



Protecting Your Property

Americans Too Confident In Flood Preparedness

by Rob Vining

(NAPSA)—Floods are the single most significant natural threat to people, homes and property, yet according to a survey commissioned



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by HNTB Corporation, a majority of Americans are unaware of their risk.

The America THINKS survey found six in 10 Americans believe their area is prepared to deal with

the potential damage from an extreme storm, hurricane or extensive flooding. Unfortunately, time and time again our flood management and levee systems have been put to the test—and failed.

Additional education is needed to inform the public of the true threat and what can be done to manage flood risk. Floods can occur as a result of torrential rains, ice thaws, stormwater runoff, hurricanes or nor'easter storms that overwhelm rivers and levees, many of which are aging and in disrepair. In fact, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the nation's levees a grade of D- in its 2009 Report Card for America's Infrastructure.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was charged with the first-ever inventory and assessment of the nation's levees. The work is far from complete, but early results indicate about 9 percent

can be expected to fail in a flood event.

In order to address our water infrastructure deficiencies, we should prioritize risks and investments while looking at alternative funding methods.

According to USACE, federal levee systems currently provide a six-to-one return on flood damages prevented compared to initial building cost.

The good news is that nearly two-thirds of Americans would be willing to pay additional taxes to protect their area.

The National Committee on Levee Safety recommends transitioning to state-managed levee improvement programs based on nationally established standards. The survey showed most Americans want more regional control, as well as more regional funding.

This is an opportunity to reexamine our current levee management approach and funding to find alternatives where states, municipalities, private owners and investors play a greater role. That could include applying a portion of property tax revenues to a flood management system repair fund, or developing local government incentives that encourage private investment through public-private partnerships.

Learn more at www.hntb.com.

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