

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2024

Ms. Lori A. Ehrlich
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 1
US Department of Homeland Security
99 High Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Administrator Ehrlich:

We write to express our strong support for the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) consider the devastating January 10-13, 2024, weather to be a single event, for purposes of damage assessment and reporting.

As MEMA Director Peter Rogers explained in his January 16 email, the storm on January 10th created historic flood levels in areas throughout the state; erosion, standing water, and other hazards continued into Thursday, January 11th, and another storm made landfall in Maine on Saturday, January 13th. The damages are still being assessed, but they appear to be record-setting with catastrophic damage to Maine's coastline and economy, including private property, public infrastructure, and working waterfronts.


Significant damage and flooding from the original storm front had not yet been resolved when the second storm entered Maine less than 72 hours later. The affected areas experienced King Tides throughout the duration of these weather events, with higher tides from the second storm than the first. The resulting conditions were hazardous, making it exceedingly difficult to conduct damage assessments and to administratively separate the damages. It is our understanding that local and county officials were able to gather only part of the information necessary to accurately assess damages from the first storm, and FEMA personnel were unable to be deployed until after the second storm to collect further data.


In addition to performing water rescues and important life-safety measures, municipal officials began clearing debris and working to re-open roads while also working to implement emergency protective measures to prevent further damage to infrastructure. These efforts helped prevent increased costs as the next weather front came in.

Treating the two storms as a single event reduces the administrative burden on municipalities up and down the Maine coast, MEMA, and FEMA by allowing assessments to be completed simultaneously, with only one set of paperwork.

For the above reasons, we ask that FEMA carefully consider MEMA's request that the January 10th and January 13th storms be treated as a single disaster event, consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress