

First and foremost, our hearts go out to all those affected by the Alameda Fire. I'm totally overwhelmed at the enormity of this disaster and it must be horribly difficult to lose everything as happened to thousands of people. I want to do all we can to help.

The road to recovery is going to be long; this is an ultra-marathon and though many want to start out sprinting we can't sustain it, so we have to pace ourselves in order to rebuild lives, homes, and businesses with care and compassion.

Our city's staff has put together a great website to help our community members give whatever they can to those in need. I really hope that it makes a difference in how and what gets donated over the coming years of recovery. It's at Ashland.or.us/ashlandresponse.

I'm really proud of the firefighters and police officers throughout the Rogue Valley who put themselves in harm's way to get people evacuated, save as much as humanly possible and put the fire out. It would have been so much worse without their selfless work responding into the flames and smoke to get others out of it.

Our communities of Ashland, Talent, Phoenix, and Medford are connected in so many ways through people, water, commerce, and many activities and events each year. Our futures in this recovery will also be interwoven as we navigate the complex issues ahead, together. I want our staff to be available to help inform a new way of living that is more fire safe, sustainable, and embracing the diversity of our communities.

So many great local organizations are already at the table to help like La Clinica, Mercy Flights, Asante, Rogue Credit Union, the United Way, and many more with others yet to fill roles we haven't yet discovered we need. These partnerships will help this process in immeasurable ways.

We have support from FEMA in disaster declarations, the State of

Oregon , and Jackson County to move us along. I have been in contact with Senator Merkley and Wyden who both made personal calls and offers of help.

The ultimate impact of yesterday's Almeda Fire spreads out into the future, our futures, in many directions. The one lesson I would draw from what has happened so far is that regional collaboration holds great potential for our ability to heal and rebuild.

As Mark Johnston, the State of Oregon's fire team liaison said to us yesterday, "We've doing our specialty and we'll leave soon, turning it over to you all to work together. But I'll be back over time we'll get to know each other and then we can really achieve a lot."

“It all comes down to relationships of trust and respect.”

I think Mark is teaching by doing and we should turn this shocking disaster into an important step forward together, that we never would have done without it. The secret, I think, is figuring out what we can do to make our partners' lives better.