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Congresswoman Sanchez Works to Aid Recent Storm Victims in Orange County

Calls on FEMA to offer more federal assistance;
Queries Army Corps on Prado Dam stability

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Rep. Loretta Sanchez today sent two letters of inquiry on behalf of the residents of Orange County to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) within the Department of Homeland Security, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Both agencies have been directly involved in the recent storm recovery efforts in California.

Expanding Federal Assistance Programs to Cover Orange County

After President Bush's Feb. 4 declaration of a portion of California as a major disaster area, FEMA designated the counties of Los Angeles and Ventura as eligible for disaster-related aid to individual families. Unfortunately, Orange County was omitted from this list, and federal funds were only available for reconstruction of public facilities. Sanchez called on FEMA to expand its designation to include Orange County to assist in the recovery of some of the residents, particularly in the City of Anaheim.

"While federal assistance to public agencies is much needed, and much appreciated, private residents in the City of Anaheim, in my congressional district, suffered millions of dollars in property damage as a direct result of the rains that occurred in January—the same rains which prompted the disaster designation," wrote Sanchez.

Securing Prado Dam to Avoid Future Evacuation Scares

With more rain expected in the Southern California region, Rep. Sanchez also called on the Army Corps of Engineers to brief the local congressional delegation on the status of Prado Dam following recent evacuations around the dam during extensive precipitation. Her letter asks the Corps to clarify its plans to assure future dam security.

"Fortunately, the recent seepage at Prado proved not to be a structural threat. The potential failure of a portion of the dam, however, would impact hundreds of thousands of residents downstream from it, as the downstream course of the Santa Ana River goes right through some of the most densely populated areas of Southern California," said Sanchez in her letter. Sanchez has since scheduled a meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers and is awaiting a response from FEMA.