

WATERSHED BASED FLOODPLAIN COORDINATION AND OUTREACH

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The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is the state's National Flood Insurance Program coordinating agency. As such, DEC is responsible for working with communities to help them maintain full compliance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program requirements. In return for federally backed flood insurance being available within a municipality, the town, city or village agrees to pass and enforce local requirements to reduce the risk of flooding to new and substantially improved development. DEC undertakes its responsibilities through community visits and other contacts, workshops, local law assistance and technical assistance. DEC also works with FEMA and local communities to help plan and adopt new flood maps.

After the 2006 floods, state agencies including DEC focused flood related activities on areas hit hard by those floods, including the Mohawk Basin. FEMA was able to access additional funding to develop a series of flood advisory maps in the Mohawk, Delaware and Susquehanna basins. As part of FEMA's flood map modernization effort, FEMA prioritized counties in the Mohawk Basin, including Montgomery, Herkimer and Oneida Counties, for development of updated digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps. DEC, under a Cooperating Technical Partner arrangement with FEMA, undertook county-wide flood mapping for Schenectady County.

The Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map products are not yet complete for Herkimer and Montgomery Counties. However, when the new products are delivered, there will be a need for outreach to affected communities to help them properly use the maps for floodplain development and planning purposes. In order to assist with that effort, DEC obtained a competitive grant from FEMA to utilize new digital mapping products to provide tools for communities to better manage their flood risk.

The project is just getting underway. Deliverables include the following:

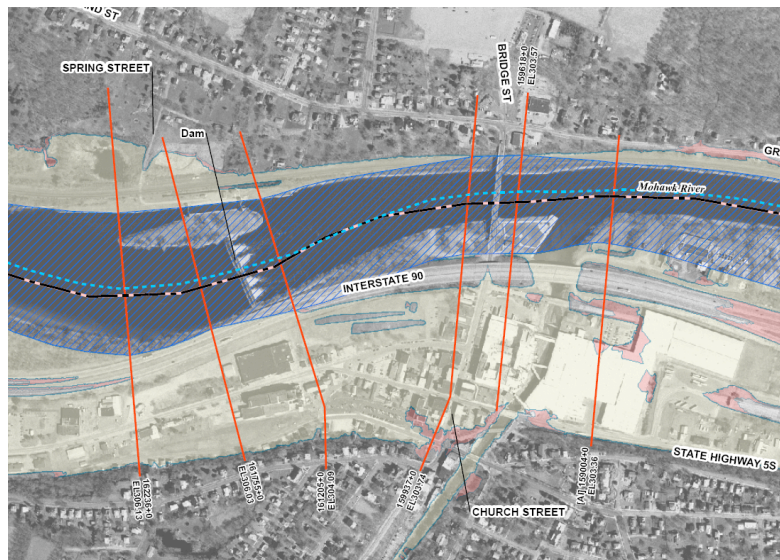
- Utilize either preliminary or final digital Flood Insurance Rate Map data, or digital data from FEMA's flood advisory maps, to evaluate the number and types of structures that are at risk from floods of different magnitudes.
- Utilize historic flood information to evaluate community losses from flooding.
- Evaluate natural flood storage areas, including wetlands, that if preserved would help to reduce future flood losses.
- Identify properties most at risk for future flood damages and develop a prioritized list of properties for future flood mitigation efforts. Include an analysis of critical facilities that, if flooded, present a danger to human life or health, a long term risk to the regional economy, or a significant pollution hazard.
- Evaluate source areas for erosion and sedimentation that contribute to poor water quality that can be mitigated through appropriate floodplain and land use measures.
- Provide materials in the form of flood mitigation approaches that local communities may utilize as part of their hazard mitigation plans.
- Develop outreach materials for state, county and local government agencies, and for the general public. Materials for government agencies should include specific steps that can be taken within the Mohawk Basin to reduce future flood damages. Materials for the general public should include steps that residents and businesses could take to reduce the physical and financial threats of flood damage.
- The techniques and information materials developed will focus on the Mohawk River

Basin, but should be easily adapted to other watersheds.

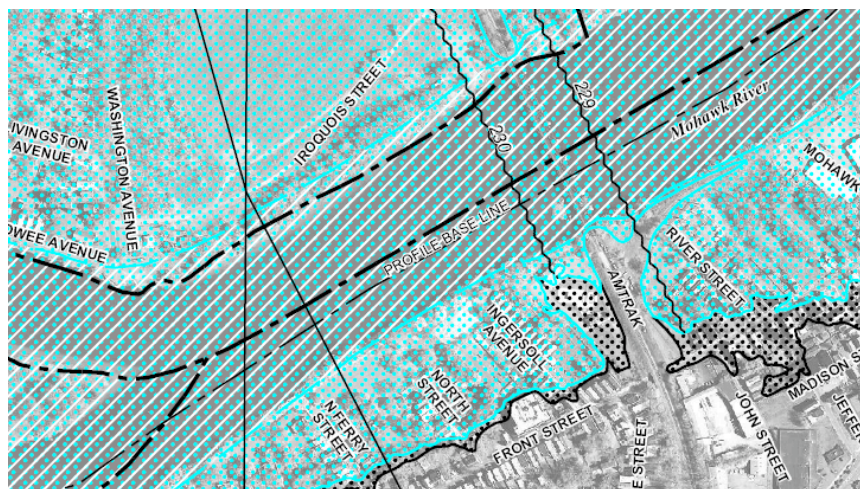
In developing this proposal for funding, the DEC Floodplain Management Section recognizes that it is unlikely that structural flood control measures can be developed that significantly reduce the risk of flooding to Mohawk River communities. Non-structural approaches, such as land use planning, flood-proofing or elevating buildings, and maintaining natural floodplains as much as possible, are a more effective, as well as cost effective way to minimize future flood damages. We also recognize that there are overlaps between water quality management approaches and flood risk reduction approaches. For example, wetland preservation helps improve water quality while absorbing flood

waters. Poor land development techniques can lead to erosion, increasing sedimentation downstream, and increasing flood risk while degrading water quality.

A key component of the project will be a series of coordination and outreach meetings. A kick off meeting will be held with key state, county and regional officials. There will also be a symposium at which findings will be presented. Finally, there will be a session for the general public. We hope that the process will result in accurate and useful information for government bodies and the general public so that the nature of flooding is better understood and steps can be taken to minimize the future impact of flooding. Floods cannot be stopped. However, the devastation that floods bring can be reduced.



Flood Advisory Map, Montgomery County



Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map, Schenectady County