

Susana Martinez
Governor



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**Secretary Greg Myers Written Testimony
Indian Affairs Committee
October 25, 2012**

Continued Wildfire Recovery Efforts: The Aftermath of Las Conchas Fire

I would like to thank the Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide comment regarding the string of disasters and emergencies at Santa Clara Pueblo. I am also pleased to deliver a report on our partnerships with the Pueblo and Federal Agencies to facilitate the recovery effort. I regret that I cannot deliver these remarks in person, but I hope you will find benefit in my remarks.

I would first like to express my gratitude to the people of Santa Clara Pueblo and their leadership. Governor Dasheno is an inspiring leader and we stand with him and the people of Santa Clara Pueblo during these difficult times.

Over the last fifteen years, multiple fires have impacted Santa Clara Pueblo and the surrounding areas. Drought increases the fire danger and, as we have seen, fires increase both the probability of flooding and the destructive of floods. Burned soil from wild land fire is unable to retain water. During rain events, soot and debris left from fires washes downstream with devastating force. This was certainly the case following the Las Conchas Fire. We knew early on that the fire was just the beginning of a long, painful process of recovery and mitigation. The impact of the fires and the ensuing floods cannot be measured in dollars and cents for the people of Santa Clara Pueblo. The loss of sacred lands will impact the Pueblo for generations to come.

The following paragraphs describe the major events involving the Las Conchas fire and subsequent Monsoonal flooding in 2011 and 2012.

The Las Conchas fire began mid-day on June 26, 2011. By early evening, the fire had grown to tens of thousands of acres. Within a handful of days, the Las Conchas Fire was the largest fire in state history, a mark eclipsed this year by the Whitewater-Baldy Fires.

Within hours of the fire's outbreak on June 26, 2011, the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management received approval of a Fire Management Assistance Grant.

The Pueblo received \$80,793.19 under the FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant program which reimbursed costs associated with fire suppression and emergency protective measures.

While the fire was still burning, the threat of Monsoonal rains prompted Governor Susana Martinez to issue Executive Order 2011-063 declaring a statewide emergency for post-fire flooding. Under this Executive Order, Santa Clara Pueblo submitted a request for and received \$58,447.28 of State assistance for post-fire flood preparations, including the installation of concrete wall barriers and sandbags.

At the request of Governor Martinez, President Obama declared a major disaster for the State of New Mexico due to flooding on November 23, 2011. This declaration provides 75% federal funds for eligible damages. The remaining 25% is divided equally between the state and the applicant. The State provides 12.5% and the applicant 12.5%. This declaration, known as FEMA 4047, designated Santa Clara Pueblo, Sandoval County Cibola County and Acoma Pueblo as disaster areas.

On November 29, 2011, FEMA and DHSEM established a FEMA/State Joint Field Office (JFO) at the Emergency Management Center in Santa Fe. The JFO serves as the hub of the FEMA and State disaster assistance operations during declared disasters. Satellite working offices were also established in Espanola and Grants.

FEMA, the State and the Pueblo worked together over the next five months, developing and reviewing Project Worksheets, a FEMA form that, among other things, defines the scope of work and includes technical information pertaining to each project within the declaration. These forms must be in place and approved prior to the commencement of work. The first project worksheet, PW 004, for emergency repairs to the canyon access road was obligated by FEMA on March 22, 2012. Additional obligations occurred in July and the most recent on August 8, 2012.

As expected, additional flooding occurred on the burn scar in 2012. A series of monsoonal bursts impacted the Pueblo between June 22 and the end of July. Additional debris was deposited into the four lakes and causing additional damage to the infrastructure in Santa Clara Canyon.

Governor Martinez requested and received a second Presidential Disaster Declaration for flooding, FEMA 4079, on August 24, 2012. Currently, FEMA has teams of Project Specialists working with the Pueblo to identify damages and develop project worksheets. Some of the work previously funded under disaster FEMA 4047 was damaged again by this event.

The State and FEMA anticipate completing the field work for the 2012 declaration, FEMA 4079, sometime during November 2012. The full recovery of the affected area may take years, but the threat of additional flooding next Monsoon Season still exists. In this regard, the State remains available to assist Santa Clara Pueblo with coordinating its mitigation efforts.

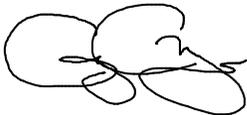
The Pueblo has also received funding to complete a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Upon completion and approval by FEMA, the Pueblo will be eligible for Pre-disaster Hazard Mitigation grant funds which can be used for long-term mitigation measures.

The disaster recovery on the Santa Clara Pueblo is as complicated as any in which the State has ever engaged. Several major challenges exist that impair and slow recovery including, difficulty accessing the canyon due to 8-10' of debris across the road, the threat of flooding from severe weather during Monsoon Season and the impact of winter snowfall. This reduces the window of time in which work can be done and further slows the process of recovery.

The Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management is committed to assisting the Santa Clara Pueblo through their recovery efforts over the coming years.

Thank you for your time and interest in this very important, ongoing process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Myers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Greg Myers
Cabinet Secretary Designate
Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management