

# Delta levee strategy relies on human risk and habitat destruction

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Many levees, necessary to protect life and property in the Delta, are in shambles due to lack of funding for repairs and maintenance. This has led local communities to take an interesting approach to obtain the necessary funds. Rather than limiting the potential exposure to people and property in case of a levee break, many communities are actively driving more people and development INTO the flood plains in a desperate attempt to increase tax revenues.

encourage more development, continually increasing taxpayer liability in flood-prone areas such as the Delta.

Outside of the potential risk to humans, the NFIP has also run counter to efforts to protect floodplains and myriad species that depend upon them. According to the United States Geological Service, more than 95 percent of the Delta's wetlands have been destroyed

As local reclamation district secretary Donte Nomellini Sr. [described to the Associated Press](#):

*“If you have an existing population in place that you want to protect, not developing anymore is not going to help; it’s going to hurt. You’ve got to increase the risk, because that’s how you’re going to get revenue to provide increased protection.”*



**The Delta needs a responsible plan for maintaining and repairing levees that does not rely on putting more people and property in danger.**

by human activity, including development. New development continues to encroach on those few remaining wetlands that are vital to the health of the ecosystem.

Under the federal Endangered Species Act, federal agency actions that may affect listed species such as Chinook salmon and delta smelt trigger a requirement to consult with federal wildlife agencies. In operation of the NFIP,

Developing communities in a floodplain, behind failing levees is a bad idea. It only adds to the problem by putting more property and, most importantly, more lives in harm's way.

FEMA has shirked its responsibility to comply with federal law, offering subsidized insurance to developers to encourage further destruction of floodplain habitat without analyzing the impacts of development on listed species.

But floodplain development is not just a local issue; the federal government is also complicit in the scheme. In order to obtain the necessary loans to undertake new construction, developers must obtain insurance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The program was originally intended to offer subsidized insurance for existing areas in danger of floods. However, since the program's inception the NFIP has been used to

Exacerbating the problem by increasing the risk to people and to the Delta's native species is not the answer. The Delta needs a responsible plan for maintaining and repairing levees that does not rely on putting more people and property in danger. While a comprehensive plan is developed and implemented, local and federal authorities must act responsibly on behalf of both people and the environment.



# Delta Watch

**A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta**