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January 22, 2014

W. Craig Fugate
Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate,

I write in advance of the appeal process scheduled to begin in March 2014 for the new proposed flood maps for Cumberland and York Counties. I urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that similarly-situated coastal communities are treated fairly and equally, and that new flood zone maps best reflect the actual, scientific flood risk along the Maine coast.

In 2009, FEMA issued new flood zone drafts for Southern Maine. During the public response period, engineers representing municipalities in York and Cumberland Counties supplied data for several coastal communities that applied region-specific methods on top of FEMA's collection methodology to reflect more specific localized results. While those original maps have been permanently shelved, the new drafts released early in 2013 incorporate much of the data provided during the 2009 process.

This is a positive result and an example of federal agencies, municipal leaders, and private engineers working together to meet FEMA's national standards while incorporating data that recognizes the region's specific geography. Maine communities that contracted with engineers during 2009 now get the benefit of better maps. All communities in the affected region should have the same opportunity.

Considering the complexity of mapping flood zones along the Maine coast, the history of adjustments to flood zone maps in Region 1, the precedent of FEMA adopting data from local engineers that improve the accuracy of mapping flood risk, and the enormous impact that changes in both flood zones and insurance subsidies will have on homeowners in Maine, I strongly urge FEMA to approach the appeal process in a manner that is thorough, transparent and welcoming to data provided by municipalities.

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As a matter of fairness in any appellate procedure brought by a municipality, I further urge FEMA to give appropriate weight to data collected pursuant to methodologies which FEMA has previously accepted for similarly-situated neighboring communities. I also urge FEMA to grant appeals in which municipalities have presented data collected using the same region-specific methods that FEMA approved during the public response period in 2009.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to working with you to establish flood zone maps that accurately reflect the risk to coastal Maine communities without putting an unnecessary burden on Mainers. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Travis Kennedy in my office.

Sincerely,

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator

CC: Paul F. Ford
FEMA Region 1 Administrator
99 High Street
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