



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

January 31, 2024

Mr. John R. Kreider
Chair
NOAA Science Advisory Board
1061 Honeyhill Lane
Tryon, NC 28782

Dear Mr. Kreider:

Thank you for your letter to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) transmitting the Tsunami Science and Technology Advisory Panel's (TSTAP) concerns regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) most recent National Risk Index (NRI), specifically the treatment of tsunami hazards. I appreciate the thoughtful recommendations.

NOAA, in coordination with our National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) partners, has taken action to ensure FEMA is fully aware of the scope of tsunami risks faced by our coastal communities. At the most recent annual meeting of the NTHMP in late July 2023, a full-day workshop was dedicated to this topic and discussed with NRI authors. The NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) has hosted a follow-up virtual meeting with this same group in August 2023. In these engagements, NWS expressed to FEMA that the errors in the NRI's tsunami risk interpretation can have negative impacts to community preparedness, local and county planning, mitigation funding opportunities, and policy-making implications. I have also directed NWS, as the administrator of the NTHMP, to ensure a continued, ongoing dialogue with FEMA in preparation of the next NRI revision.

Through the NTHMP, NOAA provides grants to state and territory partners on various projects and outputs, including the development of tsunami hazard maps for local and distant tsunami sources. As NTHMP administrator, NOAA has facilitated discussions between FEMA's NRI authors, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and NTHMP state and territorial partners that have included the use of the NTHMP-funded maps as interim hazard-based maps to support follow-on versions of the NRI. As funds are available, NOAA will continue to support Federal, state, and territory partners on tsunami hazard map development.

NOAA is also supportive of the TSTAP's recommendation that we work with our partners to develop national probabilistic tsunami maps for local and distant tsunami sources that are updated every 4 years to align with the building code cycle and the USGS National Seismic Hazard Map. NOAA supports these activities through the administration of NTHMP – which includes both USGS and FEMA representation on the Coordinating Committee – as well as

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through Federal grants to NTHMP partners. This will ensure an appropriate baseline for more accurately characterizing the tsunami risk and, thus, better supporting key decision-makers and residents of our coastal communities.

Finally, I have directed NWS to evaluate FEMA's processes and resulting national hazard maps for non-tsunami hazards. I am happy to provide further updates on this topic if desired.

I appreciate your interest in the Tsunami Program and the NRI. Allison Allen, Director of the NWS' Analyze, Forecast, and Support Office, serves as the point of contact for the Tsunami Program. Ms. Allen may be reached at (240) 499-4161 or allison.allen@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Spinrad", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Richard W. Spinrad
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator