



FEMA

## Community Coordination & Outreach Meeting Notes Pocahontas County and Incorporated Areas, West Virginia

April 18, 2024  
3:00PM

### Welcome and Introductions

- Introductions were made for the presenters of the meeting:
  - Tim Keaton, West Virginia State NFIP/CTP Coordinator
  - Sarah K. Bowen, AICP, PP, CFM, RSC3 Deputy
  - Kurt Donaldson, GISP, CFM, GIS Senior Program Manager, WV GIS Technical Center (WVGISTC)
- Agenda Overview
  - Welcome & Introductions
  - Where We Are – Preliminary Maps
  - Impacts
  - Floodplain Management
  - Public Outreach
  - What Should You Do
  - Questions and Discussion
- The meeting was attended by 10 local representatives, 1 reporter, and 4 State and Federal partners. Please refer to the attendee list at the end of this document.

### Presentation

#### *Where We Are - Preliminary Maps*

- Timeline for Pocahontas County and Incorporated Areas
  - Effective FIRM (Redelineation) – November 2010
  - Risk MAP Study Notification – May 2021
  - Risk MAP Kick-off Meeting – June 2021
  - Flood Risk Review (FRR) Meeting – December 9, 2022
  - Preliminary Maps – March 4, 2024
  - Community Coordination & Outreach Meeting – April 18, 2024
  - Appeal Period – Summer 2024 to 90-days after appeal start
  - FEMA issues LFD – Winter 2024
  - Final Maps Become Effective – 6 months after LFD
- Format of the Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and associated report/database is updated – where 1% flood elevations are published with modeled cross-sections and additional cross-sections, hydrologic calculations, and additional data layers are accessible in the geodatabase.

- Preliminary products and current effective flood maps and Flood Risk Products (FRP) are available on FEMA’s Mapping Service Center (MSC) at [www.msc.fema.gov](http://www.msc.fema.gov). MSC provides FIRM backup data and information as well as historic mapping products. The new FRPs will be populated when the maps become effective.
- Digital flood hazard data can be viewed and downloaded from the National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) – effective and preliminary products as well as the **FEMA R3 “Changes Since Last FIRM” (CSLF) Viewer**: <https://arcg.is/bz8SCO> for visual depiction for areas of change (note: online maps have various scale dependencies and displayed information will change as zoomed in). Digital flood hazard data may also be viewed on the West Virginia Flood Tool at <https://www.mapwv.gov/flood/map>.
- The State NFIP/CTP Coordinator shared that letters were sent to Repetitive Loss property owners throughout WV to share that funding is available for a Swift Current grant from FEMA for mitigation. The timeline for the applications is quick or swift and due in May. Property owners that reach out to communities or county can be forwarded to state for information on applying for this important grant.

### **Impacts**

- A recap of the preliminary study was discussed. The new study includes 80 miles of updated detailed (Zone AE) analysis, 442 miles of model-backed approximate (Zone A) analysis, and new topographic data for modeling and mapping.
- WVGISTC provided a summary of refined analysis of flooding impacts, including:
  - Impacted Buildings and Facilities
  - High Damage Loss Estimates
  - High Flood Depth Impacts

**Note:** *The WVGISTC analysis uses different analysis than the County Dashboards. The Dashboards use national data sets that estimate a higher number of buildings than the locally shared data used by WVGISTC.*

