

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2010

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

We write to convey our concern about the Army Corps of Engineers' levee vegetation policy, which we believe is inconsistent with overall Corps policy and practice, and which appears to be in conflict with longstanding federal, state, and local statutes and policies applicable in our congressional districts.

Our local governments have made it clear that removing all trees and shrubs from federally constructed levees along rivers and streams, as the new guidelines would require, is not a workable policy. The new guidance has the potential to impact thousands of miles of levees across California, compromise our already fragile ecosystems, place a large financial burden on our struggling economy, ignore region-specific conditions, and negatively impact public safety.

The State of California and a number of local governments are in the midst of upgrading hundreds of miles of levees that protect urban cities, rural agricultural areas and the Delta. The Army Corp's levee vegetation policy may result in stripping valuable ecosystem habitat from our state, as well as force projects to be redesigned at higher costs to taxpayers. This levee vegetation policy could actually decrease the stability of levees. It is also in conflict with federal environmental agency protections of endangered species.

The 1996 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) provided appropriate direction to the Corps for developing levee vegetation guidelines, and California has led the way to help resolve these issues, with support from the Corps, through such processes as the California Levee Roundtable.

We ask that the Army Corps work with local and state officials — and with your regional divisions and the regional offices of other relevant federal agencies — to enhance public safety and ensure the viability of riparian vegetation, trees, and shrubs for the health of terrestrial and aquatic species. Additionally, we believe that a balanced approach can be reached that ensures public safety and allows much-needed flood protection work to proceed without compromising valuable natural resources.

We look forward to your response and working together.

Sincerely,



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress



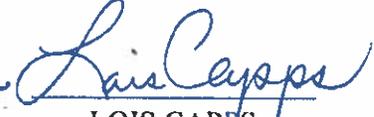
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LOIS CAPPS
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ANNA ESHOO
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MICHAEL HONDA
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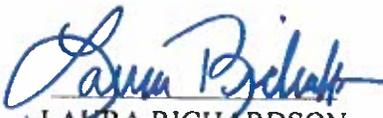
ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress



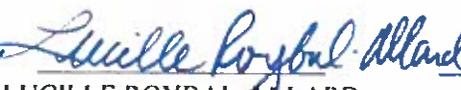
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