

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Deanne Criswell
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Criswell,

We are writing to reiterate concerns about the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) proposed strategy to implement changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in Oregon, specifically regarding a new compliance requirement that communities need to select Pre-Implementation Compliance Measures (PICMs) well before FEMA makes final recommendations. NFIP is a life-saving federal program, and its administration and changes must be undertaken with the utmost care and evenhanded judgment.

All of our offices have heard serious concerns from small business leaders, local elected officials, affordable housing advocates, and economic development groups. We want to emphasize that the implementation of permitting programs is carried out primarily at the local level, and the leaders in the affected communities have valuable insights. FEMA must lead by listening to and working collaboratively with local and state officials to craft policies that can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

Our offices have heard significant concerns from these communities about the decision to abruptly cease processing Letters of Map Revision – Based on Fill (LOMR-F) and Conditional Letters of Map Revision – Based on Fill (CLOMR-F) on August 1st, 2024, with little to no notice. The timing of this action leaves communities scrambling to comply with FEMA's plan to reach compliance with the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 2016 Biological Opinion ("BiOp") and its Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (RPAs).

We do not doubt the necessity of enhanced conservation efforts, including protection of Oregon's declining salmon population. The worsening wildfire intensity and smoke pollution is also an urgent reminder of the scale of the climate crisis. Communities across the state share these concerns and the fundamental drive to protect the unique environment in which we live.

We respectfully request that you make several key changes to FEMA's revised timeline. We ask that FEMA provide an additional 90 days for Oregon jurisdictions to consider the three proposed "Pre-Implementation Compliance Measures," changing the December 1st, 2024 selection date to

March 1st, 2025. Accordingly, the automatic adoption of the permit-by-permit PICM should also be delayed until at least March 1st, 2025 and accompanied by collaborative action with the state to demonstrate compatibility with state land use law.

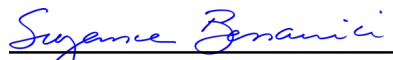
Additionally, FEMA should develop a pathway for continued review of LOMR and CLOMR cases during this period as it finalizes its Environmental Impact Statement. The pause to these processes initiated on August 1st was not sufficiently noticed to communities and future timeline changes should be announced with significantly greater notice. If applicants need additional consultation and technical assistance, FEMA should make staff available to assist.

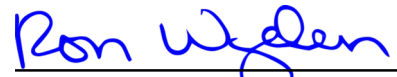
We also request that you fully consider the State of Oregon's request that FEMA add a pathway for the state to develop and adopt a statewide regulatory package that achieves compliance with the "no net loss" standard. Allowing state agencies with the staff and expertise to develop a policy that is consistent statewide would reduce capacity and cost burdens for local governments and simplify integration of any new requirements with existing state land use law.

Finally, we request a written explanation of the decision-making process that led to the PICM taking effect well before the completion of the Environmental Impact Statement. Providing community members with a clear understanding of this process is key to maintaining transparency and demonstrating consistency with the NEPA process.

We remain committed to a collaborative path forward that responds to the dual imperatives of economic stability and environmental preservation. We appreciate FEMA's shared commitment to these goals and thank you for your full and fair consideration of our concerns. For any questions, please contact Espen Swanson in Congresswoman Bonamici's office at Espen.Swanson@mail.house.gov; Ree Armitage in Senator Ron Wyden's office at Ree_Armitage@wyden.senate.gov; Gustavo Guerrero in Senator Jeff Merkley's office at Gustavo_Guerrero@merkley.senate.gov; Olivia Wilhite in Congresswoman Val Hoyle's office at Olivia.Wilhite@mail.house.gov or Alexander O'Keefe in Congresswoman Andrea Salinas' office at Alexander.OKeefe@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Val Hoyle

Val Hoyle
Member of Congress

Andrea Salinas

Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress