



Doing Something About the Floods

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

De Witt County, Illinois



DeWitt County, IL – Located in the heart of central Illinois, the town of Clinton is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the nation. While trying to maintain productivity, the town has to contend with floods. The city has a total area of 2.7 square miles, all of it land, with about 2,500 acres draining to the northeast of Clinton. So why is flooding an issue? It is attributed to the Goose and Coon Creeks overflowing into the floodplain.

Goose Creek drains into a reservoir located at an old railroad yard. Years ago, that was a way to collect water for the steam engines. Through the years, the railroad yard filled in part of the reservoir, minimizing its capacity. Through modern improvements, farmers now drain their soils faster and more efficiently, thus, increasing the volume and velocity of water coming into the reservoir and then causing the reservoir to overflow.

Tim Followell, Administrative Assistant to the City Council, knows the town's flood history as far back as 1968 and recalls one particular episode.

"I always use the house that used to sit at the corner of Jefferson Street and Taylor Street as my example. The gentlemen that owned the house had to be picked up by boat," said Followell. "He was sitting on the peak of his roof, holding his TV. The single story house was all but four feet under water."

In 1993 and 1997, Clinton experienced flooding events. In the 1997 event, 54 parcels were affected. This same parcel area has flooded three times before in the past 29 years. It was the 1997 event that persuaded Clinton to consider buyouts as a means of mitigation.

Pointing out the buyouts on the city map, Followell said, "We saw it as a plus to permanently help those people by assisting them in finding better accommodations instead of putting them at risk whenever it [the floodwaters] decided to come back."

Homes in the affected area were valued, on the average, at \$55,000. The acquisition project acquired 40 homes, three commercial buildings, and 14 vacant lots. These acquisitions added to community green space.

"The owners knew they would not be allowed to re-build [in the same area] if flooding ever occurred again," said Followell.

There was one business owner who chose not to participate in the buyout. He was confronted with floodwaters again in June 2008. He reportedly received two to three feet of water in his building.

The total cost of the project was approximately \$2.1 million. Clinton received a grant of \$1.5 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to defray 75 percent of the cost. HMGP pays the 75 percent on approved projects that will prevent or reduce damage from storms and other natural hazards. These grants are made available for both public and private projects. The town also received a match of 25 percent through a State grant offered through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. These two opportunities made the City of Clinton a better place for all the residences in the floodprone areas.

The June 2008 flood event gave Followell an opportunity to boast about the success of the buyout project.

"I was standing at the corner of Warner and Main Street [a block from where some of the buyouts occurred]. The police chief and I were laying out barricades and making sure that people knew that the [flood]water was there," said Followell. "I looked at the chief and I said, 'You know, the buyouts worked!' For green space created by the buyout project, the water that's here today, it's virtually not impacting the residents. This is one of those 'one-day' events that wasn't bad to experience."

Continued Followell, "You always wonder when you do things like this [recommend buyouts]. Are you making any difference, and is it going to benefit everybody? Did it really help? But then, when you actually witness another flood and virtually walk away un-impacted, you know, it was well worth it!"

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Illinois**

County: **De Witt County**

City/Community: **Clinton**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Structure Type: **Wood Frame**

Activity/Project Start Date: **06/1998**

Activity/Project End Date: **05/1999**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Application/Project Number: **1188.005**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$1,043,100.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1112 , 05/06/1996**

Federal Disaster Year: **1996**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1771 , 06/24/2008**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.ready.illinois.gov>**

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



Tim Followell, Administrative Assistant to the City Council, locates buyouts on the city map



Green Space created from buyout project in Clinton, Illinois