



FEMA

October 19, 2010

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Snowe:

Thank you for your expressions of concern regarding the proposed flood maps for the Maine counties of Cumberland and York. We are coordinating with the communities in these counties to offer a path forward that will further engage them in the mapping process and provide additional information, as we believe it will provide opportunities for flood hazard mitigation and planning.

As you may know, since the first days of the Map Modernization initiative, almost four years ago, the Mitigation Division staff for FEMA Region I have been in constant contact with community officials of Cumberland and York Counties. Informational outreach meetings and conference calls with officials and citizens from Portland, South Portland, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Harpswell, Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, the Islands of Casco Bay, and other communities have been ongoing in an effort to share information, including the best scientific, technical, and historical data.

On September 2, 2010, FEMA introduced the preliminary flood maps for Cumberland and York Counties and began a second appeal/comment period, which allows for a formal, collaborative exchange of information on the proposed flood maps. Some of the affected communities in these counties have raised concerns about the maps and have asked that the formal appeal period be suspended. Instead, the communities would prefer to work with FEMA on a more informal basis to address some of the concerns that they have with the maps.

Because the ultimate goal of this process is the production of the best informational product possible for Cumberland and York Counties, I believe FEMA has come up with a plan to respond to the communities' request that will address their concerns, while also resulting in new maps that identify their flooding risk. Instead of continuing the Map Modernization project in Cumberland and York Counties, FEMA will start a Risk MAP project that will include a comprehensive review of flooding risks, as well as other mitigation awareness initiatives that will benefit the communities.

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Risk MAP is a new nationwide initiative that extends beyond the original National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) objectives of Map Modernization. FEMA will collaborate with communities to define ways to improve flood risk awareness and will provide Risk MAP tools and products, in addition to the Flood Insurance Rate Map, to enable communities to:

- (1) More effectively communicate risk to their citizens, empowering them to reduce their risk and be ready for the next flood;
- (2) Inform and update their hazard mitigation plans and other land use development plans using the flood data provided; and
- (3) Take additional mitigation actions to reduce risk.

The area of Portland, Maine, and the surrounding communities is ideal for conversion to Risk MAP, because:

- (1) These communities face a potentially increasing risk of flooding;
- (2) They go beyond the minimum NFIP participation requirements by exceeding and implementing higher floodplain management standards;
- (3) They have already contributed data to the project; and
- (4) They have a sincere willingness to take mitigation actions to reduce their flood risk.

In the interest of collaboration, and because some of the affected communities have already agreed, in principle, to move forward with discussion about the Risk MAP process, FEMA has decided to withdraw the proposed maps for Cumberland and York Counties, and move the process along to Risk MAP. I believe this will facilitate a better working relationship and will address the concerns of the communities in Cumberland and York Counties.

The Risk MAP process will require local communities to collaborate on and sign a mutually agreeable "Project Charter" that would set forth roles, responsibilities, and a schedule, in order to improve the current maps. This will remove the unknowns and the potential for further confusion. Once completed, FEMA would restart the appeal/comment period. If the "Project Charter" does not get signed before January 31, 2011, however, FEMA would have no alternative but to complete the ongoing work to improve the maps with the information we currently have under the Map Modernization project, and then restart the full appeal process.

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I believe the Risk MAP proposal that I have outlined will prove to be a positive step in the identification of flood mapping and mitigation issues for the citizens of Cumberland and York Counties. I look forward to working with you and the citizens of these communities during this process, to ensure that we have a better understanding of the flooding risks in the region. If you need additional information or assistance, please have a member of your staff contact the FEMA Legislative Affairs Division by telephone at (202) 646-4500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Craig Fugate', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

W. Craig Fugate  
Administrator