfire incidents began with the Little Blue Fire in Ravalli County on the 13th of July and were the first in a series of fires that led to the request and approval of six Fire Suppression Declarations covering 20 counties and one Indian Reservation. (See map on page 4).

Montana Fire Suppression Declarations & Zones



FS #2320	FS #2317	FS #2314	FS #2318	FS #2321	Zone 5
Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3 A	Zone 3 B	Zone 3 C	
Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Sanders	Deer Lodge, Granite, Mineral, Missoula, Powell, Ravalli, Silver Bow	Cascade, Glacier, Pondera, Teton, Toole	Broadwater, Jefferson, Meagher, Lewis & Clark	Beaverhead, Madison	
				Gallatin, Park, Yellowstone National Park	Big Horn, Blaine, Carbon, Carter, Choteau, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Fergus, Garfield, Golden Valley, Hill, Judith Basin, Liberty, McCone, Musselshell, Petroleum, Phillips, Powder River
					Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Valley, Wheatland, Wibaux, Yellowstone

DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGES



The impacts of the fires of 2000 have been both direct and indirect. Visual impacts include 321 structures destroyed and more than 947,800 acres of the state burned. At one point, more than 3,842 homes were threatened. Over \$213,000,000 dollars were expended in fire fighting efforts both on the ground and from the air.

Other impacts on the state include business losses, decreases in commerce, agriculture devastation, poor air quality, and extraordinary stress. The fire conditions resulted in the restriction and closure of public forests, which negatively affected the labor force, commerce and tourism.



As a result of the extreme high temperatures from the fires, hydrophobic soils have been formed. These soils create a hard crust impervious to water. These soil conditions increase run-off and the chances for flooding.



MITIGATION ACTIVITIES

HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is the program authorized under section 404 of the Stafford Act, which may provide funding for certain mitigation measures identified through the evaluation of hazards conducted under section 409 of the Stafford Act.

The HMGP, enables FEMA to make grants to eligible applicants to fund cost-effective measures aimed at preventing future damage. FEMA can fund up to 75 percent of the eligible costs of each project with the state and local match being 25 percent. The HMGP assists state and local communities in implementing long-term mitigation measures and to prevent future losses of lives and property in future disasters following a major disaster declaration.

Section 404 grant funds are determined as 15 percent of the projected obligated grants made under Infrastructure Human Services programs plus non-administrative mission assignments for each disaster.

Applicants who are eligible for the HMGP are:

- State and local governments;
- Certain private non-profit organizations or institutions;
- Indian Tribes or authorized tribal organizations and Alaska Native Villages.

Examples of such projects include:

- Acquisition and relocation of structures from hazard-prone areas;
- Retrofitting, such as floodproofing to protect structures from future damage;
- Elevation of structures or utilities; and
- Small structural hazard control, such as debris basins; floodwalls; rip rap; or wetland restoration.

This program is administered by the state. Further information can be obtained from the State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) at (406) 841-3960.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was created through enactment of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, modified and broadened with the passage of the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 and other legislative measures. Recent modifications were accomplished through the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994. These Acts made flood insurance available to communities that adopted flood loss reduction measures in their jurisdictions. Participation is initiated when a community passes a Resolution of Intent and adopts a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance that establishes sound floodplain management practices in areas subject to flooding.

Past Interagency Hazard Mitigation Team reports have identified enrollment and participation in the NFIP as a very important mitigation measure and should be emphasized where possible. Further information can be obtained from the state NFIP coordinator at (406) 444-6654.

PROJECT IMPACT

FEMA and other federal agencies responsible for disaster assistance are committed to reducing disaster losses, however they cannot do it alone. Project Impact is about forming partnerships to assess risks, prioritize needs and improve communication to build a disaster resistant communities. It is an initiative that challenges the nation to undertake actions that protect families, businesses and communities by reducing the effects of natural disasters BEFORE the disaster strikes.

Communities know best what risks they face, and their capability to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from a disaster. The goal of Project Impact is to reduce the personal and economic costs of disasters by bringing together community leaders, citizens and businesses to prepare for and protect themselves against the ravages of nature. This effort is an investment to enhance and strengthen the economic structure and long-term stability of individual communities, regardless of when disasters strike.

