



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Ranking Member Ralph Norman

Joint Environment and Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing *An Examination of Federal Flood Maps in a Changing Climate*

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Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairman Foster, for convening this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for your testimony this afternoon.

We are here today to discuss how flooding impacts property owners and the ways that flood risks and hazards are communicated to the public. We will examine the science and data that FEMA and NOAA leverage to generate and distribute Federal flood products, the steps being taken to incorporate future flood hazards into these products, and the tools and technologies that exist to help property owners, coastal managers, and community stakeholders better understand and evaluate their flood risk.

Flooding is both the most common and most costly natural disaster in the United States. Floods have caused more than \$155 billion in property damage over the last ten years and nearly 4,000 deaths since 1950. Roughly 75% of all presidential disaster declarations are related to flooding.

In my home state of South Carolina, flooding is an even greater concern. A significant percentage of all South Carolina lands fall within floodplains designated as “Special Flood Hazard Areas” by FEMA. And although it ranks 23rd in total population, South Carolina is ranked seventh among all states in coastal flooding vulnerability, with roughly 400,000 people at risk of inland and coastal flooding throughout the state.

Addressing our nation’s flood risks requires buy-in from Federal, state, local, and community stakeholders, not red tape and useless bureaucracy. Recognizing this, in 2018, Governor McMaster established the South Carolina Floodwater Commission to develop recommendations to alleviate and mitigate flood impacts to the state.

Under the leadership of its Chairman, Retired Major General Tom Mullikin, this Commission, unique to our state, took a realistic and hands-on approach to mitigate flooding in our State. The recommendations offered by this extraordinary Committee are the cornerstone of my home state’s fight against extreme weather events.

In recognition of their achievement, I offer to submit their report for the congressional record as an example to be admired and followed nationally. Yet in spite of these valiant efforts I recognize that South Carolina alone cannot solve our national flooding challenges.

That's why I'm pleased to see that FEMA, NOAA, and the USGS are making positive strides in confronting this issue. They are working collaboratively to improve our understanding of flood hazards and risks, and how best to communicate these risks to state and local communities, and the general public. I encourage them to continue to improve and expand their interagency coordination to ensure that Federal flood products are accurate, reliable, and comprehensible to the communities, like those in South Carolina, who rely on them for planning, zoning, and land use management.

Preparedness is critical to combatting the challenges that flooding presents. But proper preparation means taking steps now to improve our resilience to flood hazards and to mitigate present and future flood risks.

I look forward to learning more today about what FEMA and NOAA are doing to improve Federal flood mapping, and how they are leveraging modern technology to gain a more accurate and granular understanding of flood risks and hazards in South Carolina and throughout our Nation.

Flooding events present a great challenge. But through collaboration and coordination between all levels of government, community stakeholders, and private sector experts, it is a challenge that we can overcome.

I again want to thank the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill. I yield back the balance of my time.