- The Countywide Dashboard for **Pocahontas County** was reviewed and includes information about the flood risk to people and structures as well as flood insurance policy and claim information. Information shared included:
  - There are more buildings expected to be mapped into the SFHA than mapped out. About 380 structures are expected to be newly mapped into the regulatory floodplain, and 295 are expected to be mapped out.
    - Mapped In: Along the East Fork of the Greenbrier River near Barlow
    - Mapped Out: Along Route 219 near Buckeye
  - Most properties in the effective SFHA are not insured. Within the effective SFHA, there are approximately 907 structures and 173 National Flood Insurance Program policies.
- A brief history of flooding in Pocahontas County was discussed, showing that the County has experienced approximately 55 flood events from 1996 – 2019, and 19 flood-related presidential disaster declarations since 1953. Pocahontas County has received \$163,607 in federal funding for a total of 17 projects.
- Previously issued Letters of Map Change (LOMCs) are evaluated in relation to the revised Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). Categorization for the previous determinations (e.g., to be revalidated or to be superseded) are presented on the Preliminary Summary of Map Actions (SOMAs) which is sent with the Preliminary FIRMs. A copy of the Final SOMA will be sent in conjunction with the subsequent Letter of Final Determination, and all applicable LOMCs that qualify for revalidation will be listed on a single Revalidation Letter that is sent to the community (and posted on the FEMA Map Service Center) shortly before the new effective date.

### ***Floodplain Management***

- Communities can regulate to higher standards (such as regulating to the 0.2% annual chance flood or a buffer of the SFHA). Higher standards can contribute to greater resiliency as well as incremental premium discounts for communities that participate in the Community Rating System.
- The local communities must adopt compliant floodplain ordinances and have them approved prior to the effective date of the new maps. Communities can be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) if the compliant floodplain ordinances have not been adopted prior to the effective maps being issued. Communities should not only factor in time for local procedural requirements, but also time for state review before being forwarded to FEMA.
- Communities are recommended to initiate ordinance review/update prior to the Letter of Final Determination (LFD), particularly in the context of higher standards, but must wait for the LFD to formally adopt.

### ***Public Outreach***

- Outreach and resources for property owners:
  - Community outreach following the release of preliminary products is an important phase of a Risk MAP project, and can be accomplished through a variety of outreach activities at the community's discretion, including an in-person or virtual Public Open House meeting, community newsletters, social media posts, mailings, door hangers, etc.
  - FEMA provides a variety of resources to assist locally directed outreach efforts, including a "Local Officials Toolkit" (PDF attached with meeting materials, [FEMA Flood Risk Communication Video Series](#), [FEMA Flood Risk Communication Toolkit for Community Officials](#), and various brochures.
  - Property owners are advised to contact their insurance agents, call the FMIX at 1-877-336-2627, or visit the following websites for additional information: [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program), [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov), or [WV Flood Tool \(mapwv.gov\)](http://WV Flood Tool (mapwv.gov)) for additional information.

### ***What Should You Do***

- Community Action Items
  - Review Preliminary Maps and the Summary of Map Actions (SOMA).
  - Comment on Preliminary information.
  - Appeal Preliminary Maps if desired.
  - Reach out to community members.
  - Wait for the Letter of Final Determination (LFD) before adopting a floodplain management ordinance.
- FEMA will initiate a statutory 90-day appeal period, including a proposed notice in the Federal Register, 2 legal classified ads in a local newspaper of record, and a supplemental press release to other media outlets that communities identify.
- The Appeal Period is anticipated for Summer 2024.
- FEMA will send a detailed letter to community officials (chief executive and floodplain administrator) shortly before the legal classified notices in the local newspaper.
- Appeals must be submitted by community officials during the 90-day appeal period (on behalf of the community and/or private property owners) and must include scientific or technical data that demonstrates a revision to the preliminary information would be warranted.

