



Giving the Creek A Little More Room

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Fayette County, Kentucky

Lexington, KY - Residents of the Valley subdivision in Lexington are no strangers to flooding. Behind their homes meanders the quiet Wild Cat Creek, offering a pleasant view from the backyards of the homes on either side. However, every few years the creek lives up to its name, dumping 1 to 5 feet of swirling water in homes and basements.



In 1989, Wild Cat Creek roared over its banks damaging 16 homes, evacuating 58 people and causing \$195,000 in damage. Flooding in 1992 caused \$346,000 in damages, and for four houses, structural costs reached mostly \$80,000. In 1997, the flooding came so fast evacuations were not possible. It caused about \$93,000 in damages and several residents were treated for hepatitis after clean-up efforts. In 1998, the flooding struck again, damaging 16 homes.

Flooding damage was often severe because the houses were built in a mapped floodway. Each structure contained a basement that faced the creek, housing a utility room with a washer, dryer, hot water heater and furnace. As floodwaters entered, appliances and utility connections were damaged or ruined entirely. Sometimes homes lost retaining walls.

The rising creek flooded neighborhood streets and run-off from higher elevations across the street would add to the mess. The city of Lexington's costs skyrocketed as they paid numerous times for debris clean up, garbage pick up, repaired drains, and evacuations.

Working in cooperation, the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) requested Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding, and were approved for 16 homes to be acquired and demolished through the voluntary acquisition program. On the other side of the Wild Cat Creek, approximately 12 to 14 homes were bought out through LFUCG funding alone. The land was cleared and converted into a greenway corridor, providing linkage to a dedicated park system as well as stormwater management. The land remains as open space and provide a natural drainage area for future high water.

With the changes in place, Wild Cat Creek now flows along its natural course. If it floods, the severity of damages or losses is greatly reduced. The open area, where the houses once stood, now allows the creek space to naturally pool past its banks and flood mostly open space. When the creek waters reach any of the remaining houses near the creek, the runoff intensity is greatly reduced.

Now the City of Lexington is saving money and manpower. The Wild Cat Creek is tamed and the community has a lovely open space park to enjoy. "Cooperation of the Federal, State and local officials made this vital project happen." said Kentucky Governor Ernie Fletcher. "This important funding will allow families to escape the flooding fears that come with every spring and summer thunderstorm."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Kentucky**

County: **Fayette County**

City/Community: **Lexington-Fayette**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Activity/Project Start Date: **10/1998**

Activity/Project End Date: **10/1999**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG)**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/>

Main Points

- More than 20 homes were bought out through HMGP funding alone.
- The land was cleared and converted into a greenway corridor, providing linkage to a dedicated park system as well as stormwater management. The land remains as open space and provide a natural drainage area for future high water.
- When the creek waters reach any of the remaining houses near the creek, the runoff intensity is greatly reduced.