

Unified Federal Review Process

Newsletter



Issue 2

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The UFR Process

The Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process (UFR Process) was established on July 29, 2014, by the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among eleven federal agencies involved in the environmental and historic preservation (EHP) reviews associated with disaster recovery assistance. The UFR Process focuses on the federal EHP requirements applicable to disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Through the UFR Process, federal agencies that fund or permit disaster recovery projects and those that perform EHP reviews associated with the decision-making process will coordinate their independent EHP review processes leading to expedited decision making, which can result in faster delivery of assistance and implementation of recovery projects. The UFR Process recognizes the important role of tribes, state agencies, localities and the stakeholders working together with federal agencies to coordinate EHP reviews.

Over the next several years, the UFR Steering Committee, comprised of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will focus on implementing the UFR Process, reviewing the processes annually and updating it as necessary. This will include engaging stakeholders in the field, hosting webinars and attending conferences to educate federal, tribal, state and local partners in the UFR Process. Read below to see what agencies have done to implement the UFR Process.

About the UFR Newsletter

The UFR Newsletter will serve as outreach to multiple federal, tribal, state and local stakeholders as a way to showcase UFR Process efforts aimed at supporting communities affected by disaster. The newsletter will allow agencies to stay involved with efforts to further develop a UFR Process across the nation. If you would like to add an article to the newsletter, please email: federal-unified-review@fema.dhs.gov





Section 106 Workshop held by HUD

By Ashley Bechtold, Environmental Specialist (HUD)

In March 2015, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) held a Section 106 Workshop in Denver, Colorado for HUD Community Development Block Grant –Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grantees affected by the 2014 flooding event throughout the state. The State Historic Preservation Office provided a wonderful meeting space at History Colorado in downtown Denver. There were approximately 15 different local and state government entities in attendance with multiple representatives. An overview of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Section 106 review process was presented along with project examples and best practices from past disasters. Certain tools to aid in expediting environmental reviews were also discussed, specifically the

importance of programmatic agreements following a disaster and the adoption of another agency's environmental review. HUD grantees were presented with information on the HUD Addendum to the Colorado FEMA programmatic agreement (PA) and how they may use this agreement for their CDBG-DR projects. The Addendum allows HUD grantees to use the exemptions and expediting measures in the FEMA PA, thereby eliminating the need to create a separate PA for HUD projects, saving time and duplication of effort. Since CDBG –DR funds are often used in conjunction with FEMA disaster funds, HUD invited representatives from FEMA Region 8 to attend and present information on the Unified Federal Review, GIS and floodplains. It was a full half day session and overall the feedback was positive and everyone left

the workshop with new information that could benefit their work and Colorado's recovery. It is a rare occurrence to have many different agencies in one setting, but doing so allows partnerships and relationships to strengthen and ultimately aids in promoting a more unified approach to environmental reviews and disaster recovery. For more information on the workshop, please contact Ashley Bechtold at Ashley.r.bechtold@hud.gov, or 202-402-6298.

Additional UFR Tools and Mechanisms Available Now!

The UFR Steering Committee recently announced the release of the **Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Guide for Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Applicants** ("Applicant Guide")

After a major disaster strikes your region, your community may not realize there are environmental and historic preservation (EHP) compliance requirements before federal funds or permits are released to support recovery efforts. For most federally funded and/or permitted projects, the EHP review process can be relatively straight forward, while others require extensive information and documentation from an applicant. In order to aid the applicant through the EHP review process for disaster recovery projects, the UFR Steering Committee released an [Applicant Guide](#) in October 2015. The guide navigates applicants through a typical EHP review by giving them insight into the process and a list of the types of information they should be providing to the federal agency.

The [UFR Resource Library](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/98911), located at <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/98911>, contains the [Applicant Guide](#), as well as all other Tools and Mechanisms developed as part of the UFR Process.



UFR Workshops held in New York City, Denver, and Washington, DC

By Meghan Hesse, Unified Federal Review Detailee to the ACHP

Prior to a disaster striking your region or community, your agency may not believe that there is time or adequate resources to develop environmental and historic preservation efficiencies for disaster recovery projects. There is always the day to day work that seems to take precedence. Further, being proactive rather than reactive is often seen as a luxury. It is often in the middle of the disaster recovery process that you realize you need contact information from other agency counterparts in order to obtain information about projects, and that it would save time and resources if you had developed environmental and historic preservation (EHP) efficiencies beforehand. Such efficiencies would allow the agency to focus on larger, more complex projects.

During this past year, the Unified Federal Review (UFR) Steering Group (DHS, FEMA, ACHP and CEQ) visited various areas around the nation that were most recently affected by disasters. Our goal was to learn from federal, tribal, state, and local agencies the best practices they used to expedite environmental and historic preservation reviews, and to also educate them on the newly established UFR Process.

The UFR Steering Committee hosted three separate interagency workshops in New York City (April 2015); Denver,

(June 2015); and Washington, D.C. (November 2015). The agencies that attended included funding or permitting agencies that manage disaster recovery projects, land managing agencies, and agencies that oversee EHP compliance regulations. Within these agencies, attendees included EHP practitioners, program and support staff, and senior leadership.

