



## HARNEY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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December 8, 2025

Senator Jeff Merkley  
Office of U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley

Dear Senator Merkley,

I am writing to express Harney County Emergency Management's strong support for the Post-Wildfire Environmental Assistance Act. This legislation fills a critical gap that counties across Oregon experience after destructive wildfires.

As you know, the Rowena Fire destroyed 56 homes in Wasco County earlier this year. While the incident qualified for a Fire Management Assistance Grant, the destruction did not meet the threshold for a major disaster declaration, leaving the county without access to federal resources needed to manage the significant hazardous debris left behind.

This gap is not unique to Wasco County. Rural counties like Harney face similar vulnerabilities every fire season. A single destructive wildfire that stops short of a major disaster declaration can leave a community responsible for complex debris removal with no federal support, even though the hazardous material risks are identical. The Post-Wildfire Environmental Assistance Act provides a practical and much needed solution by allowing EPA assistance for hazardous debris cleanup when a fire receives an FMAG declaration but does not reach the major disaster threshold.

From an emergency management perspective, this change would strengthen public health protections, reduce long term environmental impacts, and help stabilize communities more quickly. It would also give rural counties access to technical expertise and resources that we simply cannot match at the local level.

Harney County Emergency Management supports this legislation and appreciates your continued leadership on issues that directly affect Oregon's rural and frontier communities. Please consider us a willing partner as this bill advances.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Melinda Todd