## Points of Contact

FEMA Region 3	
Vinod Mahat Project Officer (202) 664-9597 <a href="mailto:Vinod.mahat@fema.dhs.gov">Vinod.mahat@fema.dhs.gov</a>	Elizabeth Ranson Mitigation Planning Specialist (215) 347-0686 <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.ranson@fema.dhs.gov">Elizabeth.ranson@fema.dhs.gov</a>
Bill Bradfield, CFM Flood Insurance Outreach Specialist (202) 880-5906 <a href="mailto:william.b.bradfield@fema.dhs.gov">william.b.bradfield@fema.dhs.gov</a>	
Mapping Partner	
David Cooper Study Manager (703) 964-1189 <a href="mailto:David.r.cooper@wsp.com">David.r.cooper@wsp.com</a>	
State NFIP Office	
Tim W. Keaton, CFM State NFIP Coordinator (304) 414-7659 <a href="mailto:Tim.w.keaton@wv.gov">Tim.w.keaton@wv.gov</a>	Kurt Donaldson, GISP, CFM Floodplain Program Planner (304) 293-9467 <a href="mailto:Kurt.donaldson@mail.wvu.edu">Kurt.donaldson@mail.wvu.edu</a>

- Map Specialists are available at the FEMA Mapping and Insurance eXchange (FMIX) to assist with any questions about flood maps and a wide range of related technical subjects and can be reached at 1-877-FEMA MAP or [FEMAMapSpecialist@riskmapcds.com](mailto:FEMAMapSpecialist@riskmapcds.com).

## Questions/Comments

- County concern about new development on US-219 impacting the floodplain in Town of Marlinton.
  - State shared that it is local responsibility to ensure development does not cause rise in floodway.
- County concern about proximity of the Pocahontas County Court to the floodplain.
  - Viewed 900 10th Ave, Marlinton, WV on the Changes Since Last FIRM layer and it is in an area where the floodplain decreased.
- Community comment that it is difficult to enforce 3 feet of freeboard when right across the street someone can build at ground level because they are just outside the floodplain. The difference confuses residents.
  - State shared that freeboard makes people safer especially with larger storms expected. As a floodplain manager it is best to encourage building outside of the floodplain.
- Community shared that residents have been exceeding the BFE by 6-8 feet based on flood insurance recommendations.
  - State shared that the model floodplain ordinance currently recommends 2 feet of freeboard and that it is moving to 3 feet of freeboard in soon to be shared update. Additional freeboard increases safety and can help decrease insurance premiums.

- County and communities shared that it is difficult to get surveyors to complete Elevation Certificate in the county.
- WVGISTC shared that they are a resource for sending letters to local properties. They will prepare letters and send to communities to review and mail the letters locally.
- County shared that it is challenging to know during a disaster if deployed resources will be reimbursed from a disaster declaration or if the Pocahontas County will be responsible for the cost.
  - State shared that it often takes 72 hours or more after a disaster to know if there will be a Presidential Disaster Declaration.
- County concern about proximity of the Pocahontas County 911 Center to the floodplain.
  - Viewed 1008 Jury St, Marlinton, WV on the Changes Since Last FIRM layer and it is in an area where the floodplain decreased. It is still very close to floodplain and County could pursue moving to be able to access and be less flood-prone during a flood event as a critical facility.
  - State recommended County reach out to talking to David Ho about EMPG grant for the 911 Center and follow-up with Congressperson and Senators to support local projects and grants.
- County asked if FEMA funding supports cameras for emergency management.
  - State recommended following up with the State Hazard Mitigation Officer on best funding stream.
- County and community concern about the impact of fill on the floodplain in Town of Marlinton.
  - State shared that it is local responsibility to ensure development does not cause rise in floodway. Town of Marlinton has been participating in the NFIP since 1974. If the community permitted fill in floodplain, they could have a could have violation.
  - FEMA has been developing a national violation tracker that will mean consequences if communities are not regulating to their ordinance.
- Is there another community in a similar situation to Town of Marlinton?
  - State shared that Town of Marlinton has one of if not the most impact from an increase in floodway in West Virginia.
- State emphasized that the Swift Current grant is available now for mitigation and the FEMA mitigation grants have grown and are available to support communities and county.
- County and community concern for a nursing home in Town of Marlinton and the quality of their evacuation plan.
- County and community concern for Knapps Creek and the impact on the Town of Marlinton. They are looking into a DEP watershed group to support the clean-up of the creek and to complete flood mitigation along the stream. USACE is currently investigating Knapp Creek.
  - PTS shared that Town of Marlinton could have success in pursuing a BRIC grant that priorities mitigation projects that impact a large number of properties

