



FEMA

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The Honorable Patrick E. Murphy
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Murphy:

Thank you for your letter dated November 19, 2013, to W. Craig Fugate, Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security, on behalf of your constituents in Palm Beach County. In your correspondence, you requested that FEMA extend the comment and review period for the preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Palm Beach County to provide additional time for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to submit new technical data that it is developing. You reiterated the importance of replacing the county's existing flood mapping with a FIRM based on the most accurate information available, to protect public safety and property and maintain the area's development and economy.

Throughout the development of a new or revised FIRM, FEMA works closely with local officials to describe technical and administrative procedures and to obtain community input. State and local officials are provided with several opportunities, both formal and informal, to review and comment on FEMA's findings during the mapping process. Palm Beach County has been involved in the current mapping process through planning, reviewing, and attending meetings with FEMA.

As you know, FEMA provided the officials for Palm Beach County with copies of a revised preliminary FIRM and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report for their community on May 31, 2013. Prior to the release of the preliminary map products, in the week of April 29, 2013, FEMA conducted meetings with representatives from Palm Beach County to discuss the work maps. FEMA held two additional meetings with officials from Palm Beach on July 31 and September 20, 2013, to address questions regarding the FIRMs and the post-preliminary process. In September 2013, Open House and Consultation Coordination Officer's (CCO) meetings were held in four of the five counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Because Palm Beach County officials indicated that they were not ready to proceed with finalizing the maps, FEMA extended the community review period for Palm Beach County until November 30, 2013.

Representatives of FEMA and Palm Beach County met on November 20, 2013, to discuss the status of the data the county plans to provide but has not yet submitted. The county requested additional time to develop the data, and FEMA is willing to provide that extra time while waiting to receive the SFWMD C-51 Basin Study, which will be completed in February 2014. Therefore, FEMA will continue to accept additional data from the county until February 28, 2014.

The February 28, 2014, deadline is not the county's final opportunity to provide input. Once the SFWMD data are incorporated and a revised preliminary FIRM and FIS report are issued, the community will have a 30-day review period for the revised preliminary products. After the

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community review period is over, FEMA will provide a statutory 90-day appeal period, as it does whenever new or modified flood hazard information is proposed to be shown on a preliminary FIRM and FIS report. During this time, community officials, property owners, and other residents have an additional opportunity to submit technical and/or scientific data to support an appeal of the proposed flood hazard determinations.

FEMA continues to be committed to working with Palm Beach County to provide the best flood hazard information possible. However, it is also important to remember that a FIRM is considered a living document, subject to revision. FEMA has several methods for map revision if new, more accurate information becomes available, even after the final FIRM for a community has been published. Individuals, groups, or community officials can request changes to the FIRM by using one of FEMA's Letter of Map Change (LOMC) processes. More information on the types of LOMCs available can be obtained by contacting FEMA's Map Information eXchange by telephone at 1-877-336-2627 or by email at FEMAMapSpecialist@riskmapcds.com.

I hope this information is helpful to you in addressing the concerns of residents and community officials in Palm Beach County. If you need additional information or assistance, please have a member of your staff contact the FEMA Congressional Affairs Division by telephone at (202) 646-4500.

Sincerely,



Roy E. Wright
Deputy Associate Administrator for Mitigation
Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration

cc: Major P. May, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IV
Brad Loar, Director, Mitigation Division, FEMA Region IV
Mark Vieira, Risk Analysis Branch, FEMA Region IV