



▶ **HIGH WATER MARK**  
PROJECT TOOLKIT



FEMA

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## ► HWM PROJECT TOOLKIT

Flooding is the number one natural disaster in the United States. Large storms and hurricanes have ravaged American communities, costing billions a year in recovery, restoration, and rebuilding. Despite this risk, according to a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) survey, a clear majority of Americans do not believe flooding is the primary hazard their community faces (90 percent of respondents). To address this challenge, FEMA's National Flood Insurance

Program (NFIP) partnered with federal agencies to create the High Water Mark (HWM) Initiative to help improve the public's awareness of flood risk and encourage communities to take mitigation actions to address this risk.

FEMA encourages local communities to increase flood risk awareness and resiliency at the local level and have developed this toolkit to assist communities with

coordination and implementation of their own HWM Projects. By implementing an HWM Project, communities may be eligible for Community Rating System (CRS) points through [FEMA's CRS Program](https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system)<sup>1</sup>, a voluntary program for NFIP-participating communities that provides incentives in the form of premium discounts for communities.

**An HWM Project has three phases/deliverables:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system>

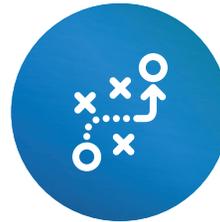


## ► HWM PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE



### Phase I: Plan Your HWM Project

- Build a Community Project Team
  - Identify HWM Project Lead
  - Identify Community Project Coordinator
  - Identify State Hazard Mitigation Officer or State Floodplain Manager
- Identify Project Partners
- Identify Areas of Mitigation Interest
- Select Mitigation Action(s)
- Coordinate Logistics
- Develop Communications Plan and Press Materials
- Develop Signs, Production
- Conduct Outreach
- Develop Invitation List
- Distribute Save-the-Dates and Invitations



### Phase II: HWM Launch Event

- Direct and Manage Project Execution
- Install Signs
- Conduct Launch Event
- Complete Post-Event Report



### Phase III: Mitigation Action(s)

- Implement Community Mitigation Action(s)
- Complete Mitigation Action(s) Form

# ► HWM PROJECT TIMELINE



## Phase I: Plan Your HWM Project

### Build a Community Project Team

The Community Project Lead and Project Coordinator lead the development of a Community Project Team, composed of subject matter experts and staff at the community level.

### Identify Mitigation Action(s)

We recommend that each community identify an action(s) to address flood risk and increase resiliency.

### Select Launch Event Date, Location, and Speakers, Coordinate Logistics, etc.

### Begin Sign(s) Planning

Determine sign locations, select printer and installer.

### Outreach

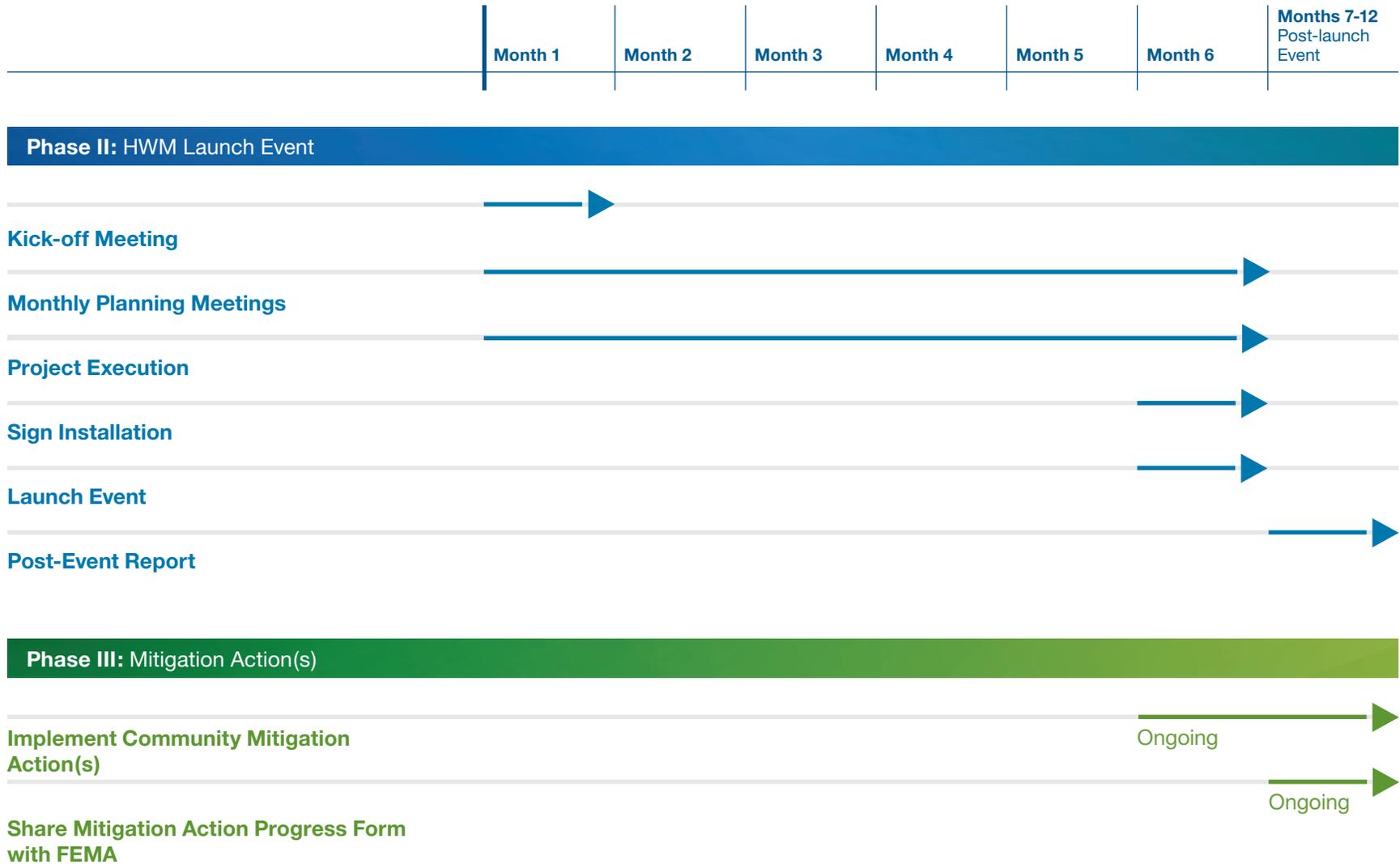
Invitation list, distribute save-the-dates.

