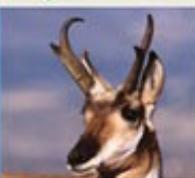


Protecting Wildlife for our children's future



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Flood Insurance Program Threatens Endangered Sea Turtles

Washington, DC – The National Wildlife Federation and Florida Wildlife Federation today notified the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of their intent to file a lawsuit against the agency for failing to protect endangered sea turtles from the impacts of its Federal Flood Insurance Program, which promotes development in critical sea turtle habitat. Issuing flood insurance without first determining whether the development will harm endangered species or their habitat violates the Endangered Species Act.

“Federally endangered and threatened marine turtles require natural sandy beaches to successfully nest and these beaches are subject to rising sea levels,” said Manley Fuller, president of the Florida Wildlife Federation. “Development of these flood prone areas also threatens critical sea turtle nesting habitat. We contend FEMA must consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding flood insurance in areas impacting sea turtles.”

Ninety percent of all sea turtle nesting in the U.S. takes place on Florida’s beaches, including loggerhead, green, hawksbill, and leatherbacks. Inappropriately cited coastal development on the frontal dunes of eroding beaches can significantly impact sea turtles by interfering with beach processes, discouraging females attempting to nest and disorienting hatchlings trying to reach the ocean. Nevertheless, public subsidies – including federal flood insurance – continue to encourage development along Florida’s most sensitive beach habitats.

“In addition to providing essential wildlife habitat, these coastal areas work as buffers against storm surges up and down the Florida coast,” said John Kostyack, Executive Director of Wildlife Conservation and Global Warming at the National Wildlife Federation. “By allowing houses and business to be built in flood prone areas, the Federal Flood Insurance Program is subsidizing the destruction of sea turtle habitat, putting people at risk and wasting our tax dollars.”

Because many private insurers refuse to insure floodplain homes, FEMA’s insurance program allows development to occur where it otherwise would not. FEMA also sets eligibility rules for communities that want to participate in the flood insurance program -

rules that currently fail to limit development in high-risk floodplains and fail to consider the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive lands. As part of their lawsuit, the National Wildlife Federation and Florida Wildlife Federation will seek an injunction that would require FEMA to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the effects of its flood insurance program.

“This is our third case against FEMA over its flood insurance program,” said Kostyack. “We are confident that science and common sense will once again prevail.”

National Wildlife Federation is America’s conservation organization, inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future.