



Submitted via e-mail.

March 10, 2023

The Honorable Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman
1021 O Street, Suite 8530
Sacramento, CA 95814.

Re: Comments on the Division 36. Climate Resiliency and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024

Dear Ms. Eggman:

Restore the Delta, and partners joining this letter, submit these comments to express points for addition within Division 36 of the Climate Resiliency and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024. Delta-focused organizations and their members from the upstream reaches of the Delta tributaries have a vested interest in the well-being and safety of environmental justice communities during Delta-centered flood events. Along with the adequate funding to implement flood risk management projects, levee upgrades and multi-benefit floodplain restoration, there must be a deliberate effort to fund environmental justice groups to work on restoration projects locally. The best government plans build economic, social, and environmental justice into their structure from the time planning begins. In addition, there should be a certain number of grants that fund stipends for both low-income community members and NGOs to cover their costs of time, transport, accessibility accommodations, outreach, and organizing to help develop community benefits related to local restoration

projects and encourage public participation in public meetings concerning the Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024.

It is vital to apply the environmental justice lens to the value of restoration projects to ensure that they are done right to improve public health access, recreational access, and flood protection for environmental justice communities.

Beyond this, there must also be an effort to include Delta Communities in public hearings to give comments on the guidelines for the Flood Protection Bond. Currently, 86003 (b) in the Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024 draft notes that there are three locations set to allow disadvantaged communities to comment on these guidelines: Southern California, Northern California, and San Joaquin County. There must also be a meeting at a Delta location in which Delta Communities (that expand beyond San Joaquin County like Solano County, Yolo County, Contra Costa, and Sacramento) can provide meaningful local input on the guidelines needed to keep their communities safe from flood through the implementation of community needs and benefits related to flood risk management projects.

As it stands, the Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024 draft is deficient in these two aspects: the incorporation of environmental justice communities in flood bond guideline meetings and the funding needed to aid local environmental justice groups in ensuring that community benefits and funding and flood control gaps are addressed in local flood mitigation projects.

If these deficiencies go unaddressed, it will result in incomplete flood mitigation projects that will not improve the quality of life for environmental communities. We ask Senator Eggman to urge the Department of Water Resources to address these issues and offer the funding and planning that is necessary to see that these projects are done properly at the local level. Finally, we remind the Department of Water Resources of its obligation to protect all beneficial uses and public trust resources in the Bay-Delta.

1. The Department of Water Resources must meaningfully include Delta communities in the Flood Bond Protection Act of 2024 by holding a public meeting in the Delta to evaluate the solicitation and evaluation guidelines.

San Joaquin County has been historically disinvested and excluded from flood mitigation projects. However, rural Delta communities also have concerns and specific flood mitigation needs. To properly execute projects, it is imperative that government officials, engineers and agencies understand local issues, needs and solutions. By including a fourth location and meeting date, the department will provide an opportunity for Delta Communities across all Counties to meet, discuss and meaningfully comment on guidelines that will directly affect their safety and community benefits and needs. Thus, ensuring that the Flood Bond Protection Act of 2024 will address and implement guidelines to properly protect the community's interests.

2. The Department of Water Resources must make a deliberate effort to fund environmental justice groups to work on restoration projects locally.

Funding for environmental justice groups is needed to ensure that restoration projects are done right for the communities impacted. Flood infrastructure improvements can be linked to recreational projects and beneficial uses. For instance, in Stockton the repurposing of Van Buskirk Golf Course is an example of a project that is incorporating community needs, flood upgrades, and creating and expanding recreational opportunities tailored by environmental justice community input via outreach events and surveys. This information should be incorporated in flood risk management planning and communicated with flood agencies and engineers to protect the integrity of a project that has the capacity to include community multi-benefits like public health, recreational accessibility and so much more.

Additionally, during the January atmospheric river storms, the state emergency response was deficient in the following ways: failure to translate flood updates for non-English speakers, lack of internal communication regarding resources, and awareness and outreach around flood safety/evacuation plans on the local level. Folks were left in the dark about who to call for what specific emergency, even local OES entities provided inaccurate information regarding resources. There needs to be clear internal communication within OES and other supporting government agencies on what those resources are during a flood emergency, how they are distributed, and how members of the public can access them. Outreach on the ground can be done more effectively through funding environmental justice groups to assist in outreach. They have the networks and community connections to reach people in a culturally competent manner and hold trust within vulnerable communities.

Another challenge that keeps residents from accessing information is that there are language barriers. Emergency offices have expressed capacity and funding issues concerning flood disaster notifications and their translation. This can be mitigated if funding is allocated to environmental justice groups to be able to do the outreach work necessary to prepare local residents and to provide direct translation services to help public agencies to efficiently communicate with community members for whom English is not their first language.

In conclusion, the Division 36. Climate Resiliency and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024 does not provide a full assessment of the flood outreach and education necessary for environmental justice communities. In the Flood Bond Protection Act of 2024, the Department of Water Resources failed to include Delta environmental justice communities in the public process for the evaluation of Flood Protection Bond Act guidelines and falls short on the funding needed for environmental justice groups to work on restoration projects on the local level to address community concerns, needs, and solutions.

We ask Senator Eggman to urge the Department of Water Resources to address the issues outlined above to ensure that the Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024 reflects the best interests of Delta environmental justice communities and comply with the Board's obligation to include them in the guideline process.

Respectfully submitted,



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