Individuals can make an important difference whether a business owner, a member of a civic or volunteer organization, and can play an important part in keeping families, businesses and communities safe by working together through Project Impact to take steps to reduce vulnerability and transform individual communities into disaster resistant communities. Further information can be obtained from the State Project Impact Coordinator at (406) 841-3960.

BURNED AREA EMERGENCY REHABILITATION (BAER TEAM)

After a fire on federal lands, the United States Forest Service convenes a multi-agency team. This team is called the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER Team).

The team studies the entire watershed area involved to include state and/or private lands. They initially conduct and study hydraulic modeling of the watershed drainages involved in a fire. Then aerial mapping and ground validation result in detailed accounting of burn areas. The results of this study are then passed to the NRCS and any other stakeholder agencies or private landowners that may be involved and/or benefit from the restoration. This would also include FEMA to look at possible floodplain redesignation.

The next phase of the operation is the treatment phase. This phase involves treatment of the slopes and channels with stream bank stabilization projects such as straw waddles, catch basins and other similar drainage projects. The treatment work can only be done on USFS lands however; thorough coordination with State and/or private landowners is initiated to insure the corrective action required is accomplished in the entire watershed area.

OTHER MITIGATION ACTIVITIES

Due to the increased potential for flooding caused by hydrophobic soils, watersheds may experience changes in hydraulics. Under the authority of Public Law 84-99 the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is working with public sponsors to investigate advanced measures for temporary flood protection. One of these projects is currently underway in the City of Superior.

As a result of this event, there will be additional funding available to various agencies to achieve mitigation objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the October 25, 2000 HMST meeting held in Helena, MT, the following mitigation recommendations were formulated. The interagency team created nine specific recommendations designed to lessen the impacts from future fire and flood events. Although these recommendations are not all-encompassing, they represent the current priorities of the team and will assist the state in achieving their overall mitigation objectives.



Recommendation # 1

Issue	Warnings are needed for potential flash flooding in burned areas, and all downstream locations.
Background	Large burned areas add to the flooding potential. GIS data for burned areas can be provided to the National Weather Service (NWS) to improve warning capability.
Action	NWS will work with USFS to acquire GIS burn maps.
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	NWS and USFS
Support Agency	DNRC
Funding	Existing funding
Schedule	March 2001

Recommendation # 2

Issue	There is little incentive for a homeowner to create a fire resistant property.
Background	Currently, insurance companies do not offer a premium reduction for many fire mitigation techniques, i.e. defensible space, and some fire resistant construction.
Action	1) Department of Natural Resources and Conservation will request from the Montana Insurance Commissioner and FEMA to encourage insurance companies to reflect mitigation measures in insurance premiums. (This may be achieved through modification of the Insurance Services Office rating system). This action could result in reductions of premiums for homeowners who practice fire mitigation.
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	DNRC, FEMA, State Auditors
Support Agency	Land management agencies, county planners
Funding	Existing funding
Schedule	By February 2001

Recommendation # 3

Issue	Property owners are unsure which fire agency is responsible for their protection.
Background	Property owners and fire agencies need jurisdictional boundaries clearly defined.
Action	Develop and distribute Geographic Information System (GIS) maps for all Montana counties that define wildland and structural fire protection by agency jurisdiction. Distribute this information to county planning offices, fire protection entities, state insurance commission, 911 Centers, Realtors, MACO (Montana Association of Counties), property owners, and via the Montana Natural Resource Information System web page (http://msl.state.mt.us/admin/lrplan/nrisplan.html).
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	NRCG (Northern Rockies Coordinating Group)
Support Agency	NRCG, United States Forest Service, county fire wardens, MACO
Funding	DNRC, USFS, and FEMA
Schedule	21 counties – November 2001 17 counties – November 2001-November 2002 18 counties – November 2002-November 2003

Recommendation # 4

Issue	Not all wildland/urban interface areas are rated for level of fire risk. Areas that are rated do not have consistent criteria.
Background	Many agencies currently have individual fire risk rating systems. These agencies apply these rating systems to their individual jurisdictions.
Action	Develop consensus among all fire agencies for one fire risk rating system. Apply this system for all currently rated areas and new areas to be rated.
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	NRCG
Support Agency	MACO
Funding	DNRC, USFS, FEMA, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
Schedule	Select rating system, present to NRCG by Dec. 2000 Create list of areas- July 2001 Apply risk rating system- July 2002

