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**Matsui Statement on New Corps of Engineers Report re: Vegetation on Levees**  
*Report Reaffirms Benefits of Trees; Corps Must Take Science Into Account and Change Existing Policy*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) issued a statement in response to the U.S. Corps of Engineers' release of a new report about vegetation on levees, a report which concludes that trees on levees do not always contribute to the failure of levees.

This report comes at an important time in an ongoing debate about the Corps' policy on this issue. Current Corps' policy tries to apply a national policy of removing vegetation on levees, regardless of whether that vegetation could result in the weakening of levees. Congresswoman Matsui, several of her colleagues in Congress, and dozens of stakeholders in Sacramento and across the nation have urged the Corps to modify their policy, taking both local variances and science into account. The Corps is expected to release their final decision later this year.

"Today's report reaffirms what we have been saying for years: that trees are not necessarily bad for levees, and in some cases their removal can actually weaken the structure. This highly-anticipated report should remind policymakers at the Corps of Engineers that a blanket policy prohibiting vegetation on levees is misguided, and ignores scientific evidence.

"The Sacramento Region faces a need to constantly improve the levees that hold back the Sacramento and American Rivers, as well as numerous creeks and streams. We are ground zero for any policy changes coming from Washington, and have seen the ramifications of the current policy in the dramatic cost increase of the Natomas Levee Improvement Project.

“In a time of declining federal, state and local resources, I believe that the scarce public funds should be spent first on crucial levee fixes, not arbitrarily removing the remaining vegetation from California’s riparian environment without site-specific, science-based evaluation. My colleagues and I eagerly await the Corps’ revised policy on levee vegetation, and urge the Corps to let science lead their decision-making process.”

*Congresswoman Matsui has been a vocal opponent of the blanket policy prohibiting vegetation on levees for years. In February, Matsui [sent a letter](#) to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy, with 16 of her colleagues urging the Corps to change their policy regarding vegetation on levees, highlighting that even the variance process is cost-prohibitive for the majority of state and local agencies. Matsui also sent a [letter last December](#), which requested that the Corps reconsider their levee vegetation policy for both economic and environmental reasons. Congresswoman Matsui has pledged her commitment to 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 year.*

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