

## DO YOU KNOW THAT SINKING FEELING ?

For those of us who have land or a family home on or near the seashore, the recent big news is that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) had presented to all communities new flood maps, showing a more realistic impact of storms and their effects on coastal areas, and tidal river areas in particular.

Included in the new flood maps are expanded land areas and additional homes. The Biggert-Water Flood Insurance Reform Act had several goals. First, Capitol Hill wanted to get the National Flood Insurance Program out-from-under the estimated \$24 billion deficit caused by recent hurricanes like Sandy. At the time Sandy hit the East coast it was categorized as a "Tropical Storm." No matter what your view is of global warming, most everyone acknowledges that oceans and all their tributaries are rising at an alarming rate, and that storms of any magnitude may cause catastrophic damages in the billions of dollars.

Second, Washington decided to shift the risk and burden of damage payouts to policyholders resulting in higher premiums for everyone required to carry flood insurance. One Louisiana family's current rate is \$ 370.00 per year will ratchet-up to \$ 17,000.00 per year under the new rates. Louisiana Senator Landrieu passed a bill in the Senate which delays certain rate increases during the next four years. Other Congressional leaders are seeking an outright repeal of other rate hikes.

FEMA along with its flood maps have been attacked from all sides. Allegations have been made that methodologies employed in the studies and the resulting data compiled by FEMA are highly flawed resulting in maps that are seriously inaccurate, particularly here along the East coast. One disturbing claim is that FEMA conducted studies and data on wave action only on the Pacific coast. Legal action brought against FEMA alleges that FEMA simply transferred those Pacific coast results and imposed that data on the Atlantic coast regions in order to set our insurance rates.

Meanwhile, private land survey businesses are marketing themselves to assist you in removing your property from the new map's expanded designated zones. The companies offer often very expensive surveys, that will they will then shepherd through various governmental agencies during an often extended appeal (review) process. That means your particular parcel of property may or may not be removed from flood designated area after a complicated and probably expensive process.

Needless to say compliance with FEMA maps and the implementation of higher policy rates is very unsettled and unsettling to those effected homeowners. Once again interpretation of a law and its effects on our lives here on the South Shore is particularly fluid and in serious flux. No one seems to know when, if ever, the FEMA flood maps and increased premiums will take place. For answers concerning your neighborhood or your specific parcel of property, I suggest you start with appropriate town hall departments and information available at [www.fema.gov/flood-insurance-reform](http://www.fema.gov/flood-insurance-reform).