

Association of State Floodplain Managers

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ASFPM Region 5 Status Report



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Region 5 Director's Report Content – prepared by Rod Renkenberger

1. How do the state and national floodplain management programs help or challenge your efforts?

Comments:

The state floodplain management program is extremely helpful to us in the work we do. They are always available to answer technical questions and provide advice. However, they are understaffed and always putting out proverbial fires. They need more funding.

It seems that anytime the national floodplain management program is involved with communities, any progress takes an extremely long time to happen. I'm not talking about mapping - I mean NFIP compliance issues.

It's a challenge at times, recently the state floodplain management program has shrunk in to a size that is 20 percent of what it was 10 years ago. This limits their ability to be effective partner with Ohio EMA at times do to staffing levels. This is a concern as riverine flooding is the highest risk natural hazard we have in the state and the impact of limited state level floodplain management program can has ripples across the floodplain regulation and development communities.

With increasing regularity, FEMA programs have become unnecessarily burdensome and complicated. FEMA mitigation projects now take 5 - 6 years to complete and require constant oversight from FEMA staff. Our state funded mitigation programs are done in less than a year.

Summary:

Funding and staffing levels are the biggest concern followed by FEMA programs becoming burdensome and complicated. FEMA Mitigation Programs should be administered at the state level, not regional level.

2. Have you reached a milestone after a past disaster, and want to share the progress your state has made since that disaster?

Comments:

The state and national floodplain management program are beneficial regarding promoting sound floodplain management generally. Specifically, the state program provides learning opportunities for local officials and networking opportunities, which promotes knowledge and better administration of floodplain management regulations locally. National programs help by promoting sound floodplain

management on the national level and relaying information down to the state level. Administration of the CFM program has been valuable as each year more and more individuals are added to the ranks of certified floodplain managers, growing in knowledge.

Most recent disaster prior to the one declared in mid-April was 2013, so nothing yet but should have plenty next year.

Illinois continues to be a national leader in post flood damage assessments and compliance. We work closely with our communities after a flood to complete damage assessments and red tag substantially damaged structures. The Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management has organized a mutual aid program to assist communities faced with large numbers of damage assessments. This past year, the Rapid Assistance Flood Team completed over 1,000 damage assessments in two communities.

Summary:

The Illinois mutual aid program and RAFT should be used as a model for other Region 5 states/communities to follow.

3. How did your Hazard Mitigation Program perform, both at the state and local level, during any disasters you experienced in the past 12 months?

Comments:

Wisconsin - \$2 million in HMGP funds from the 2017 disaster. We have not submitted applications to FEMA yet, but we have many more excellent pre-applications than we will be able to fund.

Ohio - No projects have been awarded yet for our most recent disaster DR-4360, but we have been very successful in the non-disaster grant cycle, being awarded +\$10 million dollars in FMA/PDM funds. Illinois - It has not performed. Our last declared disaster was in 2014. None of the residents from that flood have been mitigated using HMGP. They are all waiting for the FEMA program to do something. It is criminal. In the meanwhile, the state of Illinois mitigation program has spent over \$7 million dollars and acquired over 150 homes.

Summary:

State mitigation programs are much more effective and efficient. FEMA should strongly consider allowing mitigation programs to be administered at the state level.

4. Did you have any non-flood disasters in your state in the past 12 months?

Comments:

IL – No IN – N.A.
 MI – N.A. MN – N.A.
 OH – No WI – No

Illinois is the No. 1 state in the nation for overall reduction of repetitive loss properties and floodplain management compliance on new properties. As such, it is VERY difficult for Illinois **to get a federal** declaration. We simply don't have enough damage to justify a declaration. Unfortunately, given current programs that also means no mitigation funding to address the remaining at-risk properties. It also means communities no longer have disaster assistance funding to help with infrastructure, clean up, etc.

Summary:

Based on the responses received, Region 5 states did not experience any non-flood disasters in the past 12 months. The major concern of Region 5 states is the fact that it is VERY difficult to meet the eligibility requirements for a federal disaster declaration since most Region 5 communities have engaged in sound flood mitigation practices/projects for the past +35 years; striving towards resiliency! Until incentives are credited to progressive states, Region V states will find it almost impossible to meet the damage threshold for a federal disaster declaration and as a result will no longer receive Disaster Assistance Funding to help with infrastructure and clean-up.

5. How did non-flood disasters impact flood hazard mitigation in your state?

Comments:

All respondents noted that non-flood disasters are very uncommon. All noted that in the event a non-flood disaster did occur, they would use the HMGP funding to perform flood mitigation.

Summary:

The likelihood of Region 5 states receiving a non-flood disaster declaration is very unlikely and ultimately will have a negative impact on Flood Hazard Mitigation in the region.

6. What legislation, if any, are you working through, pushing, or battling at the state level?

Comments:

- Many states prohibit their employees from lobbying, making it difficult to pursue needed legislative changes.
- We would like to get a statewide all-hazards mitigation program.