Recommendation # 5

Issue	Improve monitoring and predictive capabilities of the Montana and Idaho Smoke Management Group.
Background	Montana and Idaho Airshed Group works cooperatively to manage the affect of smoke from prescribed fires (approximately 200,000 acres per year). Expansion for the prescribed fire program is anticipated. Current equipment and resources are inadequate.
Action	1) Buy more balloon equipment and real-time particulate monitors 2) Hire additional staff.
Environmental Concerns	None Anticipated
Lead Agency	MT/ID Airshed Group
Support Agency	USFS, BLM, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), DNRC, and Timber Companies
Funding	FEMA
Schedule	Start Spring 2001, finish 2003

Recommendation # 6

Issue	Fuel modification and hazard reduction literature is currently available. Some demonstration sites showing fuel modification techniques have been created. Additional demonstration sites are needed, along with increased public awareness of all sites.
Background	Public and private agencies, county planning commissions, insurance agents, homeowners associations, Realtors, and environmental groups need to be aware of what can be done to modify fire fuels.
Action	Initiate, continue, and showcase demonstration projects on fuel modifications/ hazard mitigation projects in and near urban interface areas.
Environmental Concerns	An Environmental Assessment may be required for new projects. Prescribed burning on new sites will create smoke.
Lead Agency	USFS, BLM, BIA, DNRC, local jurisdictions, and NRCG
Support Agency	Local jurisdictions
Funding	USFS, BLM, BIA, DNRC, FEMA
Schedule	By Spring 2001 for local Project Impact projects Current projects by Summer 2001, then on-going for USFS Plan and implement 2 projects within 18 months for DNRC.

Recommendation # 7

Issue	There is a lack of understanding of flood insurance availability and applicability and the need for flood insurance due to hydrophobic soils.
Background	The potential for flooding because of hydrophobic soils in areas outside of designated floodplain is increased.
Action	With a focus on burn areas: promote flood insurance, educate public of increased flood risks from hydrophobic soils (using available GIS data), and offer continuing education to insurance agents through workshops.
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	DNRC/DES
Support Agency	FEMA, DNRC (State Forester's Office), Floodplain Administrators (within the burn areas), State Auditor/Insurance Commissioner, and congressional offices
Funding	Existing funding
Schedule	Between January- March 20, 2001

Recommendation # 8

Issue	Fire fuel load is high throughout the state.
Background	Fuels have been accumulating for many years. Very few prescribed burns have occurred.
Action	Develop local risk assessments. Conduct fuel reduction projects on public and private high-risk areas (urban/wildland interface).
Environmental Concerns	Dependent on project.
Lead Agency	USFS
Support Agency	FEMA, MDES, USFS, United States Department of Agriculture, (USDA), NRCS, Conservation District Agency/ DEQ, BLM, and Tribes
Funding	Rural Community Assistance Program (USFS)
Schedule	Initiate Spring 2001

Recommendation # 9

Issue	There is a lack of understanding and personal responsibility for protecting structures and natural resources.
Background	Mitigation starts at home. At-risk structures are being built in urban/wildland interface areas. There is a lack of knowledge and incentive to properly build structures and to utilize defensible space and fire resistant landscaping techniques.
Action	Public information campaign to include: Town hall meetings Public Service Announcements Local media Firewise workshop Northern Rockies Great Basin Fire Prevention Workshop Outreach to schools Success Stories
Environmental Concerns	None anticipated
Lead Agency	NRCG Prevention Team, MT DES
Support Agency	Local DES, DNRC, NRCS, USFS, BLM, NWS, Extension Service, FEMA, MACO, and MT State Fire Chiefs Association
Funding	FEMA, USFS, DES, DNRC, agencies in-kind services, MT Broadcaster's Association, and private funding
Schedule	May-June 2001 and ongoing

