

Montana Flood Recovery After Action Review

April 2024

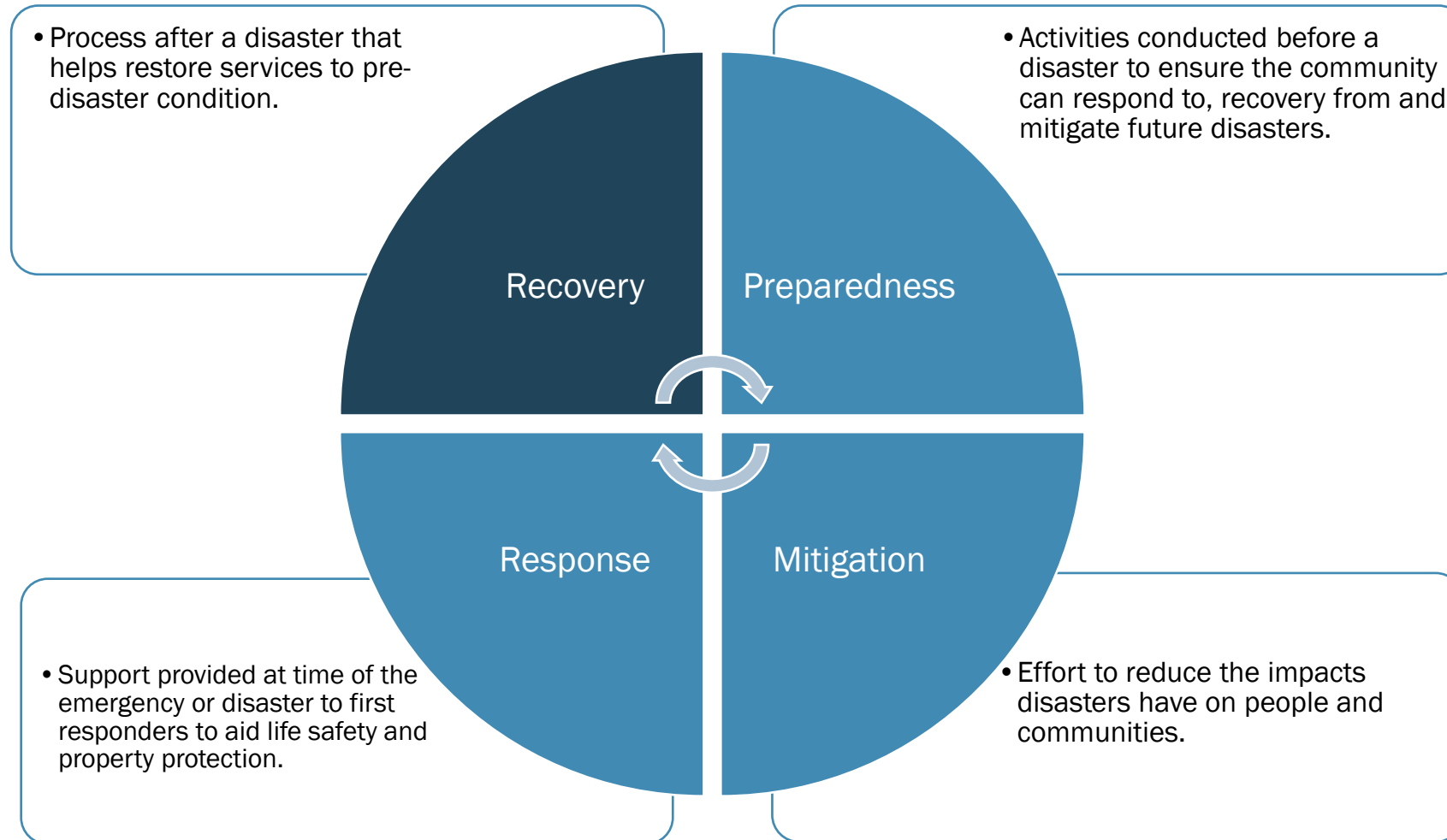




Intent:

