



# Overview of FEMA's Intent to Implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard



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**Disclaimer:** Applicants must always seek guidance from the program's governing statute, regulation, and their Federal representative when contemplating the eligibility and regulatory compliance of any proposed activity and for each separate funding stream. This document does not speak to the environmental requirements of a given project.

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# Overview of FEMA's Intent to Implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard

The purpose of this document is to share the proposed framework FEMA is considering to implement E.O. 13690 and the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard.

## Background

Executive Order (E.O.) 11988, *Floodplain Management* was issued in 1977 and requires all federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long and short term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. When avoiding a floodplain is not possible, agencies are required to minimize potential harm. The floodplain was defined in E.O. 11988 as the lowland and relatively flat areas adjoining inland and coastal waters including floodprone areas of offshore islands, including at a minimum, that area subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year.

On January 30, 2015, the President issued E.O. 13690, *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input*, which amended E.O. 11988 and established the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS). Copies of E.O. 13690 and the FFRMS can be found at FEMA's website: <https://www.fema.gov/federal-flood-risk-management-standard-ffrms>.

E.O. 13690 amended the definition of floodplain to include the multiple approaches of the FFRMS, which are used to establish the vertical elevation and corresponding horizontal extent of the floodplain. Federal agencies have the flexibility to select from the approaches of the FFRMS to establish the floodplain for a given action. Additionally, E.O. 13690 amended E.O. 11988 to set forth a higher level of resilience for critical actions, which are any activity for which even a slight chance of flooding is too great.

E.O. 13690 also requires Federal agencies to issue or amend existing regulations and procedures to comply with the Order.

## Key Concepts

FEMA intends to guide the selection of an approach of the FFRMS to establish the floodplain for FEMA's non-critical and critical actions.

### ***Non-Critical Actions***

The Executive Order allows the use of the *Freeboard Value Approach* of the FFRMS to establish the FFRMS elevation and floodplain for non-critical actions.

For non-critical actions, the FFRMS-freeboard value approach elevation and floodplain are determined by the elevation reached by adding an additional *two feet* to the base flood elevation. The base flood is a flood which has a one percent or greater chance of being equaled in any given year.

### ***Critical Actions***

E.O. 11988, as amended by E.O. 13690 defines a critical action as any activity for which even a slight chance of flooding would be too great. The Executive Order allows the use of the *Freeboard Value Approach* to establish the minimum FFRMS elevation and floodplain for critical actions. For critical actions, the FFRMS-freeboard value approach elevation and floodplain are determined by the elevation reached by adding an *additional three feet* to the base flood elevation.

The Executive Order allows use of the *Climate-Informed Science Approach* of the FFRMS for critical actions, but only if the elevation determined under the climate-informed science approach is higher than the elevation under the freeboard value approach. The FFRMS-climate-informed science approach elevation and floodplain are determined by the best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate science.

### ***Coordination with Other Federal Agencies***

When multiple Federal agencies are jointly engaged in an action, the agencies should coordinate early to ensure a consistent approach to determine the floodplain is applied. When FEMA is engaged in an action with, or in the same area as, another federal agency, FEMA is proposing to coordinate with the other federal agencies early in the planning process to coordinate the application of E.O. 11988, as amended by E.O. 13690. Additionally, FEMA may use the Unified Federal Review to coordinate the application of E.O. 11988, as amended by E.O. 13690 with other federal agencies on Disaster Recovery Projects.

We encourage and welcome questions and comments on any or all aspects of this proposed implementation framework for E.O. 13690 and the FFRMS. Please submit your questions/comments to [FEMA-EO11988-13690@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-EO11988-13690@fema.dhs.gov) with the subject line "FEMA FFRMS Intent".