- One state has completed a white paper on a state mitigation program and continues to push this program to their state legislators.
- Many states floodplain management regulations are under constant threat;
- Many are concern with state legislation aimed at eliminating higher regulatory standards.

Summary:

Higher regulatory standards are under a constant threat of being repealed. Emphasis should be placed on educating state lawmakers on sound floodplain management principles. Most state lawmakers don't understand how the NFIP is administered and often sponsor state legislation to "fix" a problem that is a federal issue. This could be very dangerous. An example of this occurred recently when a state lawmaker thought that if he lowered the Flood Protection Grade (FPG) to the BFE that his constituent's issue with FEMA's "Basement" definition would be resolved--WRONG! Additional support should be given to state floodplain management associations in states that prohibit state employees from lobbying so that higher standards can be protected and kept in place.

7. How do other state agencies or programs work with your goals?

Comments:

- Division of Fire & Building Safety, Plan Review Division coordinate with our office when issuing Construction Design Release for site in the floodplain. We follow up with the community, reminding them of any applicable requirements of their floodplain regulations.
- Division of Response and Recovery, Mitigation Division staff coordinate with our office for floodplain information when needed for mitigation projects and team up with our staff to host a biennial post-flood conference featuring information on floodplain and mitigation topics.
- Our DNR has a municipal flood control program that has similar goals to the FEMA programs and is often used as match. We also work closely with the state's CDBG-EAP program. Many other state agencies are on our state hazard mitigation team and perform mitigation actions regularly.
- Work with many different state agencies in response to disasters and during the mitigation process. This includes DNR, DOT, department of commerce, development services agency, etc.
- We coordinate closely with other state agencies.

Summary:

In general, Region V states have been very successful at agency coordination and adoption of common goals to strive towards resiliency.

8. Are there any challenges in conflicting goals?

Comments:

- The biggest challenge is with locals allowing development in the floodplain.
- No

Summary:

Based on feedback, it appears the biggest challenge is with communities that do not have staff who are educated on floodplain management principles. Funding, in many instances, is the driving force because a city clerk may be forced to wear multiple hats and perform multiple duties even though they aren't competent to do so.

9. What is unique about FPM in your state?

Comments:

- Floodways are determined with less than 0.15 rise, rather than the federal 1-foot rise, which results in much wider floodways. The floodways are regulated under the State's Flood Control Act, which gives the Department of Natural Resources permitting authority. This requires permits for development activities for sites where the upstream drainage area is greater than 1-square mile.
- Our state has a freeboard requirement of 2 feet above the BFE (flood protection grade).
- Our state requires structures in the floodplain to be elevated 2 feet above the BFE. We also require elevated structures in the floodplain to be elevated on fill, not stilts or pilings.
- Every community in our state has adopted higher regulatory standards. All communities have adopted at least 1 foot of freeboard. All communities have adopted cumulative substantial damage regulations. Most communities have adopted compensatory storage and restrictive floodway regulations (appropriate uses only). Our floodways are mapped based on 0.01' rise and considers both conveyance and storage requirements.

Summary:

Region V states are very progressive and have adopted higher regulatory standards. Floodways are much more restrictive, allowing very little rise resulting in much wider footprints. Freeboard requirements result in Flood Protection Grades 1-2' higher than the BFE and most communities have adopted some sort of compensatory storage requirement, so there is no net loss of floodplain storage.

10. What is unique about flood hazard mitigation and partnerships in your state?

Comments:

- The state does all the outreach and partnership with local officials; FEMA is non-existent at the local level.
- FEMA staff no longer go into the field.
- Silver Jackets is hugely successful. A wonderful partnership of many agencies where all have an opportunity to contribute and find solutions.
- Wisconsin has had a state hazard mitigation team for over 20 years. It recently became a chapter of the Silver Jackets. The team involves many agencies including some that might not typically be included like the Department of Safety and Professional Services and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance.
- Ohio has a very active partnerships with the Silver Jackets, the Muskingum and Miami Conservancy Districts, and other various agencies.
- Illinois' state mitigation program is much more efficient than FEMA's mitigation programs.

Summary:

The good news is that most of the Region V states have become a chapter of Silver Jackets. Several states have established their own mitigation program and find that it is much more efficient than FEMA's mitigation programs. The concern amongst the Region 5 states is that FEMA region staff no longer go into the field and are basically non-existent at the local level. Our mission over the next 12 months will be to meet with Region V staff to facilitate greater outreach and presence of staff in the region.

11. How are changes in D.C. regarding funding, legislation and the new administration impacting your flood hazard mitigation program?

Comments:

- Anytime funding is decreased it means we can't do as much mitigation. That's really what hurts us.
- Legislation in general seems to not consider the realities of administering the program.
- Congress wants to see allocated funds go out the door as soon as possible.
- Some applications are not even approved until a year or more after the period of performance started for PDM. They're not even due until a year or 18 months after the declaration in HMGP.
- Legislation keeps making the regulations more complicated which then requires longer time periods for application development. The best thing to happen to these programs for our state was the BCA waiver for floodplain acquisitions and elevations under a certain cost.
- The changing application dates and dollars amounts of FMA and PDM make it difficult to develop a rhythm with local applicants as we never know when or what is coming.

