

January 28, 2014

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

Dear Administrator Fugate,

As I'm sure you recall from our previous conversations, in 2009, FEMA released preliminary flood maps for coastal communities in York and Cumberland Counties, Maine. Several towns in those counties demonstrated that the maps did not reflect accurately the risk of a flood in the communities. Consequently, some towns decided to appeal the maps' findings and hired engineering consultants to assist them in their appeal; others did not or could not afford to do so.

Prior to the initiation of the appeals process, FEMA Region 1, the Contracting Project Manager for CDM Smith, local officials, and the towns' consultants met extensively to discuss variances in CDM Smith's methodologies and mapping results for affected and represented towns. Consequently, the parties agreed that FEMA would accept the towns' analyses, which were informed by the engineering studies, as accurately representative of their coastal topography. FEMA subsequently accepted the towns' proposed changes to the maps and dismissed the appeals as moot.

In January 2013, FEMA released new maps for all towns in both counties. For those towns that had hired a consultant in 2009 and had their appeals successfully mooted, FEMA incorporated their results into the new 2013 maps. FEMA refused, however, to apply those methodologies to the mapping for towns that had not previously hired that consultant. As a result, selected coastal communities in York and Cumberland County have conflicting mapping products produced with dissimilar calculations. This clearly is a misrepresentation of the likelihood of flooding along the coast and ultimately an inadequate portrayal of the potential threat hazard.

This unequal treatment has both surprised and alarmed the affected towns. Over 1,000 residential and commercial properties suddenly found themselves placed in high-risk flood areas. Based on those maps and the provisions of the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, these properties will now be subject to dramatic increases in their flood insurance premiums.

To ensure that FEMA's 2013 flood maps most accurately reflect present conditions, and to make sure that similarly-situated towns in Maine are treated consistently, I urge FEMA to apply the previously accepted methodologies to towns that did not or could not leverage those engineering services in 2009.

I also recommend FEMA extend the time for Maine communities to lodge appeals to the 2013 maps. In February 2013, the towns affected by the 2013 maps hired a consulting firm which – relying on a previously cooperative relationship with FEMA -- requested all pertinent data from FEMA to run its own modeling and tests. After repeated requests and denials for this information and clarification as to



why the agency did not incorporate previously accepted methodologies from the consultant, on January 8, 2014 FEMA finally provided the consultant with the information— approximately 11 months after the initial request.

This lengthy delay has caused a troubling ripple effect for 18 York and Cumberland County towns, since these towns will now not have enough time to prepare adequate appeals before the process begins in March. A delayed appeal period would provide the towns the time necessary to remodel and retest coastal methodologies with the newly provided data.

I appreciate your attention to these matters during this complicated process. I look forward to working with you to establish flood maps that do not unfairly burden Maine's residents and that provide the most accurate threat assessment for Maine. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Richard Houghton in my office at (202) 224-2523.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

cc: Paul F. Ford, Acting Administrator, FEMA Region I