### Develop Communications Plan and Press Materials

### Print Signs

Allow at least 3 weeks

# ▶ HWM PROJECT TIMELINE



▶ **PHASE I:**  
PLAN YOUR  
HWM PROJECT



## ► HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

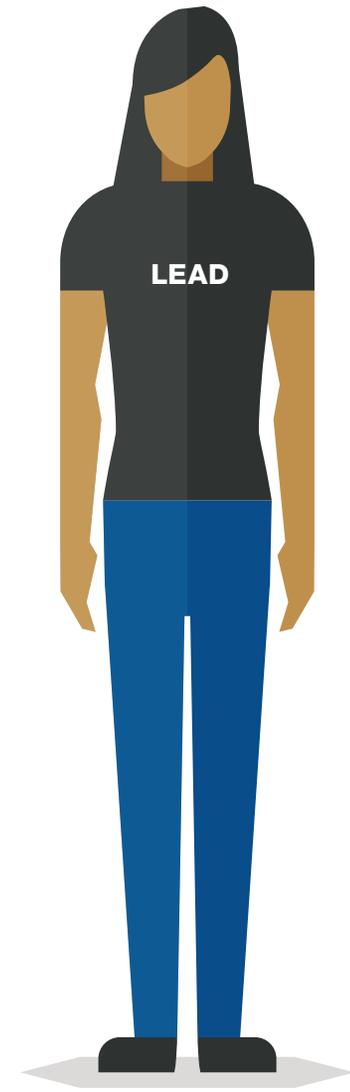
The goal of this phase is to begin the short- and long-term planning for the HWM Launch Event and continuing mitigation efforts. This effort is achieved through the following steps which can be conducted simultaneously.

### TEAM BUILDING AND COORDINATION

#### Identify HWM Project Lead

Once a community commits to the HWM Project, it should identify a Project Lead for the duration of the project. This person is critical to the success of the HWM Project planning and execution. Once the Project Lead is assigned, planning can begin. Project Lead responsibilities include:

- Support the HWM Project through the launch event and is prominently involved in mitigation discussions as needed and community relations,
- Work with the community points of contact (POCs) to set the expectations for the project,
- Provide information on best practices, approaches, and timelines for executing an HWM project,
- Identify subject matter experts (SMEs) and other partners who will become part of the project team,
- Become familiar with the community in terms of flood history, mitigation interest, etc., and
- Identify potential partners for greater involvement in the project.



## ► HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

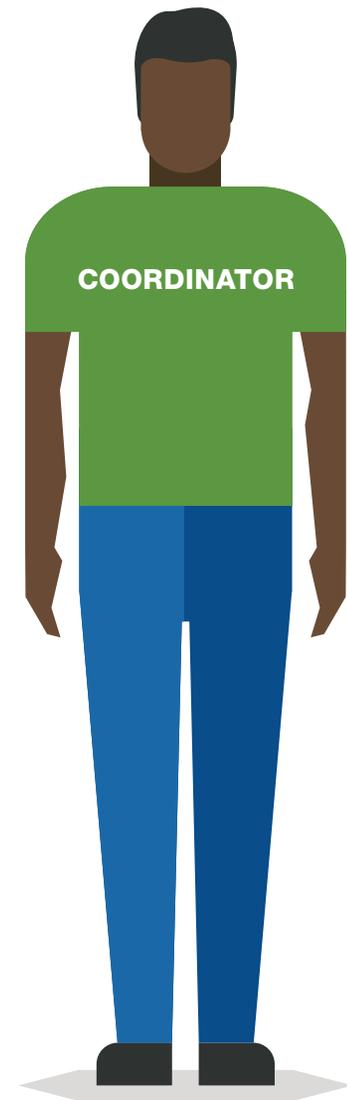
### Identify a Community Project Coordinator

The community is responsible for assigning a Community Project Coordinator. This individual serves as the day-to-day lead for the HWM Project and manages the relationships with partners. For example, the Community Project Coordinator can be the Floodplain Manager, Emergency Manager, and/or Building Codes Inspector of the local community. Some Community Project Coordinator responsibilities include:

- Establish a theme for the HWM Project and outline the community's mitigation action(s)
- Identify goals and scope of the project
- Identify potential state and local partners (e.g., local flood task forces)
- Determine the timeframe for the project, including how the HWM Launch Event will align to other community initiatives, flood anniversaries, or flood-prone seasons (such as hurricane season)

- Provide status updates to federal partners to assist in the planning and execution of the project
- Manage the day-to-day interaction to execute the HWM Launch Event (including all planning meetings)
- Identify opportunities for mitigation within the community
- Lead the implementation of future mitigation actions
- Determine the number, design, development, and installation of HWM signs
- Coordinate media outreach with the FEMA Region and other federal partners
- Provide updates to FEMA on progress

*\*Note that the HWM Project Lead and the Community Project Coordinator roles can be combined and the responsibility of one person.*



## ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

### Build a Community Project Team

The Community Project Coordinator leads the development of a Community Project Team, which is composed of subject-matter experts (SMEs) and staff at the community level. The Community Project Team supports the HWM effort leading up to the launch event and is involved in the continuing efforts of the mitigation discussion and working with federal, state, and local partners.

