ASFPM Chapter District 1
Status Report 2019

Association of State Floodplain Managers

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Introduction

District 1 encompasses FEMA Regions I and II, which include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont and the territories of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

The ASFPM state chapters in District 1 are:

- [Connecticut Association of Flood Managers](#) (CAFM)
- [New Jersey Association for Floodplain Management](#) (NJAFM)
- [New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association](#) (NYSFSMA)
- [Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association](#) (RIFMA)

In addition, Massachusetts floodplain professionals created a new organization, the [Massachusetts Association for Floodplain Management](#), AKA “massFM.” They have filed for and received a 501(c)(3) designation and are making great progress toward becoming an ASFPM chapter.

Key Accomplishments of District 1 Chapters

- Each state chapter holds an annual conference, lasting from one to three days. These have all been highly successful venues for training, sharing success stories, and networking. In addition to Continuing Education Credits for Certified Floodplain Managers, some also provide training credits for professional engineers, surveyors, planners and local building officials. The New York and New Jersey chapters have an agreement for up to three free registrations at each others’ conferences.

- In addition to the annual conference, chapters provided additional floodplain management training opportunities. CAFM targeted municipal officials, offering 27 CECs for CFMs. The
“kick-off event” for the new Massachusetts association included three training sessions and a presentation of the new organization. They followed this with a second training event for local officials and have scheduled a third.

- Each chapter provides opportunities to take the CFM exam. The New Jersey association hosted CFM trainings in 19 of the state’s 21 counties (with 318 attendees) and will offer 11 more in 2019. 149 attendees took the CFM exam and 92 passed (61.7% passing rate).

- Chapters promote participation in the ASFPM Annual National Conference and some offer scholarships. Several Connecticut association members, including nearly half of the board, made the long trek across the country to attend the Phoenix conference.

- Several chapters have Community Rating System committees. The Connecticut association co-sponsored FEMA’s 4-day CRS class.

- The New Jersey association is actively participating in various state policy initiatives, including the FRAMES Coastal Resilience Plan, Statewide Coastal Resilience Plan framework, Flood Defense act (stormwater utilities legislation) and stormwater rulemaking. This demonstrates that NJAFM is gaining credibility among peers as a stakeholder. The New York association submitted comments on the draft State Flood Risk Management Guidance, provided a newly elected Congressman with information and recommendations about the National Flood Insurance Program, is working with the New York City Area Waterfront Alliance, and is tracking the Corps of Engineers NY and NJ Harbor & Tributaries Focus Area Feasibility Study (HATS).

- The biggest accomplishment for the Rhode Island chapter was to develop and approve a Strategic Plan to guide chapter efforts over the next few years. Based on this Strategic Plan, a more action-oriented Work Plan will be developed each year by the Board of Directors.

- Each chapter has a website and informs members and others through newsletters. The new Massachusetts association issued two newsletters, created a website and is working on setting up membership registration through the website.

Challenges for District 1 Chapters

- Many times, we feel as if we are “preaching to the choir.” In order to attract new members and to fulfill the core mission of promoting floodplain management in the state, CAFM has targeted specific municipal roles and is in the process of updating membership materials.

- The biggest challenge for RIFMA continues to be having enough active volunteers to run the type of programming the members want at the desired frequency. Conference planning takes up a lot of time and effort, so they don’t often find time for many additional educational/networking efforts.

- A major challenge for the New Jersey association has been building engagement and raising new members to leadership positions. As an all-volunteer group, maintaining participation outside of a core group has been challenging.

- Until recently, NJAFM’s participation in regulatory/legislative issues was complicated due to a lack of a formal process for positions and signing on to support legislative and policy efforts. The new committee chair has formalized a process that expands the opportunity for the board
to participate in these decisions and empowers/lends predictability to the Legislative Committee to take on initiatives.

- The Massachusetts association is dealing with all of the challenges facing a newly-born organization (filing for incorporation, setting up a mailbox, figuring out an approach for outreach and messaging, handling small costs here and there without a bank account, etc.). But it has overcome these by “meeting” regularly via Skype phone conferences, and working out each aspect with respect and recognition of the value of individual viewpoints. Altogether we anticipate a robust growth as we begin to accept new members and gather the necessary resources to become an ASFPM chapter, hopefully within the next year.

Priorities for District 1 Chapters

- Massachusetts association: The highest priority is to lift up floodplain management as an important part of a resilient state, and to educate a broader audience about floodplain development issues, flooding and flood risk across the Commonwealth and the New England region. They would like to create more floodplain management professionals, and especially to advance the quality of floodplain management in the state by encouraging participation in ASFPM’s CFM program.

- Connecticut chapter: As a growing organization, the CAFM will be addressing means to improve communications and record maintenance to ensure smooth transitions as the board changes. They are now in the infancy stages of exploring data management tools for nonprofits. CAFM has also identified a need to increase the engagement of riverine communities.

- New Jersey chapter: Finalizing a legislative/policy document, continuing and forming partnerships with peer stakeholders, soliciting and encouraging more membership engagement, hosting additional CRS trainings, expanding the scope and scale of the annual conference.

- New York chapter: The association is striving to cultivate increased member engagement and participation in committees. Each committee now has two co-chairs and developed a draft work plan. The next challenge is to build committee membership and implement those work plans.

- Rhode Island chapter’s long-term priorities: (1) Increase the influence, knowledge and technical skills of members and other constituents. (2) Increase active participation in the association and its value to professionals with responsibilities for floodplain management of flood mitigation. (3) Invest in building the capacity of the association to serves its members, advance its educational agenda and grow participation.

- Rhode Island chapter’s immediate priorities: (1) Develop a work plan for 2019/2020. (2) Hire a part-time intern to help with administrative tasks.
Feedback to ASFPM and Recommendations

- Please continue to share policies, activities and educational material that promote sound floodplain management. We all love some good success stories!

- Not sure if this is a chicken and egg situation, but we would be interested to see to what extent members participate in ASFPM activities and how to increase it. I get the sense that the general membership, unless they attend the conference, does not have much interaction or interest with ASFPM. We need to define what a tighter connection would look like to strengthen the chapter/ASFPM relationship.

- Many of our members have expressed consternation with implementation substantial damage and substantial improvement criteria, and inconsistency between some municipalities in how it is applied. Clearer guidance from ASFPM and FEMA would be very welcome.

- It would be helpful if ASFPM could offer guidance on data management/collaborative software environments that other chapters have successfully used.

- Recommend providing access to webinars for chapter members. Other organizations have very robust webinars offers, both in number and quality—and many are free to all takers.

- I would say that one of the things ASFPM does well is policy. However, it would be useful to have more routine policy briefs to chapters – especially in areas in which chapters may wish to play a role.

- An area where more assistance can be helpful is on the business side of running a chapter from insurance to incorporation to bylaws to taxes.

- We would appreciate a briefing on how to talk to elected officials without risking tax-exempt status.

- ASFPM could establish a chapter forum on the ASFPM website where chapter leaders can ask questions, answer questions and have discussions.

- We are particularly interested in chapter training support. Training and outreach resources could include presentations with speaker notes that a local presenter can customize (for example, No Adverse Impact).

- ASFPM could facilitate sharing of information between chapters, perhaps as a mentor-mentee program.