



FEMA

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
PARTNERS IN SHAPING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) Fact Sheet: Minor Localized Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvement Projects

Environmental resources, cultural institutions, and historic assets define communities and contribute to their well-being and unique character. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plays a critical role in helping communities incorporate environmental stewardship and historic preservation into emergency management decisions. As disasters continue to challenge our nation and communities grapple with issues of preparedness and sustainability, FEMA offers expertise to ensure both legal compliance and informed local, State, Tribal, and national planning.

Minor Localized Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvement Projects and EHP Review

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) and Public Assistance (PA) programs provide funding following Presidential major disaster declarations for minor localized flood reduction and drainage improvement projects designed to reduce or eliminate long-term risk from flood hazards. HMA's Section 404 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds projects that provide a sustained action to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards and their effects. PA's Section 406 Hazard Mitigation funding can fund mitigation measures that will protect those parts of a facility damaged in the disaster from damage in subsequent events.

The anticipated impacts from this category of activity are primarily related to the extent of ground disturbance required for specific projects and their potential for upstream and downstream impacts. These can include vegetation removal; impacts to wetlands, waterways, and habitats; increase in flood levels or velocities; and impacts to historic properties, especially archaeological resources. As such, the full range of environmental laws and regulations can come into play, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands).

Considering EHP Impacts

Minor localized flood reduction and drainage improvement projects can be divided into two broad categories for EHP review. The first involves projects where construction is limited to pre-disturbed areas, and there is limited potential for upstream and downstream impacts. These actions usually require only minimal EHP review. However, if there is vegetation removal; impacts to wetlands or waterways; impacts to threatened or endangered species or their habitats; adverse effects on flood elevations or upstream/downstream velocities; or other impacts (including impacts on archaeological resources), a more in-depth environmental assessment (EA) is usually required to evaluate the full range of resource impacts. In addition, applicants should contact the appropriate Federal, State and local environmental agencies to identify permitting and other requirements. Required permits may include a Clean Water Act 404 permit (issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) and a State-issued Section 401 water quality certification. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary permits related to project implementation.

EHP Considerations for Minor Flood and Drainage Projects

When planning a minor localized flood reduction project, FEMA advises communities to:

- Quantify any potential upstream/downstream effects from the proposed project.
- Include any State or local stormwater design codes or standards that need to be followed.
- Coordinate with appropriate agencies to attain all necessary permits prior to initiation of the project.
- Ensure that archaeological resources are identified and impacts are resolved prior to initiating construction.

Minor Localized Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvement Projects: EHP Review Checklist

The checklist below describes project information that FEMA requires in order to complete EHP review of a minor localized flood reduction and/or drainage improvement project.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Location	State the location of the project, including both the site address and latitude/longitude in decimal degrees (e.g., 38.5342° N,-77.0212° W). Include a site map clearly showing the location of all proposed project components and their location relative to the contributing watershed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Description of Project Scope of Work	Provide a project scope of work, including changes in size or alignment, staging areas, construction access, and plans for grading, as well as the extent of ground disturbance and vegetation removal that is anticipated.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Age of Existing Buildings	Provide the original date of construction for any structures (i.e., nearby buildings, facilities, and roadways) that may be altered or affected by the project.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs	Provide clear, color photographs of the project site and surrounding structures. Label photographs with the location and orientation of the camera relative to the project site.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agency Coordination	Early coordination with applicable resource agencies, prior to submittal to FEMA, can greatly reduce EHP review time. Please note any communications with resource agencies and provide copies of correspondence and permits.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Additional Information	Include any hydrologic and/or hydraulic calculations or models that describe and quantify any potential upstream and/or downstream effects from the proposed project. Show that any National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements have been addressed (i.e., fill in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)). Include any State or local stormwater design codes or standards that need to be followed, including design flows, rainfall frequencies, freeboard, water surface, changes in water surface elevation, allowable velocities, etc. Include copies of permits or permit requirements, environmental mitigation requirements, historic/archaeological surveys, and National Register of Historic Places designations.

Timeframes for EHP Review

Timeframes for EHP review vary depending on a project’s potential to impact the natural and built environment and its complexity. For projects that do not affect historic properties or require resource agency consultation, the review process generally takes 30 days after FEMA has received a complete project application with supporting documentation (including necessary permits). The need to complete an EA under NEPA will extend the review period a minimum of three to six months as it involves outside resource agencies, other stakeholders, and more in-depth resource evaluation. Particularly complex EAs may require a longer period. Applicants can work with their FEMA Regional EHP contact to obtain more details on documentation requirements and best practices for expediting the review process.

EHP Best Practice: Edmonton, OK Flood Reduction Project

The City of Edmond, OK, applied for HMGP funding to prevent repetitive flood damage to homes and roadways in the Willowood subdivision. The proposed project included upsizing culverts, widening an existing concrete channel, and widening and improving a previously undisturbed portion of the Spring Creek Tributary, requiring the development of an EA. The applicant worked proactively with multiple agencies, including FEMA, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to explore alternatives identified in the EA and integrate them into a project design that effectively mitigated flood impacts and increased channel capacity. The applicant’s close coordination with FEMA, the State, and resource agencies resulted in a better project that met community needs while minimizing potential impacts to environmental resources.

Additional Resources: For more information on EHP review and FEMA grant assistance, contact your State Emergency Management Agency or Tribal Office or visit <http://www.fema.gov/environmental-planning-and-historic-preservation-program>.