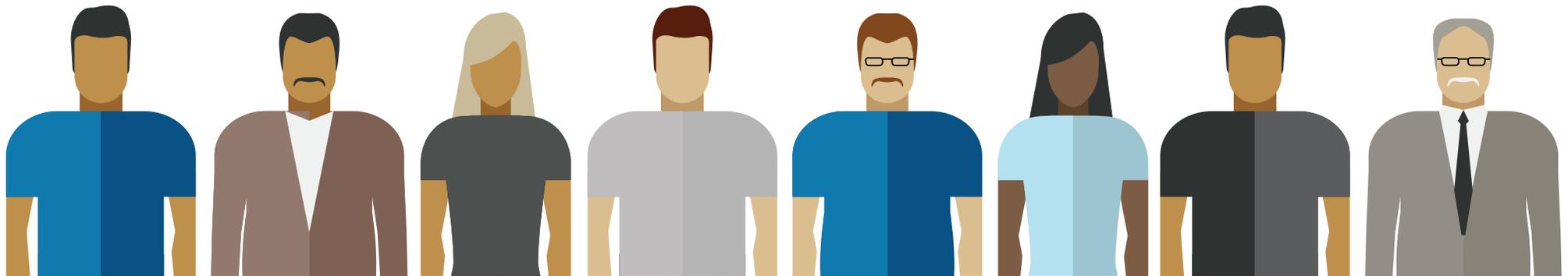
### Contact State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) or State Floodplain Manager

The community will need to reach out to the SHMO and/or the State Division of Natural Resources (DNR). The SHMO is an important role in an HWM project and other similar initiatives. They can help build partnerships, provide insight and advice, and share resources and connections with other partners. Ideally, someone on the Community Project Team has a relationship with the SHMO and DNR and can contact them on behalf of the team.

### Increase Flood Risk Awareness & Mitigation

The primary goals of an HWM project are to increase flood risk awareness and implement mitigation measures that lead to resilience. The HWM Launch Event is the starting point, or “kick-off,” for future mitigation action(s) in a community. However, mitigation action(s), understanding community priorities and identifying areas of mitigation interest should be identified at the start of the planning process. Refer to [FEMA's CRS Brochure](#)<sup>1</sup> (Refer to Series 330) to learn more about the CRS Program and how a community may be able to earn CRS points for implementing HWM Projects.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/16104>



# ► HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

## Roles and Responsibilities

Having clear expectations between community and federal partners is essential for the success of a community's HWM Project. Exhibit A describes the most common activities that the community and its partners will undertake as part of an HWM Project.

## Additional Project Partners

Local, state, federal, and private sector partners are integral to the success of an HWM Project, which is why the Community Project Team should begin identifying and reaching out to additional partners as soon as possible to gauge their interest in supporting/attending the launch event and assisting with the mitigation action(s) the community has identified. In addition to lending credibility and expertise to the project, partners provide resources to a project and in many instances share the same flood risk awareness goals. Businesses, faith-based groups, schools, members of Congress, state delegates, community officials, and members of the scientific community are just a few of the potential partners that communities can leverage. Many national organizations have state, local, and regional chapters or organizations that have a strong connection to the community.

## Exhibit A: Community and Partner Responsibilities

### Community Responsibilities

- Provide subject matter expertise as needed.
- Coordinate meetings with local, state, and federal participants to garner widespread support and collaboration for the project.
- Schedule post-launch event meetings in the community and provide brief status reports as needed.
- Appoint a representative to serve as HWM Project Lead and HWM Project Coordinator.
- Determine the date, time, and location of the HWM Launch Event, manage local logistics, and leverage media engagement and outreach, and local partnerships.
- Determine and agree to the specific mitigation action(s) that will drive the theme and messaging of the HWM Launch Event and awareness activities.
- Hold a high-profile HWM sign/unveiling/launch event to announce the project to the public, inviting local, state, and federal officials, the media, the public, and other key entities.
- Determine high-profile locations throughout the community and post HWM signs.
- Conduct ongoing outreach to share details on how individuals can protect themselves and their property from flood risk.
- Following the HWM Launch Event, provide updates to FEMA on the status of the mitigation action(s) the community is completing.

### Partner Responsibilities

- Provide access to data to assist in understanding flood risk and determining sign location.
- Assist with communication and outreach to promote the project and launch event.
- Share mitigation examples and resources to assist in identifying ways to reduce flood risk.
- Provide a representative to be part of the project on a community level.
- Attend the HWM Launch Event.

# ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

## MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT AND LOGISTICS

### Project Plan

The community should develop a Project Plan that contains key strategic and tactical information about executing the HWM Project. The HWM Project Plan serves as a road map for the community in performing this task. The Project Plan provides information on conducting the launch event, outlines areas of mitigation interest and potential action, clarifies planning assumptions and decisions, facilitates communication among stakeholders, and documents scope, cost, and schedule. A sample Project Plan is available in the “Resources” section.

### Signage

As part of the HWM project, communities should post HWM signs throughout the community to raise awareness of the effort and the flood it is commemorating. The community determines how many signs are needed and where they should be posted. FEMA has created a suggested HWM sign layout and design specifications for communities to use to tailor to their project.

Following is information about sign logistics and additional information to consider when creating your community’s signs using FEMA’s suggested sign example:

- **Federal Partner Logos:** For HWM Projects involving federal partner support, federal partner logos can/should be added to the signs. You will need to work with your federal and local partner contacts to obtain the correct logos to use.
- **Content:** HWM signs should refer to the “High Water Mark Project.” Signs can contain URLs, QR Codes, flood dates, and a tagline.
- **Material:** It is recommended that HWM signs be made from a substrate that uses a rigid metal face, but contains a plastic inner core — such as MaxMetal. See sign specifications on page 11. Signs solely composed of metal, are more costly and subject to theft.
- **Location:** HWM signs are typically posted in prominent public places such as beachfront or riverside properties, parks, or public buildings. Placing signs in residential areas must be agreed to by residents/realtors. Inquire about the appropriate permits for posting signs in parks and other state and city-owned locations to ensure that installation of signs is permitted.
- **Cost:** The cost of signs will vary based on your geographic location and the designer you use. FEMA is unable to fund or contribute to the development and production of HWM signs.



# ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

## Sign Specifications

### FEMA High Water Mark designation sign: 24" x 7.25"

- Can print one or two sides depending on location/application.
- Substrate: 3mm MaxMetal with full color printing on 3M vinyl with UV lamination. Weatherproof.
- For reference: One (1) sign printing two sides with rounded corners. Sign costs will vary based on location, vendor used and detail of sign(s).



**HIGH WATER MARK**

### FEMA High Water Mark sign: 24" x 30". The layout includes the storm information, sources, and partner logos.

- Can print on one or two sides depending on location/application.
- Substrate: 3mm MaxMetal with full color printing on 3M vinyl with UV lamination. Weatherproof.
- For reference: One (1) sign printing two sides with rounded corners. Sign costs will vary based on location, vendor used and detail of sign(s).

#### ▶ 10 FEET | 8/30/2004 HURRICANE GASTON

The highest known flood level at this location.

Gaston was a category 1 hurricane that made landfall along the central South Carolina coast. After moving inland, Gaston produced heavy rainfall across portions of the Carolinas and Virginia. Flooding in the Richmond, Virginia metropolitan area resulted in 8 deaths.

For more information contact  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
[www.sftflood.gov](http://www.sftflood.gov)  
VIRGINIA WEATHER SERVICE  
[www.weather.gov/vak/](http://www.weather.gov/vak/)  
CITY OF RICHMOND  
[www.richmond.gov](http://www.richmond.gov)



### FEMA High Water Mark side sign: 20" x 30". This is an optional panel where community information can go e.g., map, photo, etc.

- Can print one or two sides depending on location/application.
- Substrate: 3mm MaxMetal with full color printing on 3M vinyl with UV lamination. Weatherproof.
- For reference: One (1) sign printing two sides with rounded corners. Sign costs will vary based on location, vendor used and detail of sign(s).

Please visit [www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative](http://www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative) to download free HWM sign design files for your use.

# ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE I: PLAN YOUR HWM PROJECT

## Production

The community will need to identify a local vendor to design their signs using the sign files. The community will need to provide the relevant sign content and any partner logos for inclusion on the signs.

## Date and Location

The Community Project Team should allow approximately six months to plan and execute a successful HWM Launch Event. To select a date and location for your community's launch event, consider the following steps:

- Identify dates associated with your driver for participation (if applicable) e.g., anniversary of a flood event.
- Time the event strategically for best attendance: research other community events or activities that may be scheduled for your prospective date. Avoid scheduling on a date that has a competing event. Alternatively, consider booking a date that has a complementary event scheduled (such as a culture or food festival, which will bring people out and can enhance your turnout).
- Choose a high-profile location that is easily accessible and will attract attention and garner awareness. To accommodate

participation, secure a location that has parking or is close to mass transit.

- Schedule the attendance of dignitaries and guest speakers in advance: identify those who are essential for the event and determine if the timing works within their schedules.
- Inquire about the appropriate permits at the proposed area to ensure that sign installation is permitted.

## Invitation List and Distribution

An HWM Launch Event is a significant community event. To promote the goals of the project and reaffirm the community's and public's commitment to flood risk reduction, it is important to engage civil leaders and other prominent community influencers for the HWM Launch Event. The Community Project Team should research and reach out to these individuals well in advance of the launch event (via telephone and email) with a Save-the-Date followed by a formal invitation. Some guests for consideration include:

- State and federal representatives
- Federal partners and organizations
- State partners and organizations

- Mayor and city council members
- Flood control district authorities
- Floodplain managers
- Emergency management organizations or professionals
- First responders
- Schools and students
- Local businesses
- Environmental organizations
- Media

## Communications Plan

The Community Project Team should develop a communications plan, which will outline the community's strategy for delivering key messages to its audiences such as local residents, media, and key stakeholders. The Project Plan template (see Appendix) can also be used to outline your communications strategy. The HWM Project communications and outreach efforts include the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of flood risk among the citizens of the community,
- Promote the HWM Launch Event,
- Enhance coordination and communication among partners, and
- Promote continued mitigation action against flood risk.

▶ **PHASE II:**  
HWM LAUNCH  
EVENT



FEMA

## ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE II: HWM LAUNCH EVENT

The HWM Launch Event marks the unveiling of the HWM sign as a powerful reminder of the devastation that flooding can bring to a community. The event serves as a platform for increasing awareness around flood risk and starting conversations with the broader community about risk reduction.

The HWM Launch Event also serves as a foundation for the community's public commitment and endorsement of effective mitigation action(s). The goal of the HWM Launch Event phase is to execute or implement the activities outlined in the Project Plan. For additional information, refer to the Appendix section. This is achieved through the following activities:

### LOGISTICS AND PLANNING MEETINGS

The first step toward organizing partners for the HWM Launch Event is for the community to plan both a kick-off meeting and subsequent monthly meetings with the Community Project Team and all partners who are engaged in the project. Regularly scheduled monthly meetings leading up to the launch event will ensure planning is on track. These meetings can be conducted in person or by phone.

### KICK-OFF MEETING

The kick-off meeting for the HWM Launch Event is hosted and coordinated by the community and includes the Community Project Team, and local, state, and federal partners. The goal of the meeting is to discuss the project strategy, HWM Project Plan, and activities/tasks that need to be completed.

This is an opportunity for the partners and other stakeholders to identify what tools and resources they can bring to the project. Areas where partners can be of value include:

- **HWM Sign Development:** Working with the community on HWM sign design, helping with surveying line height accuracy (if necessary) for the placement of new signs and helping with sign installation.
- **Communications and Outreach:** Disseminating messages and content through partner newsletters, websites, and social media.
- **Materials Development:** Providing funding, staff time, or other resources to help develop materials needed for the HWM Launch Event (e.g., fact sheets, signs)
- **Project Support:** Providing resources after the HWM Launch Event to help the community complete tasks and support long-term mitigation actions.
- **Identifying Speakers and Other Participants:** Finding partners who may be interested. Inviting speakers such as congressional or state/federal partners who may be a draw for the media.

## ► HWM INITIATIVE PHASE II: HWM LAUNCH EVENT

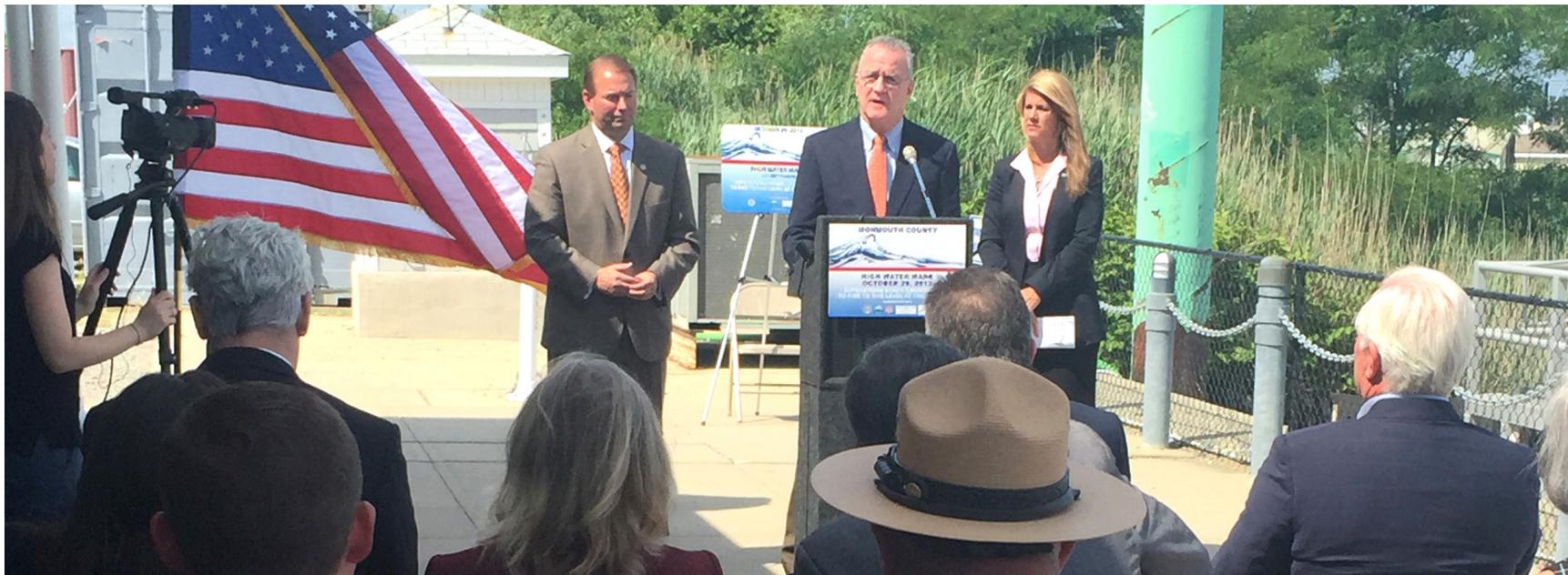
### **DIRECT AND MANAGE PROJECT EXECUTION**

Coordinating an HWM Launch event requires long-term planning. Most projects take six months to a year to plan. The amount of time needed depends on the community's project planning process. Local officials and event planners should access the sample planning summary guide to ensure that no important planning steps are missed.

### **CONDUCT POST-EVENT ACTIVITIES**

Once the event is complete, the Community Project Coordinator should prepare a Post-Event Report to capture HWM Launch Event VIP attendees, including the names and contact information of the speakers and the media. This report will allow the project teams to quickly capture the number of attendees at the event and conduct any necessary follow up.

The Post-Event Report should also provide an overall assessment of the HWM Launch, provide highlights of the proceedings, capture stakeholder impacts or actions, detail media results, and identify best practices and lessons learned. The Community Project Coordinator should give a quick assessment of the event and capture their observations. This report can be completed several days after the event when the Community Project Coordinator has the opportunity to conduct a hot wash of the proceedings.



▶ **PHASE III:**  
MITIGATION  
ACTION(S)



## ▶ HWM INITIATIVE PHASE III: MITIGATION ACTION(S)

The primary goal of an HWM project is to encourage communities to raise awareness of flood hazards and implement effective mitigation action(s) to reduce risk. Mitigation action(s) can be achieved through the following activities:

### **IDENTIFY AREAS OF MITIGATION INTEREST AND UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY PRIORITIES**

In developing the Project Plan in Phase I, the Project Coordinator is asked to identify opportunities for mitigation against flood risk. Some broad examples of mitigation actions include: updating building codes; changing land use ordinances to be more protective; protecting and preserving natural habitats and environments; conducting comprehensive education and awareness campaigns; and/or mitigation activities associated with the CRS. To understand where the potential opportunities exist, the Community Project Coordinator should:

- Review the community's hazard mitigation plans (if available) to gain insight into current mitigation priorities and plans;
- Consult the SHMO and other experts to determine mitigation opportunities;
- Determine how the community's priorities can be addressed through the HWM Project;
- Leverage state and federal partners to help identify financial resources and opportunities for furthering action; and,
- Consider joining [FEMA's CRS program](#)<sup>1</sup> or increase CRS points in order to lower your community's flood insurance premium.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/16104>

After reviewing the potential mitigation opportunities, the Project Coordinator, in collaboration with the appropriate local officials, should identify areas of mitigation interest and potential action(s).

### **Implement Community Mitigation Actions**

The HWM Launch Event is a starting point for future mitigation action in a community. Prior to the HWM Launch Event, community leaders should identify, confirm and/or validate key actions to be implemented to increase resiliency against future flood risk. For example, the Town of San Anselmo, CA committed to several infrastructure projects to help reduce flooding downtown, including removing homes from the floodplain.

Some mitigation activities have a long horizon to completion. FEMA asks that communities update the agency on the status of their project using the Mitigation Action Progress Form that can be found in the Resources section of this toolkit. As appropriate, FEMA will create case studies or spotlights about community projects and their progress that can be shared with other communities looking to implement similar projects in the future. The goal is to showcase community actions which can lead to future engagement by more communities around the nation.

## ▶ HELPFUL RESOURCES ON FEMA.GOV

### **High Water Mark Initiative**

The High Water Mark Initiative is a community-based awareness initiative to remind residents of major local floods and encourage them to prepare for the next one. The HWM initiative page is a resource for communities looking to participate in the initiative and plan and execute an HWM Project. The page includes information about the Initiative, pilot communities and case studies, event tools and resources, and ways for communities to join. [www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative](http://www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative)

### **The National Flood Insurance Program**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations. [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program)

### **Community Rating System**

The Community Rating System (CRS) recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. The CRS page contains a description of the CRS, benefits of the program, technical assistance available for communities, and incentives for communities to maintain and improve their floodplain management program. The HWM Initiative seeks to encourage floodplain management activities to help lower a community's insurance premiums for its residents. [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system)

### **Hazard Mitigation Assistance**

The Hazard Mitigation Assistance section provides information on the various hazard mitigation grant programs, types of projects funded by grants, and eligibility for the grants. The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program Fact Sheet describes available grant funding, eligibility, application submission and review process, and evaluation criteria for communities in their efforts to reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to the buildings and structures insurable under the NFIP. [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance)

## ▶ HELPFUL RESOURCES ON FEMA.GOV

### **Hazard Mitigation Planning Fact Sheet**

Hazard mitigation planning is the process state, local, and tribal governments use to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property in future hazard events. This fact sheet describes the planning process, benefits of mitigation planning, guidance, tools, and training. [www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/5756](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/5756)

### **Integrating Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning: Case Studies and Tools for Community Officials**

Case Studies and Tools for Community Officials provides practical guidance on how to incorporate risk reduction strategies into existing local plans, policies, codes, and programs that guide community development or redevelopment patterns. This document includes recommended steps and tools, ideas for overcoming possible impediments, a series of case studies to demonstrate successful integration, and fact sheets with guidance. [www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/31372](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/31372)

### **Hazard Mitigation Planning Resources**

Mitigation Planning identifies policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses. The mitigation planning process is a key resource for communities as it creates a framework for risk-based decision-making to reduce damage to lives, property, and the economy from future disasters. This page introduces mitigation planning, describes its benefits, and provides resources on Hazard Mitigation Assistance. [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources)

### **Risk MAP Community Engagement Fact Sheet**

This fact sheet discusses the community engagement guiding principles of FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) initiative and the series of approaches that occur during each project. Achieving Risk MAP's goal of reducing the nation's vulnerability to flood risk requires clear, consistent, and compelling communications. [www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/21972](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/21972)

### **FEMA Regional Contacts**

To identify a FEMA regional contact in your area, visit [www.fema.gov/fema-regional-contacts](http://www.fema.gov/fema-regional-contacts).

## ▶ APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### **[COMMUNITY NAME] High Water Mark Project Plan**

The purpose of this plan is to define our community's plan for promoting, unveiling and sustaining outreach around our High Water Mark signs and the need for our community to be resilient in the face of flooding. This plan outlines the audiences, messages, and tactics we will employ as well as the timeline, roles and responsibilities, and approach to evaluating our efforts.

### **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

Floods are the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States, and our community, like all communities nationwide, is vulnerable. Over the life of a typical 30-year mortgage, homes and businesses in high-risk areas have a 26 percent or greater chance of flooding, a full 2 ½ times greater than the chance of a fire.

In **[COMMUNITY]**, flooding can happen here; it has already. **[ENTER SENTENCE ON MAJOR FLOOD, TIMING, AND OUTCOMES].**

Showcasing the dramatic outcome of our most severe flood will offer a powerful testimony and daily reminder to our citizens and businesses and—more importantly— encourage them to take action to protect themselves and their property.

In **[COMMUNITY]**, flooding is only one of the natural hazards we face. In addition to flooding, **[HAZARD 1, HAZARD 2, AND HAZARD 3]** are also significant areas of concern that each require specific outreach and guidance. With this outreach plan, we focus primarily on flooding but include messaging related to other natural hazards as appropriate. Considerations in the development of this plan include:

#### **[CUSTOMIZE AS NEEDED]**

- Other flood awareness or natural hazard outreach activities, current or past
- Related initiatives including participation in the Community Rating System
- Mitigation planning efforts
- Floodplain ordinance actions

### **COMMUNICATIONS GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this outreach initiative is to raise our community's awareness of its flood risk and motivate our citizens and local businesses to take steps to protect themselves and their property. Specific objectives to achieve this goal include:

- Placement of high water mark signs in at least **[ENTER NUMBER]** prominent locations in the community,
- Increase awareness of flood risk among the community through media coverage and community events (e.g., HWM launch event),
- Enhance coordination and communication among partners, and
- Promote continued mitigation action against flood risk.

