MEMORANDUM

Date: March 22, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
   Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Lesher
       Acting County Administrator

Re: Pima County Regional Flood Control District’s Community Rating System Upgrade

On April 1, 2022, the Pima County Regional Flood Control District (District) will be upgraded to a Class 3 Community as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This classification is part of the National Flood Insurance Program’s (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS), which rewards participating communities for going above and beyond the minimum federal requirements for floodplain management. The District was previously a Class 5 Community and the upgrade to a Class 3 will also result in a substantial reduction in Pima County residents’ flood insurance premiums.

With this change, the District will be ranked among the top 1% of the 1,729 CRS communities throughout the nation. The District will be the first and only Class 3 Community in Arizona and is one of only 17 in the entire nation rated as a Class 3 or better.

The CRS is used by FEMA to rate the effectiveness of a community’s floodplain management program and award points under a federal scoring system. Some of the areas where the County receives credit includes the establishment of higher regulatory construction standards, open space protection/preservation as part of the Floodprone Land Acquisition Program and Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, stormwater drainage system maintenance, targeted public outreach, implementation of a 5-year Floodplain Management Plan, and the ALERT flood warning program.

Another major area where the District performs exceptionally well is in the delineation of local, or non-FEMA mapped floodplains. The District has spent many years perfecting its technical mapping processes using a two-dimensional grid system that models floodplains more accurately than was previously possible. This has resulted in a better understanding of the flood hazards specific to the County making the region safer for residents.

The Class 3 upgrade is a major benefit to County residents who have flood insurance as they will now receive a 35 percent reduction in their premiums. It is estimated that this reduction in premiums will save County residents approximately $1.6 million per year in flood insurance costs.
The Class 3 designation is timely as this also coincides with the NFIP and FEMA’s changes to the way flood insurance premium pricing is calculated. Regular homeowners or business insurance policies do not typically cover losses caused by flooding, so the District encourages the purchase of flood insurance for at-risk structures even when not required by the NFIP, such as structures located outside FEMA mapped floodplains. The Class 3 status will help make that flood insurance more affordable.

This rating is a validation of the many years of hard work, leadership, and taxpayers’ investments in flood control infrastructure and programs since the District joined the CRS in 1991.

JKL

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
    Yves Khawam, PhD, Assistant County Administrator for Public Works
    Suzanne Shields, Director, Regional Flood Control District