



# FEMA

## Fighting Floods In Kenosha Property is in Safer Place

**Kenosha County, WI** - In the span of 10 years, five emergency declarations have been issued for the Fox River Floodplain in Kenosha County. Following an emergency declaration in May 2004, when the Fox River again overflowed its banks, many fewer homes and residents were at risk, and the costs for response and recovery were substantially reduced. One reason for the remarkable turnaround is that over the 10-year period, 56 property owners have participated in the Fox River Flood Mitigation Program. The Kenosha County Housing Authority administers the program. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) provides staff support.

In 1994, Kenosha County officials initiated a plan to help people move out of the flood-prone area that was mapped as the 100-year floodplain of the Fox River. Since then owners of 56 properties in the communities of Wheatland, Salem and Silver Lake have participated in the voluntary buyout program. Various resources were used to fund the program including Community Development Block Grants - Emergency Assistance Program (CDBG-EAP) from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, and grant money from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs administered through Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM).

During the emergency phase of the 2004 flood, Kenosha County Emergency Management/Homeland Security Director Ben Schliesman noted that as a result of the buyout program, emergency responders had far fewer doors to knock on as they went door-to-door to warn residents of the dangerous flooding situation. Schliesman reported that in addition to fewer enforcement personnel required, no rescue squads needed to be dispatched to help people leave the flooded area.

Following flooding in 2000, the Fox River crested at 2.75 feet over flood stage. Under a federally declared disaster, the communities of Salem and Silver Lake were reimbursed for emergency protective measures under the Public Assistance program for \$3,431 in expenses. Kenosha County received reimbursement for \$9,253 in expenses for emergency protective measures. Federal reimbursements included the cost of sandbagging and overtime hours incurred by emergency authorities in notifying and evacuating residents.

Under the disaster declaration of 2000, eligible flood victims in the Silver Lake and Salem communities received grants from FEMA that averaged \$2,800 for minimal repairs to make the home livable. If the homes had remained in the floodplain, with each successive flood event, like in 2004, an estimated \$156,800 in disaster recovery grants for these residents could have been incurred. Property replacement and cleanup costs not covered by grants, and the emotional strain of residents suffering property loss and damage must also be factored into the overall impact if no mitigation measures had been undertaken.

Thus far, the Fox River Flood Mitigation Program removed 56 structures at a cost of \$5.5 million dollars, with FEMA contributing \$2.5 million in HMGP and FMA grants and CDBG providing approximately \$3 million in grants.



Kenosha County,  
Wisconsin



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Private**

Cost:

**\$5,500,000.00 (Estimated)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Acquisition/Buyouts**

Primary Funding:

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**