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House Passes Matsui Flood Protection Legislation

Matsui Bill Provides Clarity of Flood Zone Designations for Natomas, Communities Across the Country

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation today introduced by Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento) that provides technical changes to flood zone designations, which will help the Sacramento region move closer toward our goal of reaching 200-year flood protection.

“My legislation will ensure public safety remains our first and foremost goal, while assisting communities that are modernizing their existing flood protection systems by giving them definable milestones to meet,” said Rep. Matsui. “It provides a number of technical changes such as updating current law to take local, state and federal funding into account when determining flood zone designations. H.R. 1525 will give communities clarity to help them restore or improve their flood protection systems, and will make a tremendous difference for the people of Sacramento, and communities like ours across the country.”

After working for many months with local and state flood protection officials, Congresswoman Matsui introduced legislation, H.R. 1525, that would clarify the criteria for an A-99 flood zone designation. This legislation was added to H.R. 3139 on the House floor today and passed by unanimous consent. While ensuring public safety remains the first and foremost goal, 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, without removing the federal government’s responsibility to fund flood protection projects.

“These improvements to the A99 designation are very welcome and can benefit communities throughout the State of California by recognizing nonfederal levee restoration projects, and providing clarity and definable milestones on what is needed to comply with FEMA’s criteria,” said Rod Mayer, Assistant Deputy Director for FloodSAFE California, California Department of

Water Resources.

Currently, only communities with federally funded levee improvements, not state or locally funded improvements are eligible for an A99 designation. However, due to shrinking federal participation, states and communities across the country are investing millions of dollars into flood infrastructure. The City of Sacramento and the State of California have devoted millions of dollars toward flood protection, and this bill will allow that investment to be recognized by FEMA when they review the progress made on levees, such as those in Natomas, to determine the area's flood designation.

This legislation also helps communities understand requirements for a completed system. Current regulations are vague on what a completed system actually is, which has caused concern and confusion among local communities. This provision brings greater clarity by combining a public safety standard with a concrete milestone.

As the representative for Sacramento, which is the most at-risk community for river flooding in the country, Rep. Matsui has been a long-time champion of flood prevention investments in the Sacramento community. This legislation is a common-sense technical change that encourages responsible designations that federal level, and will continue to encourage state and local investment in flood protection infrastructure.

"I am extremely encouraged by today's passage of my legislation, which will go a long way to address the concerns of those who live and work in areas designated by FEMA as AE flood zones, such as Natomas. This bill is a common sense policy that will enhance the Natomas Levee Improvement Program and protect those that call Natomas home by clarifying thresholds for A-99 flood designations, so that we can move significantly closer to 200-year flood protection," stated Congresswoman Matsui. "Public-safety continues to be my number one priority because it is vital for the residents of Natomas to have the public safety infrastructure they need and deserve."

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