

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**QUESTIONABLE ACCURACY OF HOUSTON FLOOD MAPPING LEADS TO COMPLAINT
TO U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL:
*EXPERT WITNESS CONFIRMS “MISCHARACTERIZATIONS OF REALITY” AND
“INVALIDITY OF MODEL INPUTS” USED TO PERMIT GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT***

Houston, Texas (August 24, 2020): A two-year investigation of fraudulent flood maps by the nonprofit Residents Against Flooding (RAF) has culminated in a complaint to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General, under which FEMA is an agency. A world-respected hydrologist, Dr. Steven H. Emerman, has provided expert testimony to the federal government verifying RAF’s findings.

Dr. Emerman is the owner of Malach Consulting based in Spanish Fork, Utah, which provides hydrologic modeling for communities that are concerned about the impacts of urban development, mining, and logging. Dr. Emerman has an M.A. from Princeton University and Ph.D. from Cornell University. He was a professor of hydrology for 31 years, including serving as a Fulbright Professor in Nepal and Ecuador.

Dr. Emerman reviewed maps that are currently allowing a 900-home residential community to be constructed on the old Pine Crest Golf Course, 3080 Gessner Road at Clay Road. These revised maps make it appear that the property is no longer in the dangerous floodway nor in the 100-year flood plain. These revised maps show the property to be in a much safer flood plain requiring significantly less drainage and detention. The flood map changes, however, exist only on a computer screen and not on the ground.

Dr. Emerman determined that a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) requesting the flood map to be revised was “a gross misrepresentation of reality.” Key model inputs were used “that bore no relation to actual current or historical data.” According to Dr. Emerman, computational changes were made to create a “nonexistent split floodway” which made it appear that the Base Flood Elevation was lowered by two feet. This change made it seem that most of the property was no longer in the 100-year flood plain, allowing greatly reduced development restrictions. Dr. Emerman said, “I could not discern any scientific reason as to why this would be done; however, it makes perfect sense if the motive was to achieve some sort of economic benefit for their client [the developer].”

The Pine Crest property has been raised several feet using trucked-in fill dirt which is illegal for the 100-year flood plain. Surrounding schools and neighborhoods are in jeopardy from storm water runoff, much of which was previously absorbed by the old golf course land that is being covered in structures and concrete.

Residents Against Flooding recently hired a drone service to capture the reality of what’s on the ground compared to what’s on the revised map. The images don’t match.

After unsuccessful meetings with Harris County Flood Control to acknowledge this fraud and hold the developer accountable, RAF submitted their complaint to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office OIG. An audit and investigation of the model inputs have been requested. RAF has also presented this evidence to two members of U.S. Congress, Rep. Dan Crenshaw within whose District 2 the project lies, and Rep. Lizzie Fletcher whose District 7 is downstream.

RAF is sincerely grateful to Dr. Emerman and for the assistance of Harriet Festing, co-founder and executive director of Anthropocene Alliance, a national nonprofit that educates and organizes individuals and communities harmed by environment abuse and climate change. She connected RAF with Dr. Emerman through the Thriving Earth Exchange program of the American Geophysical Union.

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