



FEMA

Doing Something About the Floods

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.



De Witt County, Illinois



Quick Facts

- Year: **1996**
- Sector: **Public**
- Cost: **\$1,043,100.00 (Actual)**
- Primary Activity/Project: **Acquisition/Buyouts**
- Primary Funding: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**