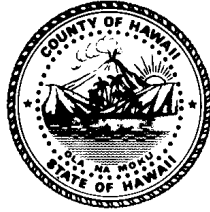


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March 10, 2009

Digital Hawaii County flood maps available for review

Preliminary digital flood hazard maps for Hawaii County have been released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and are now available online for public review and comment. The preliminary maps propose updated flood data for Puukapu Stream as well as digital information for the rest of Hawaii County based on the map panels from 1988, 1990, and 2004.

The preliminary maps are posted on the Department of Land and Natural Resource's Web site, <http://gis.hawaiiinfip.org/fhat/>. The maps are also available at Department of Public Works in Hilo and Kona.

Digital flood hazard maps, known as Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs), are the tool FEMA uses to indicate whether properties are in areas of high, moderate or low flood risk. These maps show the extent to which areas throughout the county are at risk for flooding.

These preliminary maps, along with FEMA's preliminary flood insurance study (FIS) report, have not yet been officially adopted. Residents are encouraged to review the flood designation for their individual properties and provide comments for FEMA. Please provide your comments on or before April 17, 2009, by contacting the Hawaii County Department of Public Works, Engineering Division's offices in Hilo, 961-8327, or Kona, 327-3530, or email fdemarco@co.hawaii.hi.us.

This initial review period provides the county and citizens an opportunity to thoroughly review the DFIRMs and to correct or add to them.

To ensure that all residents and business owners understand the map change process and are aware of their options, open houses will be held from 3-8 p.m. on April 22 at the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Hotel in Keauhou and on April 23 on the second floor of the Kress Building, 174 Kamehameha Avenue in downtown Hilo.

During the open houses, residents and business owners can review the new maps, understand how their properties may be affected and learn more about the financial steps they may need to take to protect their investment. Personnel from FEMA, State Department of Land and Natural Resources, and Hawaii County will answer questions on the new flood maps and flood insurance requirements.

Following the April 22 and 23 open houses, FEMA will begin its statutory 90-day appeal period for the proposed flood elevations along Puukapu Stream, which will allow property owners an opportunity to submit appeals and protests on the preliminary FIS and DFIRMs. FEMA will issue in the local newspapers an advisory of its statutory 90-day appeal period and will provide contact information for submitting appeals.

After the review and appeal periods have ended and all comments/appeals have been addressed, FEMA will begin final preparation of the FIS and DFIRMs, which will both become effective six months later. For detailed information on maps and the appeals process, see “Information for Homeowners” at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/hm_main.shtm.

If you require special services to participate at the April 22 or 23 open houses, please call Public Works at 961-8321 to arrange for sign language interpreter, or to have materials printed in larger print.

Contacts: Warren H. W. Lee, P.E.
Director, Department of Public Works
(808) 961-8321 Monday - Friday 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
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Map Modernization

Questions and Answers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Why is FEMA changing to DFIRMs?

Flood maps undergo amendments and changes periodically. The digital version of these maps are part of a larger effort to modernize the nation's aging flood maps to reflect the most current flood risks and areas of recent growth. In partnership with FEMA, Hawaii County's digital flood maps were developed after an extensive, multi-year study of the county's floodplains that used state-of-the-art technologies and risk modeling techniques.

Why modernize?

Map Modernization is responding to National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements and feedback provided by Federal, State, and local Program stakeholders.

- Flood hazard conditions are dynamic, and many NFIP maps may not reflect recent development and/or natural changes in the environment.
- Updated NFIP maps can take advantage of revised data and improved technologies for identifying flood hazards.
- Up-to-date maps support a flood insurance program that is more closely aligned with actual risk, encourage wise community-based floodplain management, and improve citizens' flood hazard awareness.
- Local communities and various stakeholders desired more timely updates of flood maps and easier access to the flood hazard data used to create the maps.
- Map Modernization is a cornerstone for helping community officials and citizens be better prepared for flood-related disasters.

How does Map Modernization help?

Map Modernization provides more accurate and up-to-date flood hazard information and enhances community officials' and citizens' decision-making and their ability to manage risks and other issues locally.

- New data reflecting current flood hazard conditions enables citizens to more reliably assess their flood risk and take appropriate action to mitigate (i.e., reduce their physical and financial vulnerability to flooding).
- The more accurate risk information that will result from Map Modernization will help local citizens choose the appropriate amount of flood insurance to purchase.
- Map Modernization provides a more comprehensive approach to economic development, mitigation planning, and emergency response.
- Communities will be more effective in managing flood risks, land use, water resources, disaster recovery, and other responsibilities.
- Communities will be empowered to update maps and data as changes occur.

Who benefits?

Map Modernization touches a broad array of National Flood Insurance Program stakeholders who will see different benefits, including the following:

- Community planners and local officials gain an improved understanding of the flood hazards and risks that affect their community.
- Builders and developers have detailed information for making decisions on where to build safely and how construction can affect flood hazards.
- Insurance agents and companies, real estate agents and companies, and lending institutions have one-stop access to flood map updates and upcoming changes.
- Homeowners and business owners are able to make more informed decisions about their current flood risks.

See www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/mm_main.shtm for more details.

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