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**17 Members of CA Congressional Delegation Send Letter Demanding Changes in Levee Vegetation Policy**

*Matsui Leads Letter Detailing Revisions Needed; Requests Report*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento) [sent a letter](#) to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy, with 16 of her colleagues Tuesday urging a change in the Army Corps of Engineers’ policy regarding vegetation on levees, which tries to apply a national policy of removing vegetation on levees, regardless of whether that vegetation could result in the weakening of levees. The Corps does have a variance process, but the high cost to have one granted is cost-prohibitive for the majority of state and local agencies, and can consume precious financial resources that could instead be spent on levee improvement projects.

Members of the California Congressional Delegation are therefore urging the Corps to take into account regional differences in relation to this policy, and to create a policy that takes into account both state and local expertise, needs, and feedback. This letter follows-up on previous correspondence, including a [letter sent in December](#), which requested that the Corps reconsider their levee vegetation policy for both economic and environmental reasons. Members continue to urge the Corps to restore balance to decisions involving levees and trees, and end the uncertainty that has plagued the Corps and their state and local partners for the last several months.

The February 22nd letter states that there are “Substantial issues that must be resolved before the Corps can successfully implement the Vegetation Policy as it is currently written ... We ask that the Corps develop a way to work with California state and local agencies to identify and address regional implementation issues with the Vegetation Policy.”

“For many decades, Corps practice has been to protect and encourage woody vegetation on many levees in California,” the letter continues. “This practice is in stark conflict with the current Vegetation Policy... Implementation costs often exceed acceptable cost/benefit standards. Agencies also question the wisdom of spending their limited funds on vegetation when much higher risk factors should be prioritized instead.”

“The Sacramento region is the most at risk urban area to river flooding in the nation,” Congresswoman Matsui added. “Accordingly, the region has worked continuously to bolster its flood defenses and emergency preparations, and has invested millions of dollars of local, state and federal funding to strengthen its levees. But the added financial burden that our local government has had to spend in dealing with this policy could have better spent directly on strengthening additional miles of levees.”

The 17 California Congressional Members specifically asked the Corps in their letter to do the following:

1. Delay finalization of the Vegetation Variance Policy.
2. Continue to review stakeholder comments and revise the policy to address them.
3. Continue with the Roundtable in the Central Valley and work through the identified implementation issues.
4. Establish a similar mechanism for other areas of California to address implementation issues unique to those areas.

In the letter, the Members also requested a report on the Corps’ progress on these endeavors by this April.

The letter was signed by the following Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

- Doris Matsui (CA-5)
- George Miller (CA-7)
- John Garamendi (CA-10)
- Joe Baca (CA-43)
- Howard Berman (CA-28)
- Lois Capps (CA-23)

- Anna Eshoo (CA-14)
- Michael Honda (15)
- Barbara Lee (CA-9)
- Zoe Lofgren (CA-16)
- Jerry McNerney (CA-11)
- Grace Napolitano (CA-38)
- Laura Richardson (CA-37)
- Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)
- Pete Stark (CA-13)
- Mike Thompson (CA-1)
- Lynn Woolsey (CA-6)

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