



Association of State Floodplain Managers, Inc.

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ASFPM Policy Statement: Priorities for Social Justice

The Association of State Floodplain Managers' (ASFPM) purpose for establishing a Social Justice policy rests upon three distinct desires:

1. To make floodplain management a more integrated, diverse, and inclusive field;
2. To explicitly incorporate concepts and practices of social and environmental justice¹ into ASFPM's policies, and examine ways in which the organization can become a more inclusive and diverse body of floodplain managers and professionals that better reflects and engages the people and communities facing disproportionate impacts from flooding; and
3. To advance social and environmental justice in floodplain management and flood hazard mitigation policies and programs.

ASFPM does not support or condone discrimination against people based on race, color, ethnicity, place of origin, economic well-being, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, disability, or social standing. ASFPM also recognizes the existence of past and current governmental and floodplain management policies and practices that may have contributed to inequities. These policies and practices have at times increased flood risk for disadvantaged communities, made flood preparation and recovery efforts more difficult, and impeded access to mitigation programs. To address these problems, ASFPM seeks to collaborate with floodplain managers and flood professionals to identify and promote the needs of socially and economically vulnerable communities, and to advocate for flood-safe and equitable outcomes. Socially vulnerable communities, including Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), bear a disproportionate share of the impacts of flooding in the United States.

Examples of the ways in which socially vulnerable communities are more susceptible and exposed to flood risk than other communities include, but are not limited to:

- Low-income and minority communities are often located in areas with higher exposure to flooding, due to legacy impacts of discriminatory housing policies (e.g., red-lining²)
- Communities with limited budgets or capacity to hire or contract floodplain expertise may not be able to address flooding and/or mitigate flooding issues.

¹ Social Justice is equal rights and equitable treatment for all. Environmental justice is an integral part of social justice, concerned with the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

² Red-lining is a discriminatory practice that puts services (financial and otherwise) out of reach for residents of certain areas based on race and ethnicity. It can be seen in the systematic denial of mortgages, insurance, loans, and other financial services based on location rather than on an individual's qualifications and creditworthiness (Investopedia definition). Made illegal in the United States by The Fair Housing Act of 1968.

- Socially vulnerable individuals and communities, people with disabilities, and previously incarcerated persons are less likely to be included in flood and emergency planning processes and their needs may not be considered in flood mitigation or response plans.
- Socially vulnerable communities are more likely to be located near less desirable lands, such as hazardous waste sites, landfills, power plants, and industrial sites that can contaminate floodwater—creating additional safety hazards during a flood.
- Socially vulnerable communities are more prone to displacement post flooding events as they have a more difficult time meeting federal cost-share requirements to access infrastructure investments, as well as federal mitigation grants.
- Socially vulnerable communities may be less able to leave during a flooding event and may lack sufficient emergency shelters. Additionally, emergency shelters and transportation options may also not be equipped to meet the diverse needs of all community members, including persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+³ individuals.

Although many factors driving inequity in the United States are beyond the specific responsibilities of floodplain managers, some current floodplain management policies can exacerbate the cycle of inequity in our country. Careful consideration of social, economic, and environmental inequities in floodplain management practices provides an opportunity to advance equity and build resilience for all communities, especially the most vulnerable. ASFPM therefore seeks to actively promote social and environmental justice in all floodplain management related practices.

Leadership

As leaders in floodplain management, ASFPM proactively seeks to ensure all individuals at risk of flooding are treated equitably and have equal opportunity to be aware of, prepare for, respond to, and recover from floods. As an organization, ASFPM will actively promote and support inclusive, equitable, and just floodplain management policies and practices at all levels of government. This approach will improve equitable outcomes so that all community members, especially those who are most vulnerable, and their needs, are represented and prioritized in our profession, practice, policy development, and decision making.

A New Approach

ASFPM supports the right for all groups of people to have a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Therefore, ASFPM commits to prioritizing social and environmental justice by examining current policies and practices in the field of floodplain management, and actively offering and promoting recommendations for changes to any that perpetuate injustices or inequities in floodplain management. ASFPM also commits to work at all levels of government, including non-profits and the private sector, to ensure that social and environmental justice is a major tenet of our shared efforts.

ASFPM commits to cultivating diversity, promoting equity, and fostering inclusion among our members and within the floodplain management community by:

1. Developing and adopting a framework for assessing racial and socio-economic equity in our organization, and in our decision-making processes and policy positions;

³ LGBTQIA+: Those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual (and ally), plus other orientations and identities.

2. Continuing existing and establishing new partnerships with related professions, partner organizations, and impacted communities to achieve social and environmental justice in floodplain management;
3. Committing to organizational learning and providing educational and training opportunities on social and environmental justice issues for ASFPM members
4. Listening to, learning from, amplifying, and working with socially vulnerable communities that are disproportionately impacted by floods;
5. Supporting increased accessibility of flood related communication in languages and media formats to meet the needs of socially vulnerable communities;
6. Supporting and promoting policy changes that will result in more equitable distribution of flood-related financial resources and mitigation benefits;
7. Promoting solutions that consider, assess, and engage vulnerable populations where social or environmental justice may be an issue.

As a national organization dedicated to reducing flood losses for all communities in the nation and promoting the natural and beneficial use of floodplains, ASFPM embraces this policy on social justice and the accountability that it demands. We commit to working with our members, leadership, and policy committees to ensure that our mission, vision, values, and daily practices reflect the principles of social and environmental justice within the context of floodplain management.