

FEMA updates preliminary flood maps

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

As a result of successful appeals, 76 of Lee County's 155 preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map panels have been revised by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The revisions affect much of unincorporated Lee County, Bonita Springs and Fort Myers; all of Sanibel and Fort Myers Beach; and a small portion of Cape Coral.

The appeals generally reduce the area that FEMA placed in floodways in its initial re-mapping of Lee County in July 2006. The revised panels,

which were approved for distribution on Thursday, Jan. 10, will become effective in September.

This is the first comprehensive review of local flood zones in 22 years and is part of FEMA's nationwide remapping of flood zones.

The preliminary flood maps were received in July 2006. FEMA held a local, public open house in October to discuss the maps. On Jan. 31, 2007, appeals were submitted by Lee County, Sanibel and Fort Myers Beach as well as representatives of a dozen property owners.



Compared to the existing flood maps in effect for more than two decades, these preliminary maps show that more areas of Lee County will be included in high-risk flood zones, especially along the coast, rivers and creeks. Within high-risk flood zones, known as Special Flood Hazard Areas, insurance rates and construction elevation requirements are higher than in other zones. High-risk flood zones are noted on the preliminary maps by the letters "A", "AE", "V" or "VE".

Overall, the number of parcels in Special Flood Hazard Areas throughout Lee County will increase by as many as 7,600. However, some communities, including Cape Coral and scattered areas in North Fort Myers, will see a decrease in the number of parcels in the Special Flood Hazard Areas.

According to FEMA, flood zone boundaries change over time as surface erosion, land use and natural forces influence water flow and drainage patterns. In addition, the preliminary maps were drafted with new technology as well as an additional 22 years of data.

Property owners can view the proposed zone for their homes or business-

es at the Lee County Web site: www.lee-county.com/dcd/fema.htm. The Web site includes a map that highlights the revised preliminary panels. It also links to FEMA sites for specific information about flood insurance and FEMA's map modernization efforts.

Additional information is available directly from FEMA at its Web site: www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/index.shtm. ■

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Comments

>> **A 30-day period** in which the public may comment on the accuracy of the 76 revised map panels began Jan. 10. Submit written comments to:

Debasri Mitra
 Dewberry
 8401 Arlington Blvd.
 Fairfax VA 22031

Please also copy your comments to:
 Robert Stewart, Flood Plain Manager
 Lee County Department of Community Development
 P.O. Box 398
 Fort Myers FL 33902-0398

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