Dear President Obama:

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) and its 35 Chapters represent more than 15,000 state and local officials and other professionals engaged in all aspects of managing and mitigating flood risk to reduce the loss of life and property from floods. We are writing to express our concern for the reduction in support for producing and updating flood data and mapping for the 22,000 flood prone communities in the nation.

Local communities have the most effective tools for reducing flood risk: land use authority and building codes. But to effectively use those tools they need to first know which areas in their community are subject to flooding. Only 7% of the nation’s land area is in the 1% annual chance floodplain (often called the 100 year floodplain), but flooding is the nation’s most frequent and costly natural disaster, averaging well over $10 billion annually. Just two major flooding events, Sandy and Katrina cost federal taxpayers over $200 billion for disaster relief while putting the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) $25 billion in debt. Add to this the continual flooding on rivers and coasts through the nation and it is clear we need to do better. If we hope to reduce these taxpayer costs an appropriate and cost effective federal role is to provide communities accurate flood maps to guide new development, and guide rebuilding after major flood events.

The ASFPM is so concerned about the cut in funding over the past few years (from $220 million in FY 2010 to $84 million in FY 14) that we performed an analysis to produce a report called “Flood Mapping for the Nation”. It demonstrates that modern, accurate maps can be produced for all 22,000 flood prone communities if the $400 million/year authorized by the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 NFIP is appropriated for the next 10 years. If we continue to provide only the FY 14 funding of $84 million, we will actually lose ground, with more flood maps becoming outdated. Accurate mapping must be available for all communities, so they can guide development away from the highest flood risk areas, and ensure that development in moderate flood risk areas is properly elevated or otherwise protected. Accurate, up-to-date flood maps are the key to reducing taxpayer disaster relief and human suffering.

Dedicated to reducing flood risk and losses in the nation.
In light of the recent unveiling of your Climate Action Plan, this issue is especially important. Climate change will cause more people, homes and communities to be flooded: and flooded more often. Among the initiatives in the Plan, three interrelated ones: Building Stronger and Safer Communities and Infrastructure, Protecting our Economy and Natural Resources, and Using Sound Science to Manage Climate Impacts, are closely tied to flood hazard management, but this will require that we know what the flood risk is. Flood risk changes over time and climate change only exacerbates this trend. Communities must have accurate up to date maps to help them address climate change and flood risk. A study commissioned by FEMA and recently released indicates that some flood hazard areas in the United States could increase by 45% by the year 2100. Investments on our nation’s flood map inventory fully and integrally supports the vision of your Climate Action Plan.

We urge you to support adequate funding for the NFIP flood mapping program beginning with your FY 15 budget proposal.

Mr. President, you have the opportunity today to ensure that part of your legacy for the 22,000 flood prone communities in the nation have the data they need to become resilient and sustainable, so they are prepared for the next catastrophic flood event and future changing conditions. We stand ready to provide assistance through our members, Executive Office and policy team in Washington, D.C. We can be reached through our Executive Director, Chad Berginnis, at 608 828-3000; and via email to cberginnis@floods.org. Please feel free to contact us anytime we can be of service.

Thank you for your support for a safer America today and for future generations.

Sincerely,

William Nechamen, ASFPM Chair

Chad Berginnis, ASFPM Executive Director

CC
DHS Secretary Napolitano
FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate