



FEMA

Streams Flow Free for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Shawnee, OK - Squirrel Creek creates a property boundary of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) in east-central Oklahoma. Historically, the creek causes minimal flooding to Tribal lands twice a year. Despite a history of uneventful flooding, the Tribe maintains an unimpaired channel of the Creek in anticipation of larger flood events. This mitigation measure helped avoid significant losses when floodwaters in July 2007 inundated their lands.

Tribal leadership had developed a creek maintenance plan for several reasons – to reduce risk, preserve natural processes, and preserve Tribal heritage. Work crews maintain waterways by removing dead trees, clearing vegetation, relocating beavers, and securing the banks with grass and sturdy trees to abate erosion.

CPN Safety and Housekeeping Director Tim Zientek said, “Investigating the water and banks that surround us showed vegetation and debris kept the channels from flowing freely. A clogged channel causes flooding and that translates into financial losses and distress for the Nation and our neighbors.”

Had the CPN not taken action to keep waterways free of debris and overgrowth, the July 2007 flood could have resulted in over \$40 million in damages had floodwaters entered an elevated casino, the Nation’s grocery store, and Tribal headquarters.

The July 2007 flooding occurred during a scheduled CPN Native American Festival, but prior mitigation actions taken by Tribal leadership in addition to its timely implementation allowed the Festival to proceed without disruption and avoided \$10 million in losses to the Nation’s headquarters.

“Understanding the function of nature and working in harmony helps the Tribe function,” said Zientek. “Eliminating or reducing the risk and lessening the impact on those who live and visit here will only enhance their enjoyment of nature.”



Tribal,
FEMA Region VI



Quick Facts

Year:

2007

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Land Use/Planning

Primary Funding:

Private funds