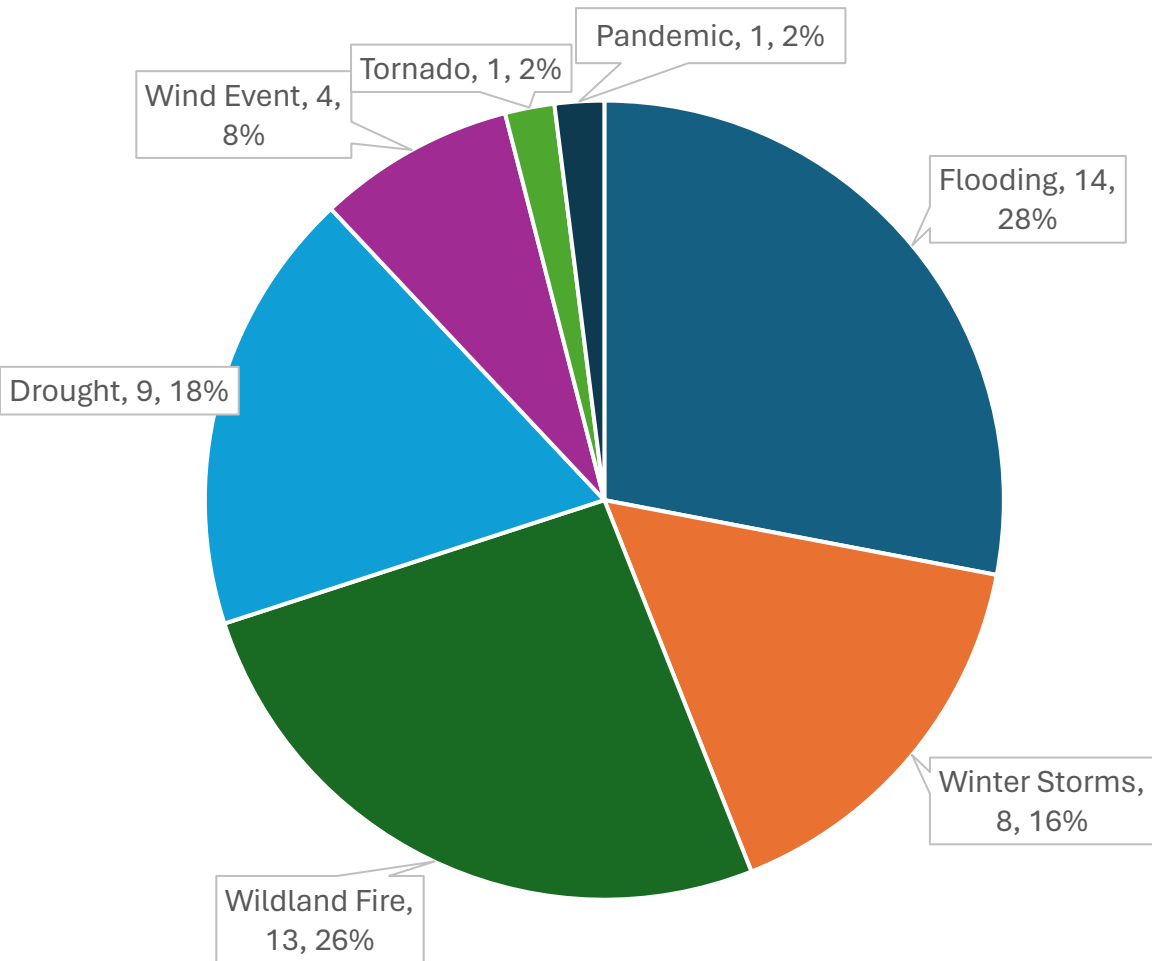
Provide key findings, strengths, areas for improvement, and potential courses of action following the 2022 and 2023 flooding in Montana.

