

Association of State Floodplain Managers

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ASFPM Region 10 Status Report



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Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska

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Introduction and Regional Overview

The ASFPM Region 10 area includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. The only ASFPM chapter or floodplain management association in Region 10 is the Northwest Floodplain Management Association, which covers all four states and the province of British Columbia. NORFMA holds an annual conference, several state specific mini-conferences, and sponsors multiple training opportunities each year. The conference this year will be in Bellingham, Washington in late September.

Overview of events for the past year. The [Floodplains by Design](#) program in Washington is currently being funded by the Legislature for another two years with \$35,500,000 for projects throughout the state that not only reduce the risk of flooding, but provide increased habitat for endangered salmon and other species. The Nature Conservancy and Puget Sound Partnership partner with the State Department of Ecology to administer the program and assist in the review of grant proposals.

On April 14, 2016 the Seattle office of the National Marine Fisheries Service issued their final Biological Opinion, <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/habitat/conservation/index.html>, on the impacts of the NFIP on endangered fish species within Oregon.

The opinion contains NOAA's Reasonable and Prudent for modifications to the NFIP within Oregon that are necessary to prevent harm to endangered species or their habitat.

Region 10 Priorities

National Flood Insurance Program reform, especially given the recent Biologic Opinion for Oregon, is a topic of great interest within the region. The BiOP recommends FEMA to include erosion zones on new maps and change many of the minimum requirements of the NFIP. These are all potential issues in the coming reauthorization.

- **ESA issues.** There are continuing concerns and confusion regarding the Oregon BiOp – How DLCD listening sessions will be “heard” by FEMA and NMFS, how implementation will really happen, and if it will be consistent or haphazard.
- **Floodplains by Design.** The state of Washington continues to implement the Floodplains by Design program. FbD is a grant program for projects that combine flood risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, agricultural viability and other benefits. Washington 2018-19 Capital Budget provided \$35 million for seven projects. FbD projects can include the setting back and strengthening of levees, acquisition of flood-prone land for ecosystem restoration and recreation, removal of flood-prone buildings and vegetation restoration. FbD projects have also moved a biodigester project forward (with agricultural and water quality benefits) and funded a large-scale erosion control project.
- **CAP-SSSE.** Washington continues to support implementation of the NFIP through the Community Assistance Program-State Supported Services Element of the program. We have been encouraged by much of the discussion in the CAP-SSSE Evaluation Findings and Recommendations. However, some issues still need further consideration.

It is clear that FEMA wants to improve record keeping related to the CAP-SSSE program. While this is entirely understandable, FEMA’s database for CAP-SSSE, the Community Information System has been an unwieldy vehicle for the task. While being mindful of the improvements that have been made to CIS in recent years, consideration needs to be given to the volume of information that could be entered into the system. The data input tasks in CIS need to be streamlined in order to expand the use of the system significantly. A more efficient system for data input needs to be developed.

The long-term funding level for CAP-SSSE continues to be a concern. State costs continue to rise. Increased state costs in the face of static CAP-SSSE funding levels squeezes the state work program. Static funding levels will increasingly force states to only focus on basic work activities.

- **Mapping.** New County-wide DFIRMs, include reactions from “finally!” to “what?” and ongoing concerns regarding mapping of levees and how to communicate residual risk are concerns for many communities within the region. Paper map inventories aren’t on our radar to be eliminated, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t an issue. TMAC hasn’t been forgotten either, and there have been queries regarding integrating several of the topics listed here (levees, riverine erosion hazard areas, CMZs, and coastal climate changes) into RiskMAP, since Christine Shirley (OR) was on the original TMAC.
- **Irrigation Districts.** How their policies and requirements under state law might impact FEMA funding, insurance and even participation by communities or states is a concern. In Idaho, irrigation districts are believed to be exempt from obtaining permits, including flood permits. This is a concern with FEMA Region X as they believe the districts are not exempt and the state

needs to require them to obtain permits. Discussions are ongoing between the region, FEMA HQ and the state of Idaho to attempt to resolve this issue.

- **Erosion Hazards.** Idaho, eastern Oregon and eastern Washington have all discussed ongoing concerns regarding riverine erosion hazards in arid regions, with discussions growing after the Grand Rapids conference and the publication of the ASFPM white paper. Lack of insurance, and channel migration without overbank flooding are the primary issues, but flash flooding in arroyos is also mentioned.
 - Several NORFMA members have joined the Riverine Erosion Hazards teleconference, sponsored by the NBF committee, which is getting selected traction from pockets around the country. Taunnie Boothby specifically mentioned this issue as a concern for Alaska and many communities within the state.
- **Wild Fires.** Increased flood risk following wild fires is a common concern among members, particularly in our arid regions. We're asking a lot of questions, all recognizing the increased hazard of flooding and mud/debris flows, but we don't have a very good handle on what else to do about the issue aside from stronger communication and community outreach. We don't seem to be talking about changing zoning and/or building permit requirements in deep mountain/timber areas yet.
- There is some interest in the USACE's development of guidance on Natural and Nature-based Infrastructure in Fluvial Systems as part of their tool kit for risk reduction. It appears as if it may be proposed as an international guidance document and they are soliciting input from around the world.
- **Climate change.** While climate change is being minimized in the current national political debate, it remains a key concern in Region 10. Ongoing research at the UW Climate Impacts Group is being actively sought by King, Skagit and Snohomish Counties, among others. Sea level rise; coastal impacts; changes in the magnitude, frequency and spatial and temporal distribution of precipitation; changes in snow pack and the timing of snow melt; changes in peak floods and in reservoir operations are all being discussed. Again, coastal impacts and sea level rise are key concerns mentioned by coastal communities in Alaska.
- **Salmon Habitat.** Finally, the 10-year report card on the improvement in salmon habitat and fisheries in the Pacific Northwest was released recently. It gave our efforts a less than stellar grade. As a result, efforts to revitalize and improve salmon restoration are important news items in the region, especially in western Washington. The Snoqualmie Watershed Forum and the local Farm-Fish-Flood initiative is starting on Version 2.0 to break down barriers and begin to implement the first of the 46 recommendations of the first three year effort. Healthy salmon, successful farms and flood protection are all being used as indicators of improving community health in what is admittedly a fairly liberal, environmentally-friendly region. Many of our local FPMs are trying to see their concerns for improving community flood resilience through a wider lens, and realizing that it is easier to get someone to consider your point of view if you consider theirs.

- **CRS**

- CRS is alive and well within Region 10. Of the 85 communities within the region participating in CRS, three counties have achieved a Class 2 standing and another 14 communities are Class 5. Approximately 18 communities are visited each year.

Recommended Actions

Based on input from the NFIP coordinators within the region and various other floodplain management professionals, the following goals and recommendations are made for the next year:

- ASFPM should continue to promote NFIP reform that will ensure sound floodplain management policies. ASFPM should review the actions within the BiOP and determine which actions we support as smart floodplain management.
- FEMA needs to ensure it is fully staffed to meet the training and enforcement needs associated with the Puget Sound BiOP and the recent Oregon BiOP. Additional funding should be provided to both states so they can better assist in performing CAVs and relevant training.
- Funding for flood maps in accordance with the ASFPM publication, "[Flood Mapping for the Nation](#)." Because of the multiple uses of FIRMS for planning and other uses, it is unreasonable to expect just policyholders to pay for all mapping.
- There is a trend to provide outreach and training to areas after a disaster. We need to fund more outreach and training prior to disasters so communities are can better implement their existing ordinances and better respond to disasters.