

Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force

Creating a Unified Approach to Floodplain Management



The collective costs of flooding disasters in the United States continue to increase while the functions and values of our floodplain ecosystems continue to diminish. The challenge of the 21st Century is to reduce the loss of life and property caused by floods while protecting and restoring the natural resources and functions of coastal and riverine floodplains. The Federal Interagency Floodplain Management (FIFM) Task Force (Task Force) is working to promote flood hazard mitigation and environmental stewardship of floodplains.

A Unified Approach

The Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force was established in 1975 to develop a “unified national program for floodplain management.” This unified program was needed because many of the federal agencies involved in water resources were not coordinating their efforts and often worked at cross purposes. At that time, most flooding was still being addressed with “flood-control” structures and there was a recognized need for a range of measures such as building codes, land use regulations, flood insurance, etc., besides just dams and levees to reduce flood losses. A range of measures would ensure that there would be a cost-effective approach to reducing flood losses.

The Task Force Purpose

The Task Force’s overall purpose is to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the public by encouraging programs and policies that reduce flood losses and protect the natural environment. The Task Force will accomplish this through improved coordination, collaboration, and transparency in floodplain management efforts within the federal government. The Task Force will prepare recommendations and reports that advance a unified national program for floodplain management, and identify and align federal policies and programs to be consistent with achieving the goals of floodplain management.



This is a photo of a house in Pascagoula, Mississippi, taken pre-Katrina ca. 1999/2000. Note the “Build Safe! 13.1’ MSL Pascagoula Elevation Standard” sign in front yard (circle). The second photo was taken post-Katrina, illustrating the successful survival of this elevated building. The house was elevated to the citywide standard of 13.1’ msl using Increased Cost of Compliance funding through their flood insurance policy.

Natural and Beneficial Functions of Floodplains

Floodplains provide a number of important beneficial functions that are of immense value to the nation. For example, floodplains store and carry floodwaters, facilitate groundwater recharge, provide habitats for wildlife, and contain immense agricultural and forestry resources.

Floodplains also provide societal benefits in addition to aesthetic values and recreational uses. In addition, although floodplains constitute only 2 percent of the Earth’s land surface area, they provide 25 percent of all ecosystem service benefits.



The Road Forward

The Task Force is renewing its efforts to develop and implement unified floodplain management throughout the 12 member agencies by finalizing a Work Plan following the Task Force Vision of:

The economic, environmental, and societal values of floodplains are protected and flood-prone communities are resilient and sustainable.

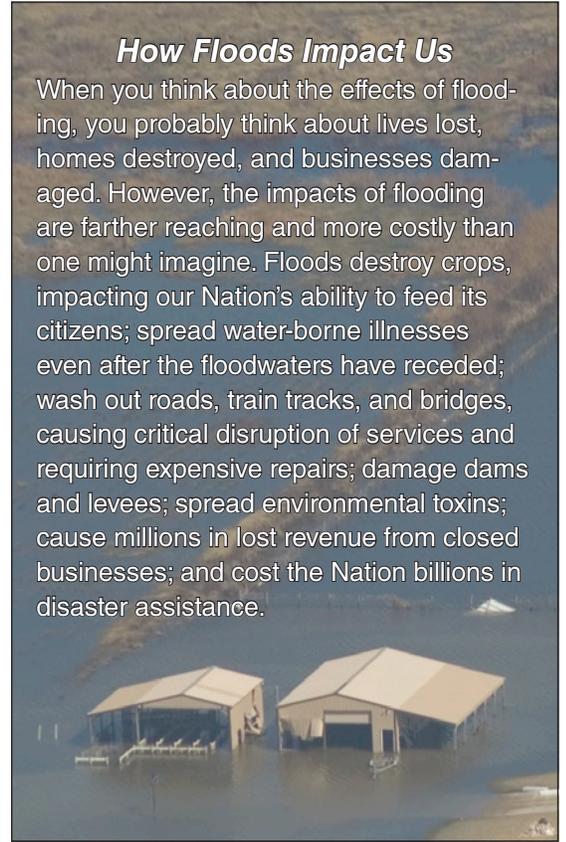
To meet this Vision, the Task Force established three overarching goals of:

- **Goal 1 – Public Safety:** Protect lives, property, and cultural assets through effective implementation of sound floodplain management programs and policies by all federal agencies.
- **Goal 2 – Sustain the Nation’s Floodplain Resources, Functions, and Services:** Protect and restore the natural resources and beneficial functions of floodplains, and the services they provide.
- **Goal 3 – Economic Vitality:** Promote and sustain economic benefits of floodplains with minimal degradation to the natural environment while limiting flood risk.

The Task Force’s planned and ongoing activities include assessing impacts and barriers to federal programs with regard to achieving the goals of floodplain management; assessing the state of knowledge related to valuation of environmental services; conducting a foresight-style study that can provide information on future conditions that could inform current decisions; developing alternatives for guiding federal agency actions in flood hazard areas, including updating Executive Order 11988; updating and revising the Unified National Program (strategic national framework) for Floodplain Management; developing policy and technical guidance for federal agencies to encourage sustainable development and appropriate land use within and affecting the floodplains; conducting public listening session(s) on scope, focus areas, and activities of the Federal Interagency Management Task Force; continuing to coordinate federal agency input and leadership to ongoing collaborative efforts; serve as a forum for interagency problem

How Floods Impact Us

When you think about the effects of flooding, you probably think about lives lost, homes destroyed, and businesses damaged. However, the impacts of flooding are farther reaching and more costly than one might imagine. Floods destroy crops, impacting our Nation’s ability to feed its citizens; spread water-borne illnesses even after the floodwaters have receded; wash out roads, train tracks, and bridges, causing critical disruption of services and requiring expensive repairs; damage dams and levees; spread environmental toxins; cause millions in lost revenue from closed businesses; and cost the Nation billions in disaster assistance.



solving and alignment on current and emerging issues and opportunities; and engaging and coordinating with federal interagency efforts to provide input to other task forces with a nexus to floodplain management.

Member Agencies

Department of Homeland Security–FEMA
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Defense
Department of Energy
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of the Interior
Department of Transportation
Environmental Protection Agency
General Services Administration
Tennessee Valley Authority
Council on Environmental Quality (Advisor)
Office of Management and Budget (Advisor)

Additional information about the FIFM Task Force can be found at:
http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/fifm_task_force.shtm.