

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate,

After hearing from numerous constituents and local leaders and examining the issue, I write to alert you to my concerns regarding the accuracy and fairness of new flood maps for long Island, New York, including, but not limited to, the communities of the Village of Valley Stream, the Town of Hempstead, and Massapequa Park.

Precisely identifying which homes ought to acquire flood insurance is a worthy and necessary goal. Yet, there is too much error inherent in the technology and data used to prepare these maps, and – in highly populated mature suburban community like Long Island – these errors result in many hundreds, if not thousands, of homeowners, unnecessarily being added to flood maps, when, in fact, history and a more precise examination of all available data and technology may well conclude that their homes are not at significant risk of flooding. Specifically, outdated GIS technology and questionable base flood elevation standards have adversely impacted this community, with more than 20,000 local residents being added to FEMA's special flood hazard area (SFHA). Using incomplete or potentially inaccurate data, the federal government has burdened already cash-strapped families with insurance premiums that can reach as high as \$2,000 – no small matter as we struggle to emerge from this economic recession. Given the significance of this economic impact, it is incumbent upon FEMA to be sure that each and every home added to the proposed flood map, merits inclusion. Simply put, the flood maps, as they currently construed, do not yet meet that standard. More can and must be done before the implantation of this map is allowed to continue, and more and more potentially low-risk homeowners are added to it.

While the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials have usefully suggested they would send a small team to spot check a few areas and reexamine a few of the properties impacted, this is hardly sufficient. Because these new flood maps are affecting upwards of 20,000 residents, it is imperative that FEMA put many more boots on the ground to conduct a comprehensive, block-by block, house-specific survey to get the job done right. In the interim, I am requesting that FEMA put in place a complete moratorium and suspension of the flood insurance requirement for this region until such time as a comprehensive reassessment is complete. We simply must get this right. A short spot-check to deal with a comprehensive problem is not the answer. Given the broad impact, importance of the programs overall goal and significant financial consequences of FEMA's flood insurance mandate on the region and its homeowners, I respectfully urge you to immediately approve a comprehensive house-by-house reassessment of these maps and the new base flood elevations imposed on residents. Moreover, I request that you work closely with the local units of government and community leaders in these areas to incorporate historical flooding data so that new maps, and their base flood elevation levels, are based on the best data and science can be re-issued for the areas.

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue. Please contact me or my aide, Grant Kerr, at 202-224-6542 if you have questions or need additional information.

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