Montana Disaster & Emergency Services

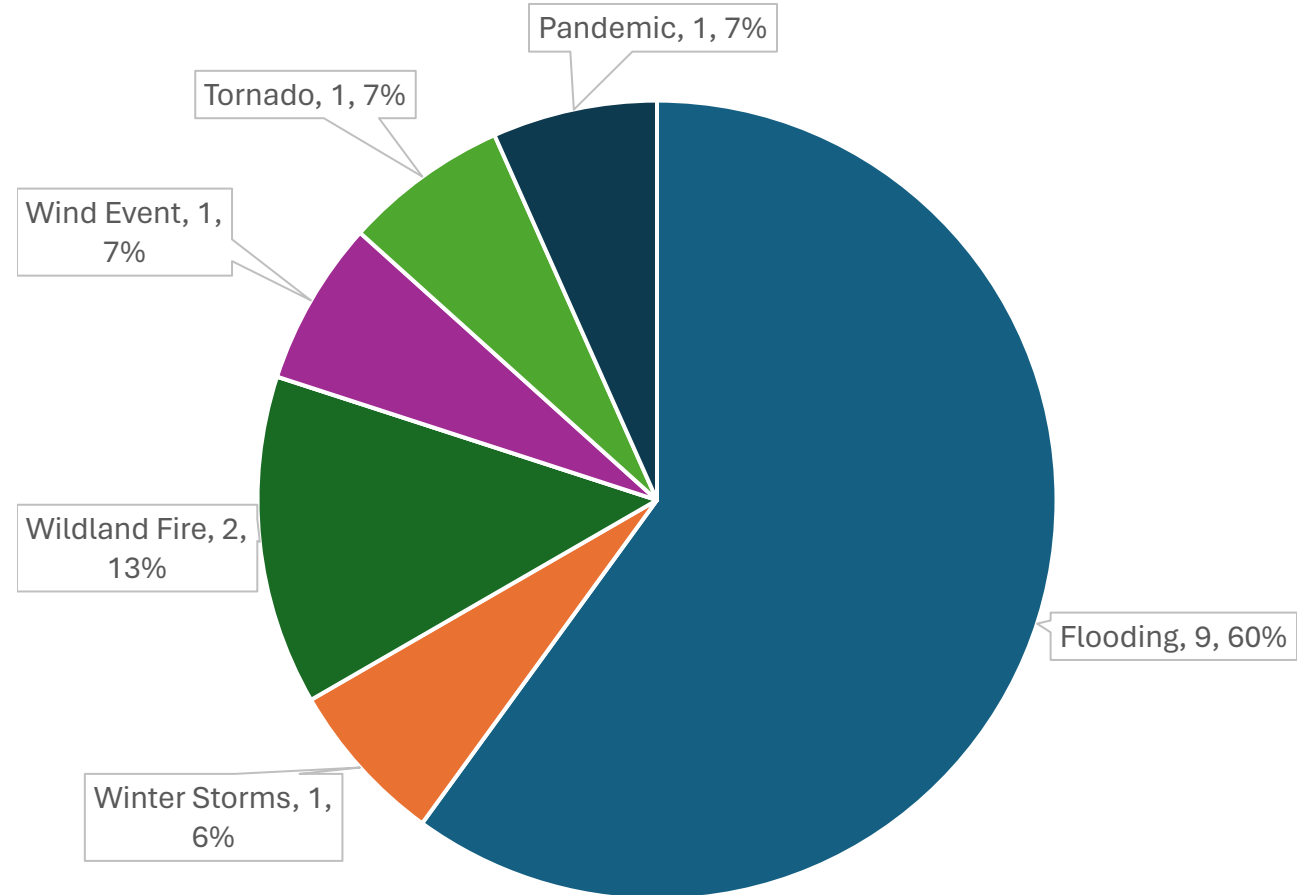


Declared Disasters 2012 - Current

50 State Disaster Declarations
(By number and percentage)



15 Federal Disaster Declarations
(By number and percentage)



New & Emerging Threats



Foreign threats