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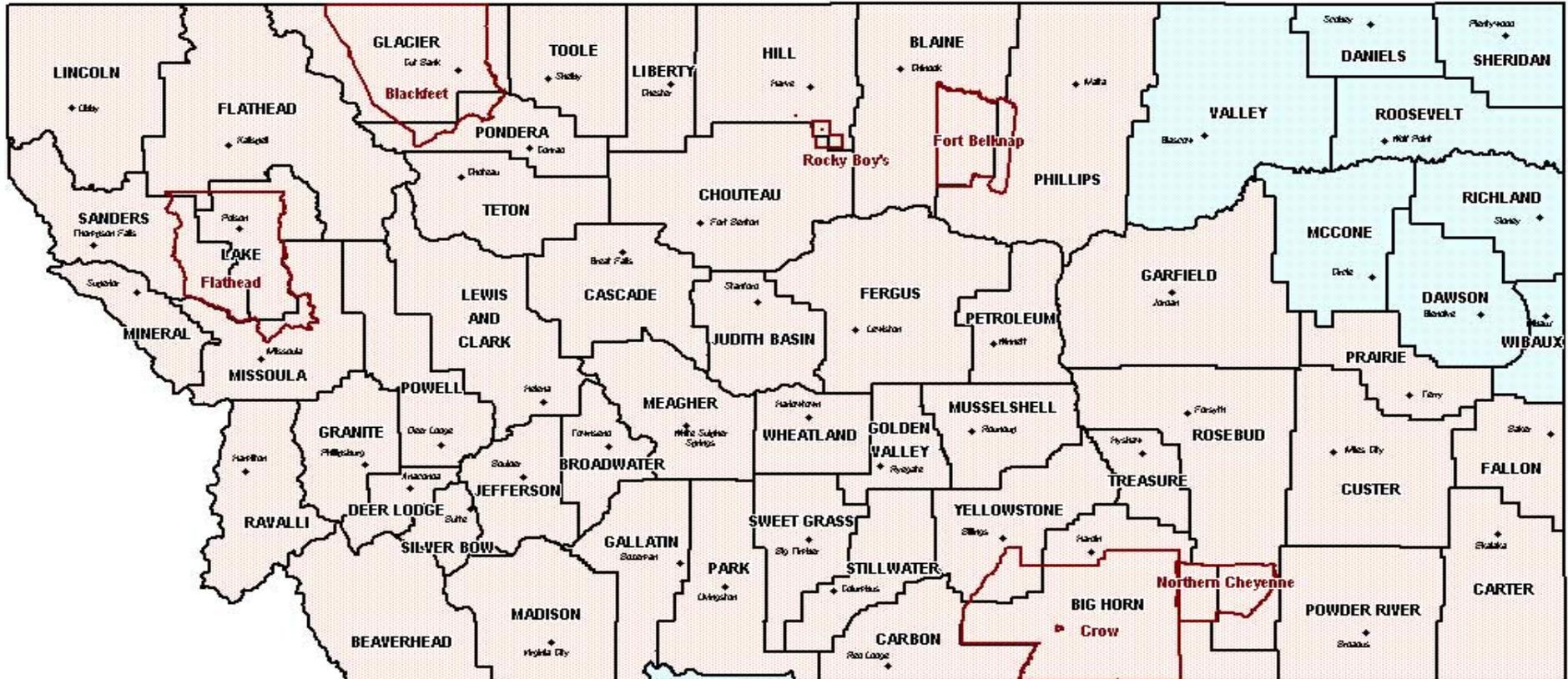
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
DES	Montana Disaster & Emergency Services Division
DEQ	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
DNRC	Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
EWP	Emergency Watershed Protection
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GAR	Governor’s Authorized Representative
GIS	Geographic Information System
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
ISO	Insurance Services Office
HMST	Hazard Mitigation Survey Team
MACO	Montana Association of County Officials
MT	Montana
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NRIS	Natural Resource Information System
NRCG	Northern Rockies Coordinating Group
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWS	National Weather Service
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
SHMO	State Hazard Mitigation Officer
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
VA	Veterans Administration



Montana Declared Counties DR-1340-MT

Declared August 30, 2000 for Wildfires

Amended September 19, 2000 Adding 20 Counties and 4 Indian Reservations



Boundaries for the Blackfeet, Flathead, Crow, Fort Belknap, Rocky Boy's and Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservations Included in Declaration 1340-MT

