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**After Nevada Reapplies for Wildfire Funding Under New Criteria, Heller Pushes FEMA to Immediately Review State’s Appeal**

**WASHINGTON** - After theState of Nevada re-applied for assistance using new criteria under the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program for the damages caused by the South Sugarloaf Fire, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to immediately review the State’s request for resources and again pressed the agency to reconsider the criteria used to determine the state’s eligibility for funding through the FMAG program. When FEMA initially denied the State’s previous application because it didn’t meet the eligibility requirements under current FMAG criteria, [Heller immediately pushed for a long-term solution for the State when he urged FEMA to level the playing field for states like Nevada that have high percentages of federal land by re-evaluating the criteria used to determine Nevada’s ability to qualify for wildfire assistance grants](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CEFE3BE5-B363-443A-9A95-991D1A3EECDC).

[In an August letter to FEMA](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CEFE3BE5-B363-443A-9A95-991D1A3EECDC), Heller stated that 85 percent of Nevada’s lands are managed by the federal government, and he argued that must be reflected in the criteria used to determine wildfire assistance grants. He then pressed the agency to reconsider the criteria to qualify for FMAG, stating that such a change would even the playing field for western states. That letter is available [HERE](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CEFE3BE5-B363-443A-9A95-991D1A3EECDC). To date, the South Sugarloaf Fire has ravaged over 230,000 acres across Nevada, and has threatened private property and public lands used for grazing, recreation, and other purposes.

*“The State of Nevada is appealing its recent denial by your agency, and I strongly urge you to immediately review this appeal to ensure that all of Nevada’s communities, both urban and rural, have the proper funding to mitigate the damages caused by wildfire,”***writes Heller**.***“****While I have expressed to you my support for this program, I have concerns that the current eligibility standards for FMAG may put my state’s rural communities at a disadvantage. In order to qualify for FMAG, your agency requires a threat to life and property, including threats to critical infrastructure and critical watershed areas,”*

Heller, a member of the Senate Western Caucus, has long worked to ensure that Nevada’s ranchers, local governments, and federal agencies have the adequate tools to prevent and suppress devastating wildfires. Recently, Heller urged the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to [hold a hearing to continue discussing forestry reform solutions](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CAABBEFC-6E38-4B4E-A86D-B88AF568D5A8) to prevent future deadly blazes. In addition, the U.S. Senate recently passed a provision that [Heller authored to increase funding for cross boundary fire control by $5 million](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=D9F37E9F-A058-4EE5-B24F-F0DADAD7B3B5). Heller has also promoted innovative fire prevention technologies, such as the AlertTahoe Fire monitoring and Early Detection Warning System. Earlier this year, Heller announced that he [secured $226,000 to install new AlertTahoe cameras](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AEAA0B1D-7D1D-4ED3-9692-7B5767389320), which will help detect fires and further protect the Lake Tahoe Basin from catastrophic damage.

**The full letter text is available below.**

*Dear Administrator Long:*

*I write you today in support of the State of Nevada’s application for assistance under the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program for the damages caused by the South Sugarloaf Fire.  The State of Nevada is appealing its recent denial by your agency, and I strongly urge you to immediately review this appeal to ensure that all of Nevada’s communities, both urban and rural, have the proper funding to mitigate the damages caused by wildfire.*

*The South Sugarloaf Fire burned over 230,000 acres of land in Northeastern Nevada, causing destruction to private property and public lands alike.  As a result, Nevadans have lost access to public lands for grazing, energy development, and other multiple-use purposes.  This fire has also caused damage to private lands, resulting in many of my constituents being placed under mandatory evacuation as the blaze grew in size and speed.*

*I would also like to reiterate my concerns with the eligibility criteria for a wildfire to qualify for assistance under the FMAG program.  While I have expressed to you my support for this program, I have concerns that the current eligibility standards for FMAG may put my state’s rural communities at a disadvantage. In order to qualify for FMAG, your agency requires a threat to life and property, including threats to critical infrastructure and critical watershed areas.*

*As the senior Senator from a state that is 85 percent managed by the federal government, many of my constituents rely on federal lands for their livelihood, which I do not believe is weighed adequately when determining FMAG eligibility.  When reviewing the State of Nevada’s application, I respectfully ask that your agency take into consideration the severe consequences of the South Sugarloaf Fire on our public lands, including the loss of lands for grazing, energy development, and any other factor that has a significant economic impact in the region.*

*I look forward to your prompt response to the State of Nevada’s appeal as well as my previous letter sent on August 28, 2018, and I will continue fighting to ensure that FEMA’s policies and procedures are beneficial to all Americans, including Western states like Nevada.*