Cybersecurity



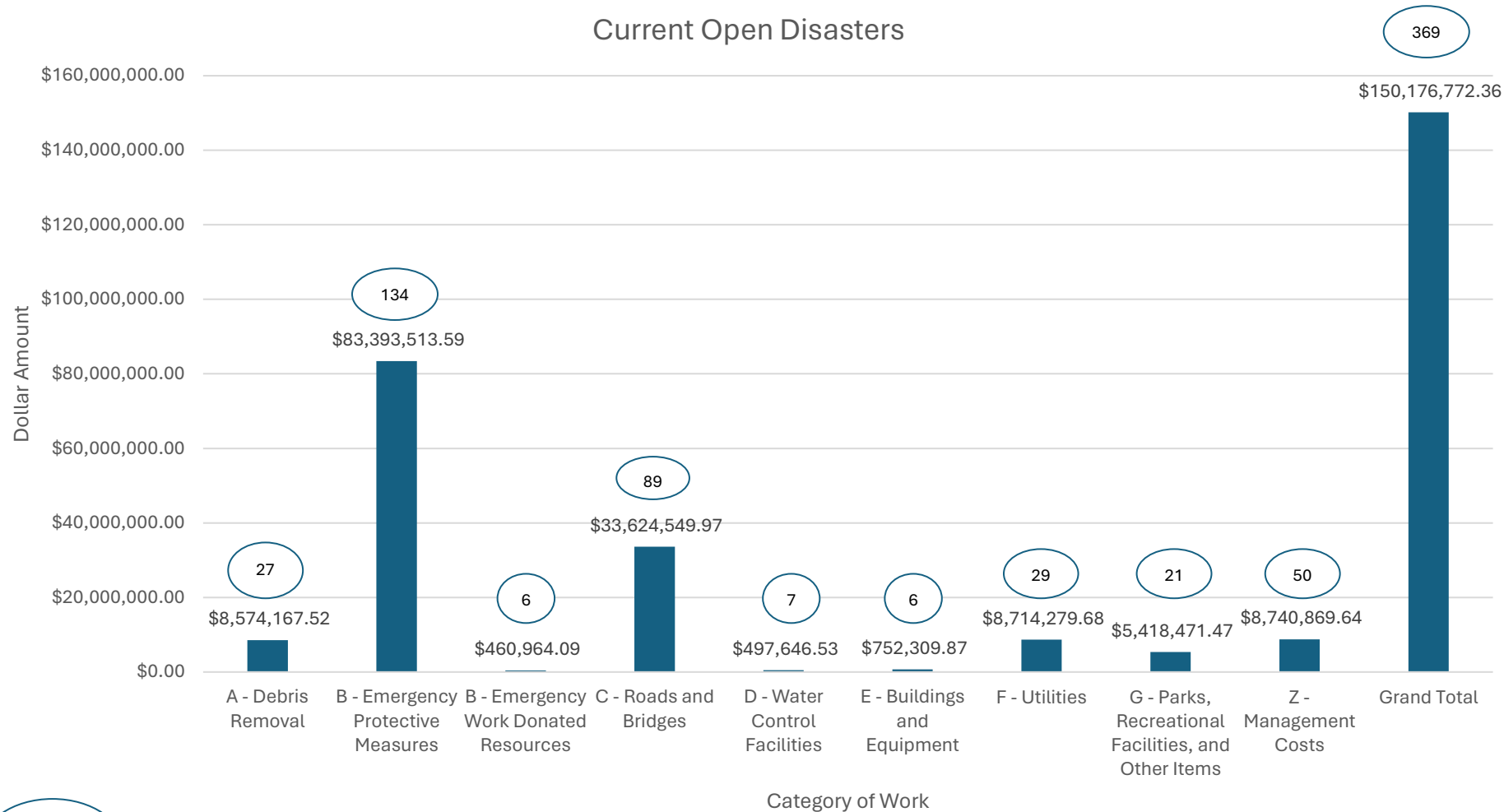
Aging infrastructure



Unknown threats



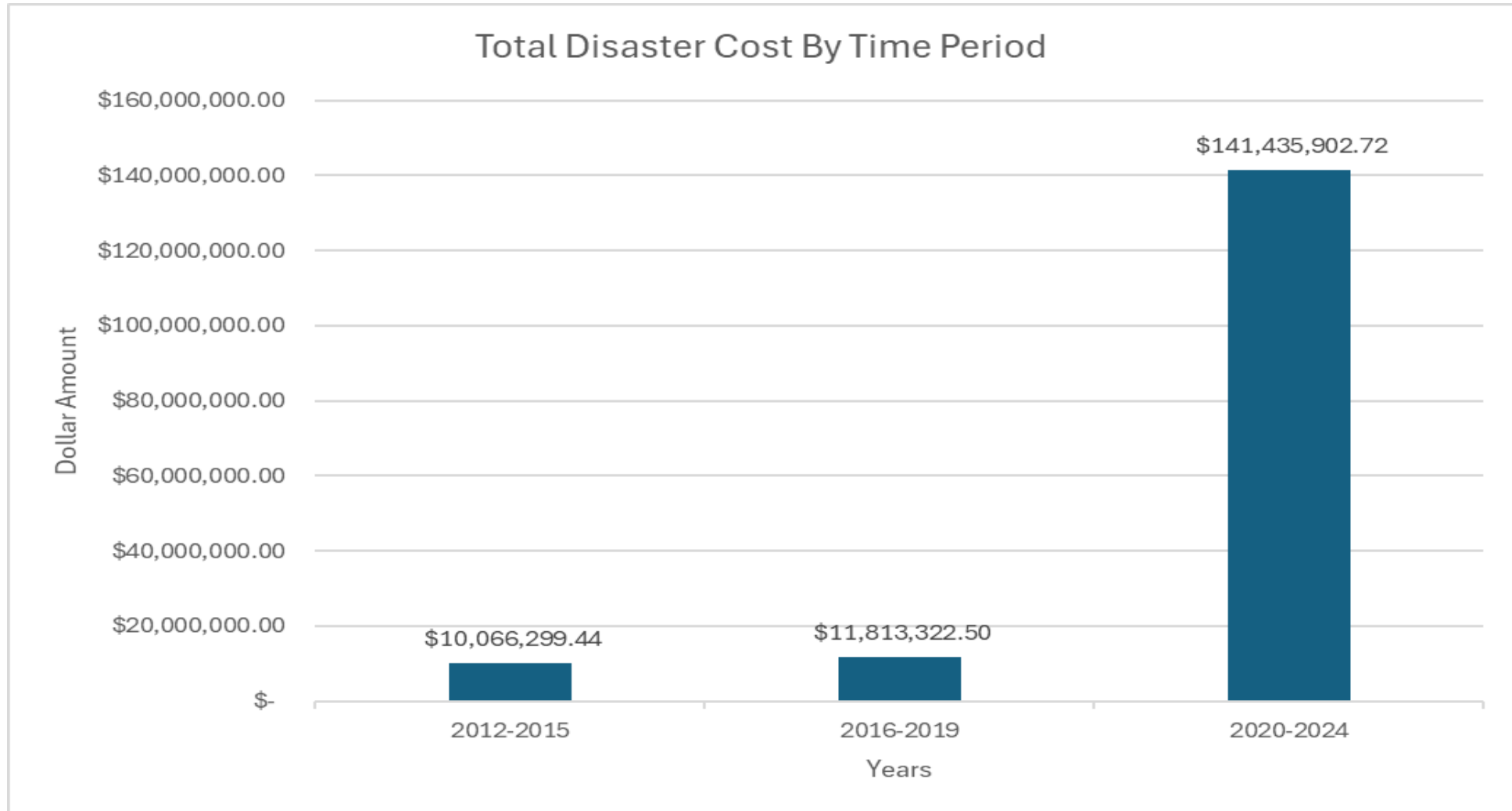
MT DES Recovery – Current Workload



- Recovery currently has six open disasters
- Half of the open disasters are floods
