



FEMA

Community Buy-In Helps City of Jackson Benefits

Jackson, OH - Unlike many of the communities which suffered major damage in the March 1997 flood, Jackson, Ohio, (population 6,700) is located more than 30 miles from the Ohio River in the state's hilly and scenic southeastern corner. The sources of its recurring flood problems are Horse Creek and Salt Lick Creek, two usually unthreatening streams that carry runoff from nearby high ground through the town on their way to the Ohio.

When the area around Jackson receives unusually heavy rains, as it did on March 1-2, 1997, both narrow, winding creeks often receive more rapid runoff from miles of surrounding hillsides than their banks can contain. Drainage and stream flows are impacted to some degree by upstream stretches of land formerly used for logging and strip mining, and the creeks also receive heavy runoff from recently widened stretches of U.S. Route 35--now a major four-lane highway.

Homes in several low-lying and poorly drained areas of the town suffered considerable damage in 1963, 1968 and again in 1975 when sustained spring rains took the creeks out of their banks. But according to Jackson city building projects coordinator Story Cool and Mayor Tom Evans, the March 1997 downpour and its aftermath caused "the worst flooding anyone around here can remember." One often-damaged area, roughly a half-mile square along Central Avenue and Freeman Street that suffered street flooding and standing water after even normal rains, was under so much moving water for so long during the '97 event that dozens of homes were destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

"FEMA and OEMA recovery teams arrived while the water was still receding, and set up a Disaster Recovery Center at the local Odd Lots store," said Evans. Once streets were re-opened, utilities were back in operation and debris removal underway, Evans said he and his service director met with OEMA Mitigation Branch staff in Columbus to learn about the HMGP program.

Evans noted that, at an early point in the planning process, several members of the committee strongly advocated that the best mitigation strategy would be to dredge the creek beds at several choke points. "We had experts from the Department of Natural Resources and Army Corps of Engineers come to the next meeting and listen to their suggestions. They explained that dredging wouldn't prevent flooding after heavy rains...just move it downstream another few hundred yards," said Evans. "They told us the real problem was that these creeks are going to overflow periodically no matter what you do, and that our most damaged neighborhood was going to keep on getting flooded because it sits smack in the middle of the natural floodplain."

After they got that information and were able to ask a few questions, Evans said even the strongest advocates of dredging backed away from that alternative and ultimately supported property acquisition as the best course of action.

The City of Jackson received a \$288,000 HMGP grant and state and local matching funds that allowed it to acquire 4 vacant lots and permanently remove 31 repetitively damaged structures from the flood-prone area along Central Avenue and Freeman Street.



Jackson County, Ohio



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)