ASSOCIATION of STATE FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS SUPPORTS COLORADO 2013 FLOODING RECOVERY STRATEGY

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Floods are the nation’s most frequent and costly natural hazard, resulting in more Presidential Disaster Declarations than any other type of disaster, and destabilizing local and regional economies. The vast destruction on the Colorado Front Range and northeast Plains from the recent September flooding is devastating, but may be a harbinger of what we can expect in the future. It is important to recognize large events like this flooding WILL happen again.

The September 2013 flooding across northeast Colorado is a tragic regional disaster that changed and disrupted lives and livelihoods. As organizations of professionals, the members of Colorado Association of Stormwater and Floodplain Managers (CASFM) and the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) understand that the state of Colorado can and will rebuild from this effort so that all parties can attempt to return to a sense of normalcy. This basic human need, this fundamental desire to get back to some state of normalcy, is paramount to our long-term survival as a community of neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family members. In Colorado’s time of need there is nothing more crucial than taking a moment to stop, to think, and to envision a future condition that is better than the present. The only way we can secure that vision is to build back smarter and stronger, and to assure that future generations in Colorado and all states across the nation do not have to repeat the life-changing events of September 2013 in the next major floods.

ASFPM applauds the Colorado Association on their recommendations to support the resilient recovery and smart rebuilding in the areas affected by this year’s storm (see their 2 page Media Paper). As the affected communities, families, and businesses continue to rebuild, the recommendations set forth will help reduce the risks and costs of future floods, and provide a blueprint for flood hazard mitigation for the nation.

“The steps Colorado flood hazard managers are taking will address the need for hazard mitigation as part of recovery and rebuilding to better prepare communities for future floods,” noted Chad Berginnis, ASFPM’s Executive Director. “Encouraging property owners to mitigate against future flood damage recognizes that mitigation not only reduces risk but also can reduce flood insurance premiums for families and businesses that rebuild higher, farther from flood sources, and with robust building codes and designs.”

ASFPM, and our 35 State Chapters, are at the forefront of efforts to promote robust development and recovery standards, including investing in flood maps and data, and promoting local adoption of margins of safety, such as higher construction elevation standards and buffers along streams and shorelines, to account for uncertainties in precipitation models and flood maps.
The attached ASFPM paper, “Colorado Flooding Recovery 2013: Using Mitigation to Rebuild Safer and More Sustainable Communities”, outlines actions that communities, individuals, businesses, and state/local/federal officials can take to reduce suffering, damages, and risks from events like the NW Colorado floods in the future.

Decades of federal flood policy have focused on structural measures to attempt to control floods and a national flood insurance program to ameliorate economic loss and discourage development in floodplains. Despite these efforts, flood losses continue to rise with inadequate attention to the local development decisions that deepen local dependence on federal disaster relief and exacerbate the nation’s vulnerability to floods. ASFPM is pleased to promote actions to help communities prepare for these current and future challenges.

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) is an organization of professionals involved in floodplain and flood risk management, flood hazard mitigation, flood data analysis and sharing, flood mapping, the National Flood Insurance Program, and flood preparedness, warning and recovery. ASFPM has 35 chapters and more than 15,000 members working to reduce the risk of loss of life and property in flood disasters, and to restore and protect naturally functioning floodplains. For more information, please visit us at www.floods.org.

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