Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

AUG 20 2001

Mr. T. Cary McSwain
Richland County Administrator
2020 Hampton Street
P.O. Box 192
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Dear Mr. McSwain:

This letter is in reference to the Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Congaree River in Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina. The situation surrounding this determination is extremely complex from a technical and scientific perspective. We recognize the serious environmental, economic, and public policy implications of this new map. The floodplain management role of the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration through the NFIP, however, is limited to the determination of where floodwaters will go under certain circumstances, and to provide participating communities with floodplain management tools to assist them in making sound floodplain management decisions. In this case, the location of the floodway has been the single most contested issue; i.e. does a floodway, as defined in our regulations, exist on the landward side of the Manning levee.

All the parties involved adopted a reasonably uniform approach from a scientific and technical standpoint. That work was predicated on work performed by my staff that drafted the appeal resolution in September 2000. The appeal resolution map showed, as did two previous draft maps, the area landward of the Manning levee as being within the floodway.

The appeal resolution decision was based, in part, on the results of multiple two-dimensional steady flow modeling runs. Since we issued the appeal resolution, we have received significant comments regarding the integrity of our model, and we have been provided with alternative models. Our use of the two-dimensional model remains as it was during the appeal resolution. That is, we have used it to help us understand flow characteristics behind the Manning levee. It never was nor is it now being used to compute Base Flood Elevations or a floodway.

We have thoroughly reviewed all comments received, including the comments regarding our two-dimensional model and, the other models provided during the comment period. The historical record, and geotechnical data clearly demonstrate that the levee will breach during the 1% annual chance flood. In fact, there is a high likelihood that the levee will fail during flows well below that of the 1% annual chance event. We remain convinced that breaches in the levee will occur, and they will result in significant flow through the I-77 openings in the Richland County floodplain. Therefore, a floodway will remain landward of the Manning levee.

I remain concerned with the misconception that the floodway designation prohibits any plans to improve the levee or develop behind it. The fate of any proposed development or levee

improvements lies with state and local governments, not FEMA. The Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration does not issue or deny building permits. I believe strongly that any decision regarding the development of the area behind the Manning levee be made at the local level with all impacted and potentially impacted property owners on both sides of the Congaree River involved. As such, the final FIRM and FIS are tools to begin that process.

The floodway designation is intended to guide our state and local partners through an existing process specifically designed to foster openness through coordination. Equally as important, this process is designed to assure that any potential adverse impacts be identified and agreeably mitigated by those impacted. FEMA's role in this process is strictly limited to answering questions regarding the minimum floodplain management and flood hazard mapping requirements outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations. In fact, solicitation of our input is not required until a map revision is desired. Local officials can allow improvements to the levee as long as they believe the project will not adversely affect flood hazards. We will not allow our role in this issue to be construed as a permitting process thus undermining the integrity and judgment of our partners.

The hazard identification process has been difficult for all parties involved. However, it is an important step which, when ignored or hastily performed leads to devastating consequences. The real work begins from this point forward. As a local official, you will be asked to represent a constituency whose signal regarding future development may be mixed. You will have to listen carefully and weigh the rewards, risks, and potential impacts such development might have on the environment and citizens within your community. The flood hazards are only one piece in this much larger puzzle.

We look forward to working with you and your community to ensure that the goals of the NFIP are met. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the FIRM for your community, do not hesitate to contact Michael K. Buckley of our Headquarters Staff at (202) 646-2766 or A. Todd Davison, Division Director, Federal Insurance and Mitigation Division, FEMA, in Atlanta, Georgia at (770) 220-5400.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Shea, Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and
Mitigation Administration

cc: Ms. Kit Smith, Richland County Council Chairperson
Mr. Randy Jergenson, Planning Management Director

[redacted], Columbia Venture, LLC
Paul Sandifer, Ph.D., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
[redacted], Blanchard Investments
FEMA, Region IV
NFIP State Coordinator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

AUG 20 2001

Mr. Bruce E. Rucker
Lexington County Council Chairman
212 South Lake Drive
Lexington, South Carolina 29072

Dear Mr. Rucker:

This letter is in reference to the Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Congaree River in Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina. The situation surrounding this determination is extremely complex from a technical and scientific perspective. We recognize the serious environmental, economic, and public policy implications of this new map. The floodplain management role of the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration through the NFIP, however, is limited to the determination of where floodwaters will go under certain circumstances, and to provide participating communities with floodplain management tools to assist them in making sound floodplain management decisions. In this case, the location of the floodway has been the single most contested issue; i.e. does a floodway, as defined in our regulations, exist on the landward side of the Manning levee.

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I remain concerned with the misconception that the floodway designation prohibits any plans to improve the levee or develop behind it. The fate of any proposed development or levee

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Sincerely,

Robert F. Shea, Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and
Mitigation Administration

cc: Mr. Sammy Rickard, Lexington County Flood Manager
Mr. Johnny W. Jeffcoat, Lexington County Council

[redacted], Columbia Venture, LLC
Paul Sandifer, Ph.D., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
[redacted], Blanchard Investments
FEMA, Region IV
NFIP State Coordinator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

AUG 20 2001

The Honorable Robert D. Coble
Mayor of the City of Columbia
P.O. Box 147
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Mayor Coble:

This letter is in reference to the Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Congaree River in Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina. The situation surrounding this determination is extremely complex from a technical and scientific perspective. We recognize the serious environmental, economic, and public policy implications of this new map. The floodplain management role of the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration through the NFIP, however, is limited to the determination of where floodwaters will go under certain circumstances, and to provide participating communities with floodplain management tools to assist them in making sound floodplain management decisions. In this case, the location of the floodway has been the single most contested issue; i.e. does a floodway, as defined in our regulations, exist on the landward side of the Manning levee.

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Sincerely,

Robert F. Shea, Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and
Mitigation Administration

CC: Mr. David A. Johnson, City of Columbia Director of Engineering
[redacted] Columbia Venture, LLC

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
[redacted]
[redacted] Blanchard Investments
FEMA, Region IV
NFIP State Coordinator

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Washington, D.C. 20472

AUG 20 2001

The Honorable Wyman M. Rish
Mayor of the City of West Columbia
P.O. Box 4044
West Columbia, South Carolina 29171-4044

Dear Mayor Rish:

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Sincerely,

Robert F. Shea, Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and
Mitigation Administration

cc: Ms. Jennifer Cunningham, City of West Columbia Administrator
[redacted] Columbia Venture, LLC

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
[redacted]
[redacted], Blanchard Investments
FEMA, Region IV
NFIP State Coordinator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

AUG 20 2001

The Honorable Avery B. Wilkerson, Jr.
Mayor of the City of Cayce
P.O. Box 2004
Cayce, South Carolina 29171

Dear Mayor Wilkerson:

This letter is in reference to the Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Congaree River in Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina. The situation surrounding this determination is extremely complex from a technical and scientific perspective. We recognize the serious environmental, economic, and public policy implications of this new map. The floodplain management role of the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration through the NFIP, however, is limited to the determination of where floodwaters will go under certain circumstances, and to provide participating communities with floodplain management tools to assist them in making sound floodplain management decisions. In this case, the location of the floodway has been the single most contested issue; i.e. does a floodway, as defined in our regulations, exist on the landward side of the Manning levee.

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Sincerely,

Robert F. Shea, Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and
Mitigation Administration

cc: Mr. Ken Knudson, City of Cayce Planning Director
Mr. John Sharpe, City of Cayce Manager

[redacted], Columbia Venture, LLC
Paul Sandifer, Ph.D., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
[redacted], Blanchard Investments
FEMA, Region IV
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