

Association of State Floodplain Managers

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ASFPM Region 2 Director Status Report



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Region 2 Observations

While a small state geographically, New Jersey ranks number three in the country in the amount of total National Flood Insurance Program flood insurance payouts. New Jersey has 552 NFIP participating communities and is particularly active in the Community Rating System. The state currently has 92 CRS-participating communities with a total annual flood insurance premium savings of over \$35 million.

New Jersey continues to work with FEMA Region II to prioritize flood-risk mapping projects with the state through their Cooperating Technical Partner agreement. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has been a CTP with FEMA since 2006 and continues to assist FEMA Region II on its mapping and outreach priorities. The NJDEP works closely with the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management on community hazard mitigation projects and plan updates. NJDEP also continues to work closely with the New Jersey Association for Floodplain Management to assist on membership services, training, outreach and annual conference planning, which will be held from October 24-26, 2018 in Atlantic City. In addition, the NJDEP has coordinated with NJAFM to provide regular, floodplain-management training sessions statewide and exam offerings for the Certified Floodplain Manager certification. The number of active CFM members in the Garden State is now 339.

In Albany, 2017 was a year of change with long-time New York State Floodplain Administrator (and past ASFPM Chair) Bill Nechamen retiring from active service at the Department of Environmental Conservation. The state's Floodplain Management Bureau has transitioned to new leadership while continuing to meet the demands of effective floodplain management.

Early 2018 marked the kick off of the state's multi-year effort to revise and improve its State Hazard Mitigation Plan. The state's HMP was last updated in 2013 and published as the 2014 HMP. The approval of the 2014 edition of the plan enabled New York to receive \$11.2 billion in Public Assistance and \$1.47 billion in Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding. Like many states, the New York State HMP serves as a foundational framework for county and local plans.

The vision for the 2019 HMP is to move the "book" from a hard-copy manual to a web-based model with the goal of the HMP to be a more dynamic tool from day to day and not just a 1,500-page document that sits on a shelf, unread and unused. While not in this round of revision, the long-term goal of the HMP is to have the document achieve Enhanced Status in 2024. This elevation of the plan would open the door to more federal funding, which in turn should help the state manage its hazard

mitigation program more effectively. The 2019 plan will not be “enhanced” formally, but will be written as such for future integration and elevation.

To see this effort through, the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services invited a multitude of stakeholders, academia, subject matter experts and others to participate in the process from day one.

The New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association comments that nearly two decades into the Map Modernization - Risk Map era, NYSFSMA continues to be alarmed that federal budgets have not nearly kept up with mapping needs. Today, floodplain managers, planners, community officials, lenders, insurance agents and others in nearly half of New York state’s 55,000-square-miles must use decades-old, undigitized, paper maps with no clear dedicated funding to complete the remaining portion of the state.

For example, of the nine counties in the Genesee-Finger Lakes region (western New York), only one has a modernized Flood Insurance Rate Map. Six are using Q3 Flood Data and two are using non-GIS based FIRMs (i.e., paper flood maps). Because there are many communities in the region with small populations, the lack of easily disseminated, reliable digital flood hazard data and mapping adversely impacts the awareness of the flood hazard risk and therefore the amount of flood insurance policies.

NYSFSMA is thankful of FEMA's commitment to modernize flood maps, but remains concerned that sea level rise, climate change and suburban development are changing flood risk more rapidly than maps can be developed. NYSFSMA urges FEMA and New York state to work together on a multi-year plan to complete the modernization of Flood Insurance Rate Maps and other flood-risk tools. Similarly, New York must complete the development and adoption of coastal erosion maps from Long Island to the Great Lakes shorelines. Hurricane Sandy and recent Lake Ontario flooding has shown that the 1980's Coastal Erosion maps do not come close to protecting property from the ocean and lakes. The state should have a routine plan to finalize and update all coastal erosion maps on a 10-year cycle.

With an existing CTP program agreement already in place, FEMA and New York state should be encouraged to work together to continue to produce high-quality flood mapping throughout the state, especially in those areas lacking modernized flood hazard coverage.

Recent flooding across the state has also shown that the “100-year” flood standard is insufficient. NYSFSMA urges the state to adopt a future-conditions flood-risk standard as called for in the Community Risk and Resiliency Act.

NYSFSMA is committed to working with FEMA, state and regional agencies, not for profits, the private sector and local communities to utilize interdisciplinary approaches to reduce flood risk in New York. The association continues to improve its capability to deliver more training and to work with the state's policy makers.

From a regional planning perspective, it has been observed that many municipalities within New York state are fearful of participating in the CRS program because of the administrative burden. Because of the devolution of local land use authority to the 1,500+ cities, towns and villages of the state due to New York's Home Rule laws, the regulation of floodplains and their associated issues are placed on communities that are generally small, with very limited capacity to implement CRS activities. Of the 1,500 communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program in New York, 1,350 communities have fewer than 10,000 residents; 1,162 less than 5,000; and 320 communities have fewer than 1,000 residents. Much needed technical assistance for the implementation of CRS could be regionalized through inter-municipal agreements, shared services, nonprofit assistance and/or regional planning. FEMA or state funding for a pilot program is encouraged.

Finally, it would be helpful if New York state could create a "crosswalk" that provided and illustrated the linkages between the state's various programs and policies that may exist in its several state agencies and regulations that may provide possible CRS points. This could provide a "boost" in interest in CRS by letting communities know that at least some of the points are already out there, ready to be taken.