



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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**Rep. Doris Matsui Calls on Federal Agencies to Clarify
National Flood Policy**
*Requests Information on Standards and Their Effect on Local
Flood Protection Efforts*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) sent a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requesting an update on the guidance policies and implementation initiatives of both agencies, and the nationwide examination of levees being undertaken by the Corps.

“It is imperative that we keep moving forward with public safety. Our flood protection efforts in Sacramento and across the country are critical to that goal. But, we must make sure it is being done in a responsible way. The Corps and FEMA must let us know what standards we are striving for and how they set that bar. Their actions affect everyone who lives in a flood plain,” said Rep. Matsui.

Rep. Matsui worked with Chairman Oberstar of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to jointly draft the letter. At her request, a hearing will also be held on Feb. 14, 2008, in Washington, D.C. Rep. Matsui will also participate in the hearing as a key witness. The hearing will have a national focus on improving implementation standards for flood protection, and clarifying the process.

“In Sacramento, we know how important it is to invest in flood protection. We must keep our families safe, and create systems that will bolster our flood control now and for generations to come. I will continue to be a leader in Congress and in Sacramento to ensure that we reach these goals,” said Rep. Matsui.

The following is the text of the letter sent by Rep. Matsui:

February 1, 2008

Dear:

Much has changed in our country's flood protection policy since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast in the summer of 2005. We are committed to ensuring that these changes better improve protection of our citizens and our cities.

The Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") has begun a nationwide evaluation of levees, including structures in the cities of Sacramento, California; St. Louis, Missouri; and Washington, D.C. We are requesting information about these efforts, as well as new guidance policies and implementation initiatives of the Corps and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA").

Specifically, we request more information on:

- The draft Corps guidance as described in the Draft Engineering Technical Letter 110-2-570, that was released in September 2007, and , in particular, any Corps analysis on implementation and the financial ramifications of the draft guidance
- The role of FEMA in working with the Corps on development of the draft engineering technical letter.
- The Corps' permit review process for levee construction and rehabilitation, including the approval process for the alteration of an existing flood control structure under section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Appropriations Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 408, commonly referred to as 408 permission from ASA).
- The Corps' policy on encouraging the use of non-structural alternatives or watershed approaches to flood damage reduction projects.

We support a toughening of our nation's flood control policy standards. Clearly, previous standards and oversight failed the people of the Gulf Coast. As both the Corps and FEMA develop new standards or guidance materials, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee seeks to clarify the effect that implementation of these standards or guidance materials will have not only on the federal budget, but also on the budgets of our non-federal flood control partners.

We look forward to working with the Corps and FEMA to strengthen our nation's portfolio of public safety facilities, which we consider – as we know you do – a top national priority.

We look forward to your cooperation in these matters.

Sincerely,

James L. Oberstar, M.C.
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Doris O. Matsui, M.C.

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