Below is a summary of the key themes that emerged from each workshop.

New York City

Hurricane Sandy is the second costliest disaster in U.S. history after it struck the mid-Atlantic and New England in October 2012. Damages were largely sustained in New York and New Jersey due to storm surges which affected regional transportation infrastructure, and utilities.

Attendees: 67 participants from 13 different federal agencies (i.e. DOT, FHWA, EPA, USACE), 11 state and local agencies (NY SHPO, NJ OEM, NJ DCA) and Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

Key themes:

1. Pre-disaster interagency coordination is key. Attendees emphasized that federal, state, local, tribal and territory agencies should build stronger relationships with one another to better understand

other agencies' perspectives and decision-making processes. In addition, regular meetings with your intergovernmental partners should be established to proactively identify opportunities for pre-disaster programmatic approaches, as well as to identify potential bottlenecks in the EHP review process prior to a disaster.

2. Embedded agency staff expedite EHP reviews and sharing of information. Following Hurricane Sandy, several federal and state staff were embedded into various agencies in order to provide a conduit between the two agencies. This relationship built trust between the agencies and allowed



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agencies to identify potential issues with proposed recovery projects.

Denver

In September 2013, record-breaking rainfall caused flooding and mudslides in three major watersheds in central Colorado. The floods resulted in the largest domestic evacuation since Hurricane Katrina, as it seriously damaged 500 miles of roads and 30 bridges. This workshop provided an opportunity to learn about Colorado's recovery efforts and primarily focused on how HQ could support regional staff needs.

Attendees: 63 participants representing 11 different federal agencies, and 19 state and local agencies.

Key themes:

1. HQ direction: Field staff need direction from their respective agency's headquarters office on how to implement the UFR Process. Without sufficient direction, field staff do not understand if this is a priority for their agency and whether they should devote time and resources to the UFR Process.

2. Coordination Group: Regular staff level meetings are beneficial to facilitate collaboration in order to pass on new and/or reinforce

existing tenets.

Washington, D.C.

This workshop was held to educate federal agency headquarters staff about the UFR Process, as well as to report on what we had learned from the previous two workshops.

Attendees: 54 participants from 22 different federal agencies.

Key themes:

1. UFR Implementation. Attendees indicated that the socialization of the UFR Process should be top-down at the regional level (e.g., if Regional Leadership are proponents of the process, then Regional Staff will place a priority on its implementation).

2. HQ Support for Regional Staff. Workshop discussion indicated that there is a disconnect in the understanding of where relationships between agencies already exist. There is a tendency of deployed personnel to advocate for new partnerships and agreements, because they do not have the background knowledge of where partnerships and agreements already exist. Response deployments rarely overlap, with staff receiving little briefing of their predecessor's interagency lines of communication. In addition, participants believed a web-accessed compilation of agency-specific summaries would be helpful; as it is integral for agencies to understand the roles and responsibilities of other agencies, as well as how others agencies approach compliance requirements.

Thank You!

The UFR Steering Committee would like to thank our federal partners who volunteered to present best practices or lessons learned as part of the UFR Workshops in New York, Colorado, and Washington, DC: Ms. Colleen Keller, NJDEP; Ms. Grace Musumeci, EPA; Mr. Dan Saunders, NJSHPO; Ms. Allison Shiffner, FEMA; Ms. Donna DeFrancesco, FEMA; Mr. Carlo Popolizio, FWS; Mr. Greg Pollack, FEMA; Mr. James Haggerty, USACE; Ms. Megan Jadrosich, FEMA; Mr. Michael Audin, FEMA; Ms. Steven Hardegen, FEMA; Mr. Craig Hansen, FWS; Mr. Dan Alexander, FEMA; Ms. Vanessa Henderson, CDOT; Ms. Portia Ross, FEMA; Mr. Kevin Houck, CO WCB; Ms. Stephanie Gibson, FHWA; Mr. Jeff Fulmer, FEMA; Mr. Thomas Parker, FHWA; Ms. Kim Shugar, City of Longmont; Mr. Charlie Bello, FEMA; Ms. Kelly Maiorana, CDOT; Ms. Crystal Andrews, CO DOLA; Mr. Ian Hyde, CO Governor's Recovery Office; Ms. Danielle Schopp, HUD; Ms. Kimberly Pettit, FEMA; Mr. Michael Drummond, CEQ; Ms. Angela Colamaria, OMB.

Message from the National UFR Coordinator

Thank you for reading this issue of the UFR Newsletter. The first full year of the UFR's implementation has resulted in a number of achievements including the release of new tools and mechanisms including the UFR Applicant Guide, the completion of three UFR Workshops, and the activation and deployment of our very first UFR Advisor to support a disaster recovery operation. There's still a lot more work ahead of us before the UFR is fully implemented, but these are all major milestones to highlight as we continue building towards a unified approach to environmental and historic preservation compliance that will make us as federal agencies more effective in serving disaster survivors. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in helping us reach this point, and I look forward to engaging with even more of you in the future as we continue our march towards full UFR implementation. – Ryan Potosnak