

TRANSMITTAL MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Honorable Mayor & City Council Initials: 

FROM: Lacey G. Simpson, Acting City Manager File #: MGR25-318

DATE: May 9, 2025 Mtg. #: 05/15/25 MRf

RE: **State Response Letter to March 20, 2025, Declaration of Disaster Emergency for Wolfe Point Landslide**

Attached for City Council consideration is a letter to Mayor Sivertsen and Ketchikan Gateway Borough Mayor Dial from Alaska Adjutant General Torrence Saxe in response to the City and Borough issued Declaration of Disaster Emergency for the March 20, 2025, Wolfe Point Landslide.

As stated in the letter, the State has concluded that the damages resulting from the March 20, 2025, landslide are not “widespread or severe” enough to qualify for a declaration of disaster emergency and state disaster funding. While the City has incurred costs associated with the event response, Borough staff has concluded that their expenses are not substantive enough to warrant efforts for reimbursement or other assistance. City staff remains in consultation with representatives of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on alternatives for seeking financial remuneration for the expenses incurred by the City to maintain basic transportation services for the community when the State ceased to continue such services as a result of the landslide.

While the final costs of the City’s emergency financial outlay remain outstanding, staff welcomes any comments or suggestions the City Council may have on how to seek proper and due financial consideration for its role in addressing the State’s infrastructure failure.



MEMORANDUM

April 21, 2025

The Honorable Rodney Dial, Mayor, Ketchikan Gateway Borough
The Honorable Bob Sivertsen, Mayor, City of Ketchikan

Mayors Sivertsen and Dial:

I have received your joint Declaration of Disaster Emergency, dated March 20, 2025, for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and the City of Ketchikan following a landslide at Wolfe Point. Since receiving notification of the slide, my staff at the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) have been in contact with the Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center, receiving updates on road clearing and response operations. In addition, SEOC deployed two Division Supervisors to Ketchikan on March 21, 2025, to provide on-scene state response coordination.

While the slide deposited debris blocking the roadway and required water shuttle services, temporary sheltering, school schedule adjustments, generator power, and aeromedical flights, there were no injuries reported and no residential or commercial property damaged. The State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities began immediate work to assess the slide area, determine the risk of additional slides, stabilize the area, and clear the roadway. A temporary single-lane bypass was opened on March 24, 2025, under controlled access, and a two-lane bypass became operational on March 26, 2025, restoring normal traffic flow.

My staff at DHS&EM has reviewed the Ketchikan and Ketchikan Gateway Borough's request against the criteria outlined in Alaska Statutes (AS) 26.23, the "Alaska Disaster Act." Under AS 26.23.900, a disaster is defined as an occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, loss of life or property, or shortage of essential resources resulting from a qualifying event.

After a thorough assessment, my staff has recommended, and I concur, that the damages from this landslide do not meet the statutory definition of "widespread or severe" as required under the Alaska Disaster Act. Based on these findings, I recommend that a state declaration of disaster emergency and state disaster funding under the Alaska Disaster Act is not appropriate.

The absence of a state declaration does not indicate a lack of concern by the State. DHS&EM will continue to work with the City of Ketchikan and Ketchikan Gateway Borough to explore what alternative State, tribal, and federal funding, technical assistance, or other help may be available to address any long-term needs. Should you need any further assistance, please contact the SEOC at (907) 428-7100.



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Military and
Veterans Affairs**

Office of the Adjutant General

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Saxe".

Torrence W. Saxe
The Adjutant General, DMVA

cc: Governor's Office
Senator Bert Stedman, Senate District A
Representative Jeremy Bynum, District 1
Bryan Fisher, Director, DHS&EM

