



FEMA

December 18, 2007

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

I am writing to affirm FEMA's commitment to work with the Town of Marana to ensure the flood hazards depicted on the Pima County Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are reflective of the conditions in the field.

The draft flood maps presented to this point are not final, they have no legal force or effect, and they will not be posted on any FEMA website. Also, the draft maps do not recognize the potential flood mitigation effects of the CAP canal, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, or Interstate 10. We appreciate the Town's commitment to provide an additional engineering study for the area south of Interstate 10 and anticipate some change in flood hazards as a result. In order to expedite the analysis and provide support, FEMA can offer the services of its mapping contractor to provide technical assistance to the Town and its consultant.

Given the specific circumstances of this study, we have agreed to suspend processing of the Preliminary FIRMs until November 1, 2008, in anticipation of the receipt of the new engineering data and associated maps. Any data submitted prior to October 1, 2008, will be incorporated into the Preliminary FIRMs before they are issued. If the data received suggests significant changes to flood hazards that will require more than 4 weeks to incorporate into the Preliminary FIRMs, we may postpone further issuance of those maps. In addition, as part of our standard mapping process, there is a statutory 90-day appeals period following the issuance of the Preliminary FIRMs, during which time additional engineering and mapping work may be submitted for incorporation into the final effective FIRM. Beyond that, data can be submitted at any time to revise the maps through our Letter of Map Change processes.

We ask that community officials be cautious and make prudent permitting decisions while the flood hazard data is being compiled, because if any areas are ultimately determined to be subject to inundation by the base flood, owners of structures built in such areas could be required to purchase flood insurance. It is standard FEMA policy, in all communities across the country, to encourage property owners to consider flood insurance, regardless of the zone indicated for their property on the effective FIRM.

Finally, with respect to any other community in a similar situation – where FEMA proposes to discontinue recognition of one or more structures currently shown as mitigating flood hazards on the effective FIRM – FEMA will promptly, prior to drafting any revised maps, inform local officials of

Senator John McCain

DEC 18 2007
Page 2

such a proposal and also provide a sufficient amount of time for that community to conduct a study of the effects of the structure(s) in question before finalizing updated flood hazard information for the area. Given the unique nature of such situations, FEMA will go beyond standard community outreach and coordination requirements and proactively engage community leaders and stakeholders in discussions about flood risk as well as the implications a flood hazard designation would have on flood insurance and floodplain management requirements. FEMA will also provide technical assistance to communities willing to undertake studies aimed at improving flood hazard data for the area. FEMA is currently working to finalize internal guidance for its regional offices and mapping partners that will outline a process and methodology to use when analyzing flood hazard implications in situations as described above.

I hope this information is helpful to you in addressing the concerns of the Town of Marana and possibly other communities in Arizona. If you need additional information or assistance, please have a member of your staff contact the FEMA Office of Legislative Affairs by telephone at (202) 646-4500.

Sincerely,



David I. Maurstad
Assistant Administrator
Mitigation Directorate

Enclosures

DM:mjm

cc: Senator Jon Kyl's Washington Office
Representative Gabrielle Giffords's Washington Office
Representative Barney Frank's Washington Office
Representative Spencer Bachus's' Washington Office
Representative Steven C. LaTourette's Washington Office
Nancy L. Ward, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IX
Sally Ziolkowski, Director, Mitigation Division, FEMA Region IX
Raymond T. Lenaburg, Risk Analysis Branch Chief, FEMA Region IX