

On March 4, 2011, I introduced H.R. 902, legislation to help modernize and clarify the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) flood zone designations. This bill would provide technical changes to FEMA's flood zone designations so that local agencies will have a concrete understanding of the criteria they need to meet to reach certain milestones. H.R. 902 will go a long way to address the concerns of those who live and work in areas designated by FEMA as flood zones.

The Sacramento region is the most at risk urban area to river flooding in the nation. Accordingly, the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency and the State of California have devoted millions of dollars toward flood protection. But under current law, only communities with federally funded levee improvements, not state or locally funded improvements, are eligible for an A99 designation. This bill will allow the investment of state and local partners to be recognized by FEMA when they review the progress made on our nation's levees.

Specifically, the H.R. 902 would amend Section 1307 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to require the FEMA Administrator to consider reconstruction and improvement of flood protection systems when establishing flood insurance rates within 30 days from the date of enactment. While ensuring public safety remains the first and foremost goal of flood protection efforts in Sacramento and around the country, this bill will assist communities that are in the midst of modernizing their existing flood protection systems by updating current law to take local, state and federal funding into account when determining designations.

FEMA needs to recognize what taxpayers, local governments and states have contributed – and will continue to contribute to flood protection efforts when they review the progress made on levee improvements. Current regulations are vague on what a completed system actually is, and this has caused concern and confusion among local communities across the nation. My legislation would bring greater clarity by combining a public safety standard with a concrete milestone.