- The other open disasters consist of a pandemic, a wind event, and a fire

of Projects

Recovery Trends





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Field Officer
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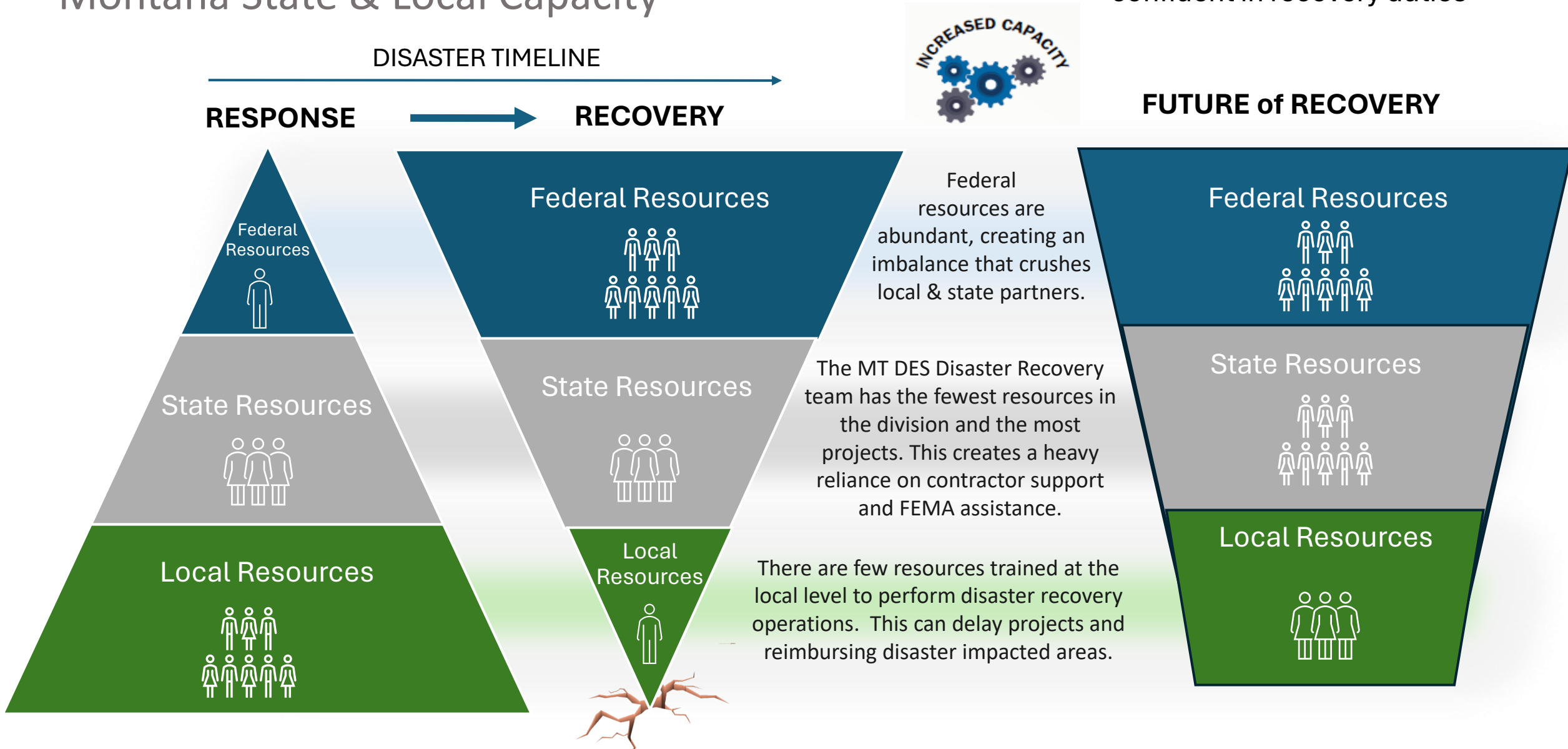
60% are new, or new to their position, since the 2022 flood