- There was a robust conversation during the CCO meeting on the comments submitted at and after the Flood Risk Review (FRR) meeting December 9, 2022. These comments shared concerns on the Tannery, the Library, and other locations. The previously shared comment responses are summarized in the following bullets:
  - Comment 1 – Former Tannery site historically has not been inundated during flood events – check for accuracy.
    - The last time this area was studied was in the 1980s. That study used flows (the amount of water passing a certain point during a flood) that were much lower than what the new data shows. This study uses flows that are seen at a stream gage just upstream of the Tannery site. When we plug in the old flows to the model, the results are roughly the same as what shows in the effective data. What this means is that we have better data now on the amount of water that is running through this area during a flood. Because the stream gage data shows more water flowing during a flood event, the increased amount of water will need a place to go and will naturally spread out over the land more. This is represented by expanded floodplain boundaries on the new maps.
  - Comment 2 -McClintic Library is shown in the flood zone even though building is elevated – please review lidar for inaccuracies.
    - Sometimes when lidar is processed there are areas where the ground elevation cannot be detected because things are blocking the sensors view of the ground (tree cover in this case). When this happens, the surrounding known areas are looked at and the known elevations are stretched across unknown areas. This appears to be what has happened here. WSP created a digital elevation model where we only looked at known data and used that to redraw the floodplain. The floodplain no longer intrudes into the center of the library structure.
  - Comment 3 – Pocahontas County Parks and Rec Center – Constructed with fill now shown in floodplain/floodway.
    - A LOMR (Letter of Map Revision) is required when fill is placed in the floodplain. In order to have the best information to address this comment, WSP asked for the LOMR information from the community. As of yet WSP has not received any information.
  - Comment 4 & 5 - Structures on 5th Avenue in Marlinton are to be razed this calendar year. Requested to review whether that action will have a mitigating impact on the surrounding floodplain.
    - WSP removed these structures in the model and reran it. No change in the floodplain or floodway was observed by removing the structures.
  - Comment 6 - Floodway boundaries have expanded within the Town of Marlinton. Review entire town floodway for accuracy.
    - WSP was able to make minor tweaks to decrease the size of the floodway here without causing increases elsewhere. Like the Tannery site above, the main driver of the increases in the size of the floodplain and floodway in the Town of Marlinton is an increase in flows. The new data, which replaced data from the 1980s, shows much more water flowing during a flood event. The increase in water flow is represented by the expanded floodplain and floodway boundaries on the new maps.

## Attendee List

Community/Agency	First Name	Last Name	Title	Attended
Pocahontas County	Walt	Hemlick	President, Commissioners	Yes
Pocahontas County	John	Rebinski	Commissioner	Yes
Pocahontas County	Jamie	Walker	Commissioner	Yes
Pocahontas County	Melissa	Bennet	County Clerk	Yes
Pocahontas County/ Town of Hillsboro	Donald	McNeel	Floodplain Coordinator	Yes
Pocahontas County	Scott	Triplet	Incoming Floodplain Coordinator	Yes
Pocahontas County	Michael	O'Brien	911/EM	Yes
Pocahontas County	Kevin	Stitzinger	911/EM	Yes
Town of Durbin	David	Cain	Floodplain Manager	Yes
Town of Marlinton	Bruce	Van Meter	Floodplain Manager	Yes
Allegheny Mountain Radio	Tim	Walker	Reporter	Yes
State NFIP (WVEM)	Tim	Keaton	State NFIP Coordinator	Yes
WVGISTC	Kurt	Donaldson	GIS Senior PM	Yes
WVGISTC	Eric	Hopkins	GIS Specialist	Yes
PTS (ARC)	Sarah	Bowen	Study Contractor	Yes