

Adding Wind Coverage to the National Flood Insurance Program Will Harm the Environment and Taxpayers Alike
Bill Expected to Receive a Floor Vote This Week

Washington, DC (July 20, 2010) – Fourteen conservation groups are warning that proposed legislation would increase incentives to develop and redevelop many dangerous, high-risk and environmentally-sensitive areas. It would also give citizens a false sense of security, and cost U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars.

With the House expected to vote this week on a bill (HR 1264) to expand the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to include coverage for windstorms, the groups, including American Bird Conservancy, American Rivers, Audubon, Ceres, Clean Water Action, Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth, League of Conservation Voters, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Republicans for Environmental Protection, River Network, Sierra Club and Waterkeepers Alliance are urging strong opposition.

If enacted H.R. 1264 would result in taxpayers subsidizing even more development in hazard-prone and ecologically-sensitive coastal areas and floodplains. “Healthy rivers, wetlands, floodplains, and coastal areas provide natural security, protecting communities from storms and flood damage,” said Shana Udvardy, Director of Flood Management Policy for American Rivers. “This bill is a step in the wrong direction and will hurt all of the benefits provided by coastal areas and floodplains, including storm protection, clean water, and wildlife habitat, not to mention the natural beauty which accounts for billions of tourism dollars annually.”

Adding wind coverage to a program that is \$18.75 billion in debt to the US Treasury will only exacerbate the need for bailouts from the American taxpayers. “Rather than subsidizing development in the floodplain and coastal areas, the Federal government should be mitigating risk, assisting people in moving out of harm’s way, protecting and restoring areas that provide natural flood protection, and communicating the true risk of flooding to Americans while protecting the taxpayers.” said Adam Kolton, senior director of Congressional and Federal Affairs for National Wildlife Federation.

[In a letter to Members of Congress \(http://bit.ly/b9yoXz\)](http://bit.ly/b9yoXz), the conservation organizations wrote that “According to FEMA there are already 8 to 12 million homes located in high-risk, special flood hazard areas. Instead of incentivizing even more development in these most at-risk areas, Congress should enact meaningful and positive reforms such as incentivizing better land use planning, hazard mitigation, and improved risk identification and mapping.”

“We need to put the brakes on development in the most sensitive floodplains and coastal areas,” said Adam Kolton, senior director of Congressional and Federal Affairs for National Wildlife Federation. “Unfortunately, this proposal steps on the gas.” Kolton said.

“A federally-backed wind insurance program would give citizens living in these areas a false sense of security and a belief that they are protected from catastrophic losses, when they are not.” Udvardy said.

In the letter to Members of Congress, the conservation organizations called for a sound approach “FEMA has recently begun a two-year comprehensive review of the NFIP to make sound recommendations that will improve and potentially overhaul the flood insurance program. Now is not the time to add the high costs and risks of wind insurance to this seriously failing federal program. Both FEMA Director Craig Fugate and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano have indicated they oppose expanding NFIP to include wind and we believe they are right.”

The Conservation Organizations are urging Congress to oppose H.R. 1264 because “adding wind insurance to the NFIP will damage the environment, give citizens a false sense of security, and cost taxpayers ultimately billions of dollars.”

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