- The new administrations war on science and regulations is negatively impacting our state's long-term planning. With a failure to recognize climate change...flooding and resulting flood damages will simply get worse. Eliminating the new Federal Executive Order on FPM was literally insane!

Summary:

- Region 5 States should lobby their congressional delegation to support an increase in FMA and PDM Funding;
- Region 5 States should lobby their congressional delegation to support making Acquisition/Demolition a top priority for FY18 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Applications;
- Region 5 states should lobby their congressional delegation to support incentivizing the Disaster Assistance Program so that progressive states who have mitigated much of their at-risk structures can still qualify for a Presidential Disaster Declaration and be rewarded for their efforts. States that have not embraced mitigation SHOULD NOT be rewarded for their failure to act.

12. Are you implementing programs in your state that others could learn from?

Comments:

- We start the EHP review process for FEMA by obtaining consultations from a variety of agencies. That usually speeds up the approval process.
- SHARPP system that is used for the required open monitoring.
- We strictly enforce substantial damage. It is obvious that some states simply ignore substantial damage.

Summary:

Several states are implementing programs that could be very useful to the other states within the region. Success stories should be shared for the benefit of other Region 5 states and provided to FEMA Region V to support our position that Region 5 states have greater capabilities and that those capabilities should be embraced for the greater good of the region.

13. Have you rolled out new Hazard Mitigation Plans that change how you do things in your state?

Comments:

- Yes, we've included climate change implications in many of our decision-making processes. We've also consolidated the HMP risk assessment and the THIRA, which has turned into a great document.
- No, but we are in the process of updating our current SHMP and intend to make the document primarily digital and tied in through ESRI arc online.

Summary:

FEMA may want to consider standardization of State Hazard Mitigation Plans; what should and should not be included. Consolidating the SHMP and THIRA into a single document as done in one of our Region 5 states is something that should be considered by other states.

14. How many of the counties in your state have DFIRMs 10 years old or older?**Comments:**

IL – 14	IN - 3
MI – N.A.	MN – N.A.
OH – N.A.	WI – N.A.

Summary:

Map Modernization/Risk Map Program is failing to keep DFIRMs updated every five years for communities in Region 5. The mapping update process is burdensome and complicated and could be administered much more efficiently at the state level; at least for Region 5 states that have the capability to administer such program.

15. Do you have any counties in your state that still have old FIRMs that have not been updated?**Comments:**

IL – 18	IN – 4*
MI – N.A.	MN – N.A.
OH – Yes	WI – Yes; in low flood-risk areas

*Each is in the mapping process, but updates have been delayed due to levee issues

Summary:

The fact that several of our states have old FIRMs that have not been updated is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE! Mapping updates MUST be coordinated with each state. The fact that Region 5 states have communities who are still using FIRMs only reinforces the fact that FEMA MUST START RECOGNIZING STATES CAPABILITIES AND EMBRACE THEM.

16. Are there organizations or agencies in your state that you are working with or struggle to work with when implementing programs in your state?

Comments:

- Generally, no. There is always an occasional community that is lacking in their administration of their NFIP responsibilities. Typically, they are the communities without zoning and without requirements for permitting development other than those found in their floodplain ordinance.
- Our biggest struggle is with local governments. Local communities are unable or unwilling to provide the required 25% local match for mitigation grants.
- We are increasingly realizing that social networks are an important component of buyouts and mitigation projects. Many of the most flood-prone areas are also low income. Finding comparable housing is important to the success of a projects.

Summary:

In general, the struggle with implementing floodplain management programs is attributed to local communities that refuse to properly administer/enforce their NFIP responsibilities and furthermore, are unable or unwilling to provide the required 25% local match for mitigation grants. FEMA Region V staff should support state officials when addressing a community's deficiencies.

17. ANYTHING else you want to share? You know your state, so you know what's important, needs assistance with or is interesting.

Comments:

- We've been having trouble with FEMA's transparency with their process, especially with EHP reviews. If we know what the holdup is, a lot of the time we have a contact or can reach out directly to an agency to resolve a problem.
- FEMA needs to recognize the gap between good state and not-so-good states.
- Give more autonomy to the good states; provide more oversight to the poor states.
- Focus on flood-loss reduction rather than widget gathering!

Summary:

Region 5 states capabilities are some of the best in the nation and FEMA Region V should recognize this fact and embrace it by allowing our "good" states to administer such programs as Flood Mitigation and Mapping. Generally, FEMA delegates much of its work to private contractors unfamiliar

with our region, which has not worked well. The capabilities of Region 5 states should be respected and utilized to improve efficiencies in the mitigation and mapping programs.