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### TARGET AUDIENCES AND KEY MESSAGES

For this HWM Project, below is a sample of the types of audiences to which you will want to target your outreach efforts. The three to five primary and secondary key messages that you will convey in all outreach about your HWM Project should be added. Primary messages convey broader information, and supporting messages include more detailed information and facts. We have populated the chart with sample audiences and objectives, but feel free to edit specifically for your High Water Mark project.

AUDIENCE	OBJECTIVES	PRIMARY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING MESSAGES
<b>Homeowners and Renters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of local flood risk</li> <li>• Motivate to take steps to protect themselves and their property</li> <li>• Encourage them to talk to their friends, neighbors, and family</li> <li>• Encourage them to talk to local officials</li> </ul>		
<b>Kids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of local flood risk</li> <li>• Motivate to take steps to help protect their home and family</li> <li>• Encourage them to talk to their friends, neighbors, and parents</li> </ul>		
<b>Elderly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of local flood risk</li> <li>• Motivate to take steps to protect themselves</li> <li>• Encourage them to talk to their friends and neighbors</li> </ul>		
<b>Local businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of local flood risk</li> <li>• Motivate to take steps to protect their businesses and employees</li> <li>• Encourage them to talk to other local businesses</li> <li>• Motivate them to talk to local officials about mitigation</li> </ul>		

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### OUTREACH TACTICS

To reach the audiences defined in your plan, we have outlined examples of some of the sustaining outreach tactics that can be conducted directly with these groups as well as with their influencers, to share information about flood risk from additional trusted sources.

AUDIENCE	INFLUENCERS	SUSTAINING TACTICS
<b>Homeowners and Renters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Friends and family</li> <li>• Other local officials such as emergency managers</li> <li>• Insurance agents</li> <li>• Real estate agents</li> <li>• Kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-profile launch event on approximately the date of the national observance of flood or preparedness concerns, with annual sustaining event</li> <li>• Media relations through editorial board meetings with local press, distribution of press kits, and follow-up with key trusted local reporters</li> <li>• Outreach to local weather forecaster to provide information on air</li> <li>• Direct mailings, especially to those in high-risk areas</li> <li>• Open house or town-hall meetings</li> <li>• Outreach through homeowners' associations</li> <li>• Seminar at local fire station</li> <li>• Seminar with insurance agents, provide information to distribute to customers</li> <li>• Seminar with real estate agents, provide information to share with prospective buyers</li> <li>• Outreach to lenders to provide clients with user-friendly information on local flooding and action steps</li> <li>• Social media campaign, such as Twitter feed to disseminate event information and tips, Facebook page, LinkedIn page, blog, and/or widget with daily tips</li> <li>• Mobile application for download regarding flooding history, weather forecast, and daily reminders of action steps</li> <li>• Flood-related events at community fairs and events</li> </ul>

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### OUTREACH TACTICS

To reach the audiences defined in your plan, we have outlined examples of some of the sustaining outreach tactics that can be conducted directly with these groups as well as with their influencers, to share information about flood risk from additional trusted sources.

AUDIENCE	INFLUENCERS	SUSTAINING TACTICS
<b>Kids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scavenger hunt to locate HWM signs</li> <li>• Inclusion of local flood history and action steps within curricula in schools, including teaching ideas</li> <li>• Poster or video contest</li> <li>• Girl Scout, Boy Scout, and 4-H flood-related activities and events</li> <li>• Boys &amp; Girls Club and YMCA flood-related activities and events</li> </ul>
<b>Elderly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seminars at care facilities</li> <li>• Outreach to local pharmacies to include information with prescriptions</li> <li>• Outreach through local faith-based organizations and churches</li> </ul>
<b>Local businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Customers, suppliers, etc.</li> <li>• Local officials, economic development authority</li> <li>• Small Business Administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business continuity workshops</li> <li>• Outreach through Chambers of Commerce, speak regularly at meetings</li> </ul>

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to conducting outreach directly to our target audiences, we will engage the local, and/or regional offices of the trusted organizations below to support us in our outreach about flood risk.

### INFLUENCER ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATION	ROLE	LOCAL POINT OF CONTACT
Local National Association of REALTORS		
Local Chamber of Commerce		
Local Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS)		
Local Flood Insurance Producers National Committee (FIPNC)		
Local National Weather Service		
Local National Association of Flood and Storm Water Management Agencies (NAFSMA)		
Local National Association of Mortgage Brokers (NAMB)		
Local National Flood Association (NFA)		
Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA)		

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to conducting outreach directly to our target audiences, we will engage the local, regional and/or national offices of the trusted organizations below to support us in our outreach about flood risk.

### YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATION	ROLE	LOCAL POINT OF CONTACT
Girl Scouts		
Boy Scouts		
4-H		
Boys & Girls Clubs		
YMCA and YWCA		

## ▶ APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To implement this plan, you can use this chart to assign the following individuals to a task. As implementation begins, a new chart can be developed to illustrate roles and responsibilities for each individual tactic.

ACTIVITY	MAYOR	FLOODPLAIN MANAGER/ EMERGENCY MANAGER	PUBLIC AFFAIRS	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	PROJECT LEAD/ PROJECT COORDINATOR
Customize materials for the community's use					
Establish relationships with supporting organizations					
Establish outreach timeline					
Lead launch event					
Lead ongoing outreach					
Evaluate outreach					

## ▶ APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### TIMELINE

This high-level timeline below can be used to detail your plans to launch and sustain flood risk outreach over time.