● Modified or Short-Term

Resource Pyramid

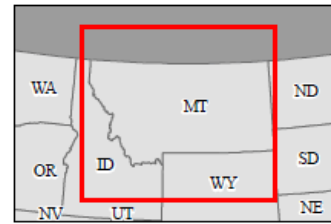
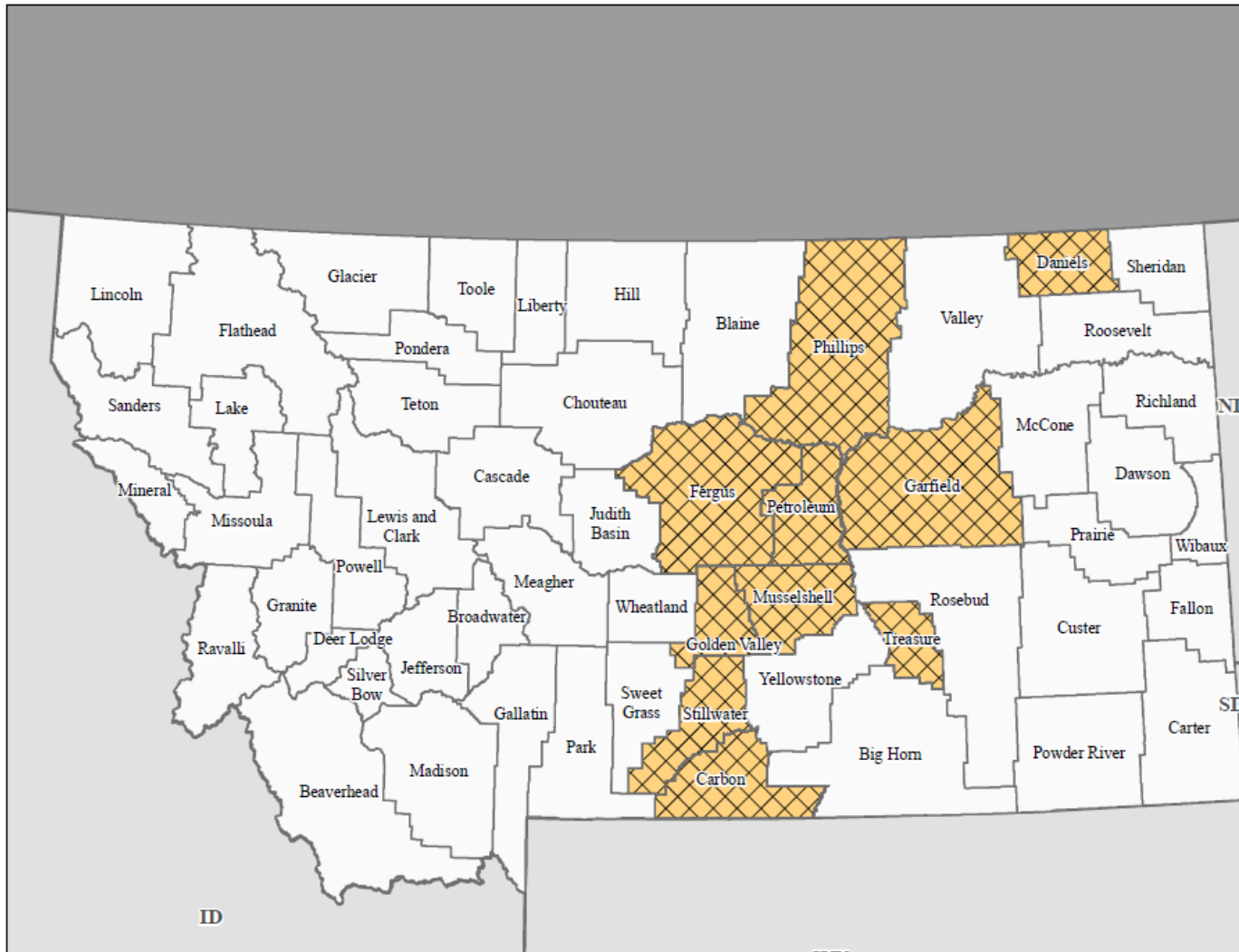
Montana State & Local Capacity

In recent poll, only 1 of 21 new county emergency managers confident in recovery duties



2022-2023 Event Summary

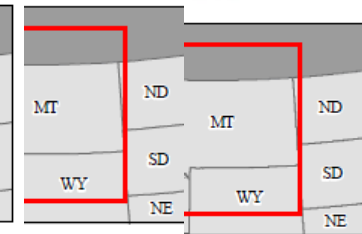
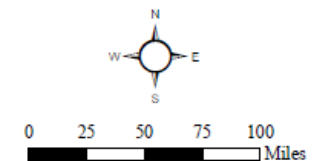
FEMA-4745-DR, Montana Disaster Declaration, 2023



Data Layer/Map Description:
The types of assistance that have been designated for selected areas in the State of Montana.

