

December 14, 2023

Ms. Nancy Dragani
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
Building 710, Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Ms. Dragani:

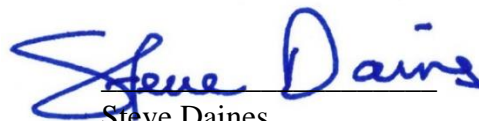
I write to express my concern with proposed changes to the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) database for the city of Choteau in Teton County, Montana. The current draft proposal expands the floodplain inside the city limits, which would place a significant and undue burden on the community.

As you know, FEMA and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) are in the midst of a multi-year process to update and revise flood maps for the Teton River, Sun River, Spring Creek, Deep Creek, Muddy Creek and tributaries. These maps outline the areas of the city and county that lie within the floodway, the 100-year floodplain, and the 500-year floodplain.

The provisional maps presented to the public for comment in November included considerable expansions of the acreage and number of structures within the floodplain. As a result, homes, businesses, and development in these areas would be subject to costly flood insurance requirements, local floodplain regulations, and a lengthy permit process for construction or renovation. Further economic development in the city would be threatened at a time when efforts are already underway to protect Choteau from an event like the 1964 flood. The Montana Department of Transportation is currently engaged in a project to improve U.S. Highway 89, whose breaching nearly 60 years ago led to the most devastating flood in Montana's history. Through raising the highway's elevation and better mitigation work, the threat of another major flood can be substantially reduced.

While I appreciate your efforts to keep people and their property safe from flooding, I urge you to engage with the local community, consider the ongoing efforts to mitigate flood risk, and make the necessary changes to the proposed flood maps to limit their economic impact on the community of Choteau.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator

cc: Amanda Kaster, Director, Montana DNRC