ACTIVITY	DEADLINE	STATUS
<b>Current (1 to 3 months)</b>		
Launch event		
<b>3 to 6 months</b>		
<b>6 to 9 months</b>		
<b>9 to 12 months</b>		
Evaluation		

## ► APPENDIX: HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT PLAN

### EVALUATION

To evaluate the effectiveness of each type of outreach activity and inform the continual improvement of your communications, you can evaluate your outreach using the metrics below. You can add additional metrics as appropriate for your specific project or event.

ACTIVITY	METRIC	STATUS
<b>Events (e.g., launch, video contest)</b>	Participation, number of materials distributed	
<b>Seminars</b>	Participation, number of materials distributed	
<b>Online Outreach</b>	Web analytics, including number of unique visitors to flood-risk related Web pages	
<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of “likes” to Facebook page, “followers” on Twitter, resharing of Tweets</li> <li>• Social media monitoring through Google Alerts</li> <li>• Number of downloads of widget</li> </ul>	
<b>Media Relations</b>	Number of mainstream media representatives in attendance at event(s), mentions in the media	
<b>Direct Mail</b>	Number of unique visitors to landing page announced only by mailing, or calls to hotline listed within mailing	
<b>Partnerships</b>	Participation levels by supporting organizations	

## ► APPENDIX: SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY



[COMMUNITY LETTERHEAD]

[MONTH, DAY], [YEAR]

[COMMUNITY NAME] TO UNVEIL HIGH WATER MARKS, ANNOUNCE INITIATIVE TO HIGHLIGHT LOCAL FLOOD RISKS

WHO: [NAME, TITLE, COMMUNITY]

WHAT: Unveiling of a High Water Mark(s) on/at [LOCATION] and announcement of supporting outreach efforts to encourage citizens to take steps to protect themselves and their property from flooding.

WHEN: [TIME] on [DATE]

\*Note, media should arrive by [TIME]

To confirm attendance, please RSVP at [EMAIL ADDRESS] by [DATE]

WHERE: [LOCATION]

CONTACT: [COMMUNITY PRESS CONTACT NAME, PHONE, EMAIL]

EDITOR'S NOTE: Related video bites and b-roll will be made available via satellite and Web download.

All [COMMUNITY] press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at [COMMUNITY WEBSITE ADDRESS]

###

## ▶ APPENDIX: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: **[COMMUNITY OFFICIAL]** **[FEDERAL AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE]**  
**[CONTACT NUMBER/EMAIL]** **[CONTACT NUMBER/EMAIL]**

### **[COMMUNITY NAME]** TO UNVEIL HISTORIC HIGH WATER MARKS, ANNOUNCE INITIATIVE TO HIGHLIGHT LOCAL FLOOD RISK Residents and Media Encouraged to Attend

**[INSERT CITY, STATE], [INSERT DATE] – [INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY]** officials today announced the planned unveiling of high water mark (HWM) signs placed prominently in the community to increase awareness of flood risk. The HWM signs emphasize how high the water has risen during major floods, and encourages community actions to reduce their risk. **[INSERT NAME]** will unveil HWM signs **[INSERT LOCATION]** on **[INSERT DATE]** at **[INSERT TIME]** and will also announce supporting outreach and mitigation efforts as part of their participation in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s High Water Mark Initiative.

Floods are the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States. Over the life of a typical 30-year mortgage, homes and businesses in high-risk areas have a 26 percent or greater chance of flooding, 2 ½ times greater than the chance of a fire. But residents and businesses often take few, if any, steps to protect themselves from these potentially devastating events, opting instead to trust that, “It won’t happen here.”

“My hope with these high water marks is that residents will seriously consider how a major flood could impact them, and take at least one new step to protect themselves or their homes,” says **[INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY OFFICIAL]**. “Whether it’s making an emergency plan, preparing a supply kit, or safeguarding valuable information in waterproof containers, there are low-cost and even no-cost ways to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our property from floods.”

In **[MONTH/YEAR]**, the **[INSERT CAUSE OR NAME OF STORM]** caused unprecedented flooding that resulted in **[INSERT DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT]**. While the impact of the flooding was devastating, the lessons learned from it have dulled in local memory. The community is being proactive and reminding the public of the community’s history and potential for flooding and of the simple steps they can take to protect themselves should it happen again.

“We are not only encouraging residents to protect themselves, we are also challenging ourselves by committing to a long-term mitigation action that will help improve our community’s flood risk,” **[INSERT NAME]** said. “**[INSERT COMMUNITY NAME]** has committed to **[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT MITIGATION ACTION]**.”

For more information on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s High Water Mark Initiative, please visit [www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative](http://www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative).

**[INSERT BOILERPLATE LANGUAGE IF APPROPRIATE]**

## ▶ APPENDIX: MITIGATION ACTION PROGRESS FORM

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name of Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Point of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Flood of Record: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this the flood you are commemorating through your HWM Project? Yes No

If no, which flood are you commemorating? \_\_\_\_\_

### HIGH WATER MARK PROJECT

Location of High Water Mark Launch: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of High Water Mark Launch: \_\_\_\_\_

How many people attended? \_\_\_\_\_

Were there notable community VIPs in attendance? \_\_\_\_\_

What mitigation action(s) did the community commit to? \_\_\_\_\_

Status of Mitigation Action(s) (Please attach additional pages as needed):

6 Months: \_\_\_\_\_

1 year: \_\_\_\_\_

18 Months: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Years: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed form to your FEMA Regional contact (See Regional Contacts under Helpful Resources).