All areas in the State of Montana are eligible for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

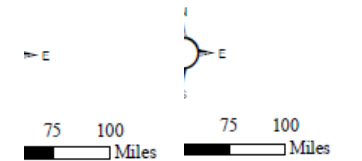
Designated Counties
 No Designation
 Public Assistance (Categories A - G)



Description:
Assistance that have been selected for Montana.

All areas in the State of Montana are eligible for assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Designated Counties
 No Designation
 Public Assistance (Categories A - G)



Key Findings

- **Staffing and Capacity Challenges**
- **Recovery Coordination Among Agencies**
- **Damage Assessments and Site Inspections**
- **Debris Removal**
- **Individual Assistance**



Key Findings

1. Staffing and Capacity Challenges

Summary: The response to and recovery from the 2022 and 2023 flooding highlighted critical gaps in staffing and personnel capacity for local and state agencies.



2. Recovery Coordination among Agencies

Summary: The number of agencies involved in the 2022 flooding brought resources and expertise, but also revealed added complexity and inefficiencies in program delivery. Recovery coordination between agencies at all levels was challenging.



3. Damage Assessments and Site Inspections

Summary: To meet eligibility requirements for FEMA's Public Assistance program, accurate damage assessments and site inspections must be completed at each location. These processes were time consuming and caused frustration among partners.



4. Debris Removal

Summary: The 2022 flooding resulted in an incredible amount of rocky and vegetative debris in and along waterways, setting these areas up for future flooding. Per Montana Code Annotated, MT DES was assigned the task of removing hazardous debris from navigable waterways on behalf of the Governor.



5. Individual Assistance

Summary: For the first time since 2011, Montana received an Individual Assistance Declaration for four counties in 2022, opening up federal programs and services for those affected. However, due to capacity challenges and unfamiliarity with the programs, several services were underutilized.





1. Staffing and Capacity Challenges

Summary: The response to and recovery from the 2022 and 2023 flooding highlighted critical gaps in staffing and personnel capacity for local and state agencies.

1. Staffing and Capacity Challenges

Strengths:

- State and Local DES supported response and recovery efforts with staff going above and beyond primary duties.
- Federal partners quickly mobilized to support
- MT benefited from external SMEs through EMAC in early response/recovery

Summary of Areas for Improvement:

- A. Bring staffing levels, expertise and experience at State and local levels up to what is required to fully support a Recovery program in Montana.
- B. Conduct pre-disaster planning of how to augment State and local capability.
- C. Enhance local capability to address the full spectrum of emergency management.

Potential Courses of Action:

1.A.1. Expand state and local staffing to support recovery efforts and handle more disasters with state-led recovery.

1.A.2. Leverage technology to alleviate staff workload to streamline data collection, agency coordination, and process efficiency.

1.A.3. Continue to utilize external resources, such as EMAC personnel, who can augment state staffing and bring subject matter expertise.

1.B.1. Coordinate with FEMA Region 8 ahead of disasters on “right-sizing” response and recovery footprint for in-state operations.

1.C.1. Increase training and educational opportunities to local and tribal jurisdictions.

1. Staffing and Capacity Challenges



2. Recovery Coordination among Agencies

Summary: The number of agencies involved in the 2022 flooding brought resources and expertise, but also revealed added complexity and inefficiencies in program delivery. Recovery coordination between agencies at all levels was challenging.

2. Recovery Coordination among Agencies

Strengths:

- Many response and recovery partners have developed strong working relationships pre-disaster.
- State and federal recovery agencies worked to address barriers and challenges.
- Despite complex programs, agencies are committed to serving Montana communities.

Summary of Areas for Improvement:

- A. Define roles, responsibilities, definitions and timelines for determining needs for, permitting and implementation of Recovery programs, including how to leverage FEMA's Interagency Recovery Coordination.
- B. Provide assistance to State and local emergency managers in determining eligibility and ensuring applicants have access to resources that will not disqualify them from eligibility.
- C. Improve the permitting process across various agencies.

Potential Courses of Action:

2.A.1. Complete a Statewide Recovery Framework including relevant partners and their respective roles.

2.A.2. Conduct a review of state agency recovery responsibilities and functions and make recommendations to clarify authorities and definitions for program delivery.

