

**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

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March 25, 2022

Brian Thompson,  
Supervisory Emergency Management Specialist  
Recovery Directorate  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

RE: Docket ID FEMA-2022-0006, Request for Information on Federal Emergency Management Agency's Collection of Demographic Characteristics of Applicants for the Agency's Programs or Disaster Assistance

Dear Mr. Thompson,

On behalf of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), we are pleased to show our support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to collect demographic characteristics of applicants for the Agency's programs and disaster assistance.

Through our Division of Safety of Dams, DWR provides oversight to the design, construction, and maintenance of over 1,200 dams in California. Currently, there are 643 dams with downstream hazard potential classified as "extremely high" or "high." Many of these dams are owned by private entities or low-income communities that lack sufficient funding to conduct risk assessments, physical improvements, and support meaningful outreach and engagement with the impacted downstream communities. As the State administrator of FEMA's High Hazard Potential Dam Program grants, DWR would use the collection of demographic data in conjunction with dam inundation maps to prioritize our engagement with dam facilities that have impacts on vulnerable communities and provide further assistance to the extent possible. DWR recognizes the importance of FEMA's effort to improve accessibility and equity of their programs. This data will provide federal, state, and local agencies with the information and tools necessary to better serve communities facing the largest risks.

In addition, DWR is very thankful for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). In particular, we appreciate the increased federal cost share provided to underserved communities and feel that this must continue as described in the Justice 40 initiative. We recommend that FEMA work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and request that USACE reserve capacity in its permitting role to expedite permits for BRIC and HMGP projects that protect vulnerable communities. This recommendation is being made because the three-year implementation time period to implement levee projects in underserved communities can be difficult to meet if the project is delayed by the (USACE) Section 408 permitting process. We believe providing this type of technical assistance and regulatory support is also aligned with the Justice 40 initiative to improve services for underserved communities.

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Finally, DWR is excited by the federal government's leadership in pursuing development of the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. We plan to contribute to this tool's development and request that the State of California be consulted on appropriate metrics to be included within this tool.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact me at (530) 400-1395 or [Michael.Mierzwa@water.ca.gov](mailto:Michael.Mierzwa@water.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Michael Mierzwa, P.E.  
State Floodplain Manager  
California Department of Water Resources

Attachment: DWR's past comments on NFIP

Enclosures:

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