



Statement on Rescission of Flood Risk Management Standard

16 W. Lafayette St.
Trenton, NJ 08608
p: (609) 393-0008
f: (609) 360-8478
w: njfuture.org

August 15, 2017

Contact: [David Kutner](#), 609-393-0008 ext. 105

Aug. 15, 2017 -- We at New Jersey Future are both mystified and extremely disappointed in the president's repeal today of Executive Order 13690. This action will remove critical safeguards intended to ensure that federally funded infrastructure projects are planned and constructed appropriately to take into account hazardous flood areas.

Executive Order 13960 required that a determination of such areas at risk be based on the best available and actionable science, and on FEMA's Federal Flood Risk Management Standards (FFRMS). This flood risk siting screen was intended to ensure that taxpayer dollars would not be wasted on infrastructure or residences located in areas that experience repeated flood inundation. Taking flood risk into account when allocating these federal dollars would have minimized the cycle of build-flood-rebuild, thereby protecting lives and reducing recurring post-flood cleanup and reconstruction costs.

It is difficult to understand what benefits will come of rescinding this order. The memories of Hurricane Sandy's devastation are still fresh in the minds of many who live or work along the New Jersey shore, and rescinding this rule does nothing but increase the risk that they will endure similar devastation, or worse, as a result of future storms and a changing climate. Additionally, the U.S. taxpayers will continue to be left with the bill for wasteful repeated rebuilding and restoration of structures in areas of high flood risk, instead of seeing those dollars spent more wisely on reducing those risk levels or on building in different, safer locations.

The president's ostensible reason for repealing the order is to "streamline review" for large infrastructure projects. By definition, review of large, complex projects is detailed and time-consuming, but its intent is to ensure the projects get built in the most viable way. Skipping consideration of critical factors such as flood risk will certainly not achieve that objective. Large infrastructure projects are designed and built to last for generations. Putting them in high-risk places or building them in ways that ignore known risks is wasteful at best, and irresponsible and reckless at worst.

If there is any bright spot in the president's action today, it is that it does not require state and local governments to follow suit. New Jersey Future has advocated consistently since Hurricane Sandy for incorporation of rigorous scientific data on sea level rise and flood risk into planning at all levels of government. New Jersey Future's platform for the next governor advocates incorporating science-based sea level rise projections and other climate change risk into decision-making at all levels of government in New Jersey. We hope the incoming governor sees the wisdom of establishing rigorous standards to keep such projects out of harm's way and continues the policy established by EO 13690.

About New Jersey Future

Founded in 1987, New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible growth, redevelopment and infrastructure investments to foster vibrant cities and towns, protect natural lands and waterways, enhance transportation choices, provide access to safe, affordable and aging-friendly neighborhoods and fuel a strong economy. The organization does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on technical assistance. New Jersey Future serves as the backbone staff for the Jersey Water Works collaborative.