2.B.1. Provide training and education to communities to better prepare for disaster recovery.

2.B.2. Work with SHPO/DEQ to improve pre-disaster coordination on gravel pit eligibility and provide outreach to communities.


2.C.1. Include permitting entities at MARCs and/or DRCs to provide guidance to individuals.

2.C.2. Develop resources to help clarify and reduce the burden of the permitting process for individuals.

2.C.3. Explore case management solutions that ensure information flow across agencies and back to the applicant.



2. Recovery Coordination among Agencies



3. Damage Assessments and Site Inspections

Summary: To meet eligibility requirements for FEMA's Public Assistance program, accurate damage assessments and site inspections must be completed at each location. These processes were time consuming and caused frustration among partners.

3. Damage Assessments and Site Inspections

Strengths:

- State and local partners worked collectively to gather initial damage assessments.
- Counties with a consistent FEMA point-of-contact reported a good experience.
- Individual damage data resulted in a FEMA Individual Assistance declaration.

Summary of Areas for Improvement:

- A. Develop efficiencies in the damage assessment and site inspection processes and ensure emergency managers are trained in implementing them.
- B. Increase coordination with FEMA to enhance communication on timelines, eligibility and programmatic requirements.

Potential Courses of Action:

3.A.1. Train a state and local cadre of Public Assistance technical experts to provide support through the damage assessment process and reduce reliance on federal agencies during disaster recovery.

3.A.2. Provide training and education to potential applicants on disaster documentation best practices.

3.A.3. Utilize technology to streamline data collection and processes.

3.A.4. Increase state and local capacity to lead recovery efforts with reduced reliance on federal funding.

3.B.1. Coordinate with federal recovery agencies to efficiently move through recovery processes, while meeting realistic timelines.



3. Damage Assessments and Site Inspections



4. Debris Removal

Summary: The 2022 flooding resulted in an incredible amount of rocky and vegetative debris in and along waterways, setting these areas up for future flooding. Per Montana Code Annotated, MT DES was assigned the task of removing hazardous debris from navigable waterways on behalf of the Governor.

4. Debris Removal

Strengths:

- Thousands of tons of hazardous debris was removed from waterways, reducing the risk of damage from future flooding.
- County burden was reduced by having the state take on the debris removal project.

Summary of Areas for Improvement:

- A. Increase state and local staff capacity for handling the unique challenges of debris removal projects and incorporate Montana-specific considerations in debris removal planning and coordination.

Potential Courses of Action:

4.A.1. Develop a comprehensive State Debris Management Plan, incorporating lessons learned and best practices.

4.A.2. Approach the waterway debris removal process collaboratively, with all relevant agencies involved throughout the process.

4.A.3. Provide training and education to local jurisdictions on debris management planning and removal.

4.A.4. Develop and train a state and local cadre of debris management technical experts.

4.A.5. Activate a Debris Management Task Force early in disasters and ensure that all relevant agencies are engaged.

4. Debris Removal



5. Individual Assistance

Summary: For the first time since 2011, Montana received an Individual Assistance Declaration for four counties in 2022, opening up federal programs and services for those affected. However, due to capacity challenges and unfamiliarity with the programs, several services were underutilized.

5. Individual Assistance



Strengths:

- Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC) and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) provided information and resources to affected community members.
- Montana saw a high rate of FEMA Individual Assistance eligibility and awards.
- Community-based organizations and volunteers provided critical services to individuals.

Summary of Areas for Improvement:

- A. Increase State staffing and training in the Individual Assistance program.
- B. Assist local jurisdictions in planning for individual recovery and implementing best practices.

Potential Courses of Action:

5.A.1. Define the role of the State Voluntary Agency Liaison and Individual Assistance specialist within MT DES and establish partnerships ahead of disasters.

5.A.2. Develop and train a state and local cadre of subject matter experts on Individual Assistance programs and services.

5.B.1. Provide education and training to communities on MARCs, long-term recovery groups, and other best practices to help residents recover.

5.B.2. Support state and local recovery plans that incorporate planning for individual recovery.

5. Individual Assistance

Conclusion

- Montana communities are resilient and come together in the aftermath of disasters but will need increased support as disasters become more damaging.
- Collaboration among response and recovery agencies will be key to effective recovery.
- While immediate response is critical during an incident, focus on long-term recovery is necessary.
- Investment in local programs is crucial to wholistic recovery.



Next Steps

We need your help

- Increase State level disaster recovery capacity
 - Disaster Recovery Employees
 - Grant & Financial Management
 - Internal Compliance
- Reduce reliance on federal funds & resources
- Increase grant dollars available to local jurisdictions
- Develop local recovery training program

Thank you

Questions and Comments