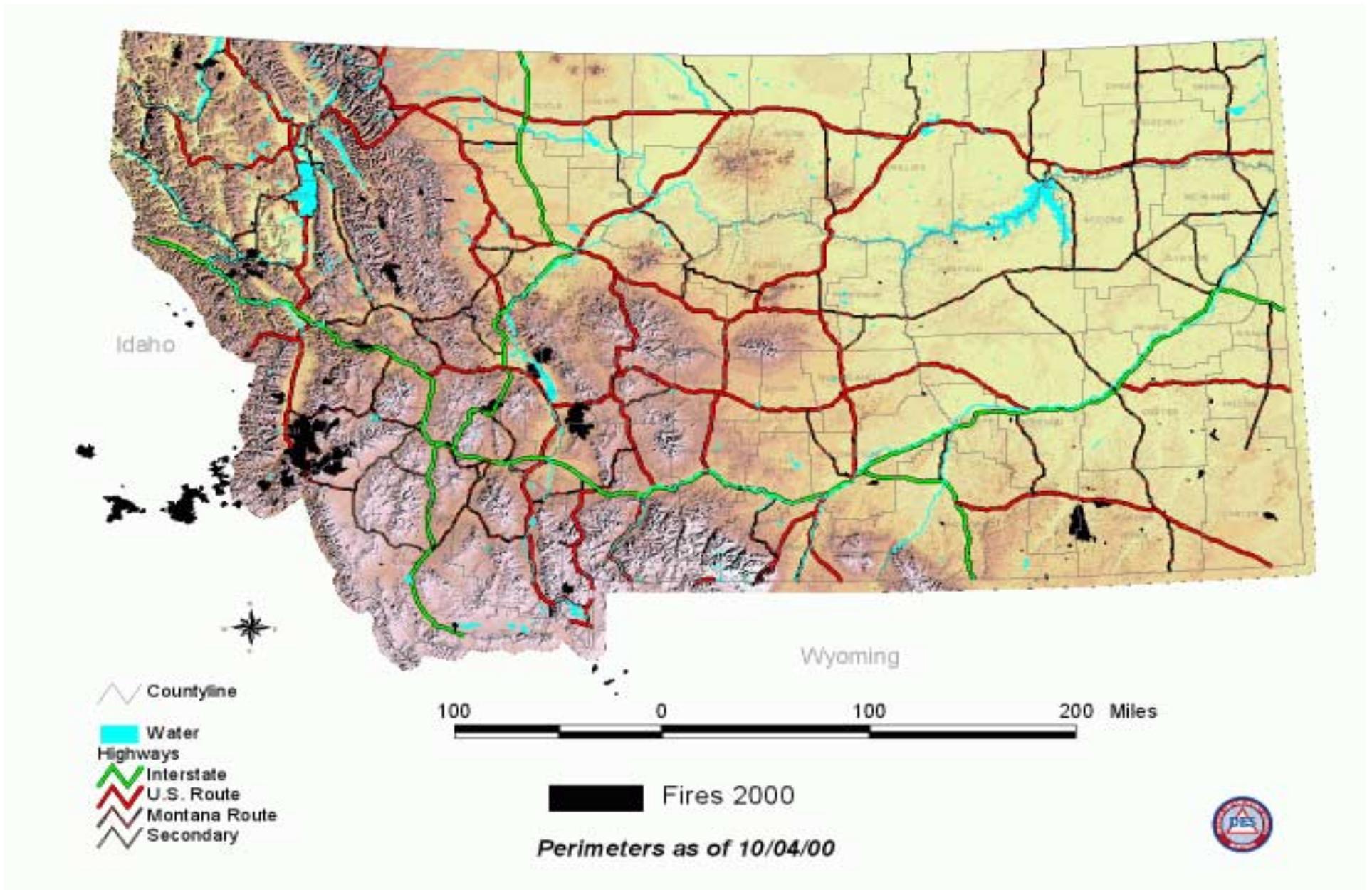
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Montana Declared Counties - DR-1340-MT
Designation of Counties and Indian Reservations

- Individual Assistance - 48 Counties and 6 Indian Reservations
- Hazard Mitigation - Entire State & All Indian Reservations

MT-1340-Final
 8/31/00-9/15/00
 Sept. 19, 2000

FOOTPRINT MONTANA FIRES 2000





FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
OR
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