

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

INTERNET:
<http://baucus.senate.gov>

February 3, 2011

William Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW, Room 828
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate,

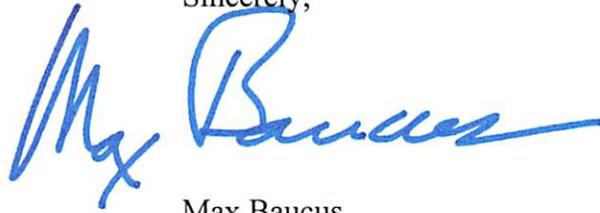
I write to express concern about the modeling techniques used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the Map Modernization Program. As you know, FEMA currently uses a “without levees” analysis during the development of new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps in cases where a levee or other flood control structure is not certified. “Without levee” modeling methods assume an existing levee or flood control structure that lacks adequate certification and provides zero protection for the purposes of the model. In some cases, a levee in need of minor repairs – or those simply lacking a professional engineers’ endorsement of a certification – is not portrayed as providing any flood protection. This doesn’t seem to meet the commonsense test.

In cases where a levee lacks the proper certification but clearly provides some protection, what modeling techniques could FEMA use to more accurately reflect the true level of flood protection provided by the structure? What would the cost of such modeling techniques be when compared to the current “without levee” approach? Did FEMA consider the use of these techniques at the start of the re-mapping process, and if they were abandoned, can you explain why? Would it be possible to change modeling techniques at this point in the remapping program and what would the impact be on communities that have already moved through the remapping process? If FEMA were to set up a program by which communities could petition to have alternative modeling techniques be used, can you identify objective criteria that could be used to evaluate such petitions?

I support FEMA’s efforts to provide the nation with accurate digital flood hazard data and maps so that property owners can accurately assess and prepare for flood risks across the country. But, I believe that the Agency should consider improvements to the program that help local communities comply and ensure that it meets the commonsense test. I look forward to your prompt response.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Max Baucus
U.S. Senator