

Building Public Support For Floodplain Management

A Catalog of Good Practices

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The draft is available for review and comment until May 9, 2008. If you have comments, suggestions, new stories, examples, or lessons learned, please send them on to the Principal Investigator, French Wetmore, at FrenchAsoc@aol.com by May 9.



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1. Introduction

As a public official, the “public” can be your customer, client, boss, or adversary. No matter how you look at it, your work will be more effective if you have the public’s support. This catalog is a compendium of ways you can build that support.

There are many jobs a floodplain manager can hold. The primary emphasis of this catalog is on helping the local permit official, but the good practices reviewed here can help other offices and other people involved in floodplain management, including emergency managers, engineers, code officials, planners, mitigators, and those in the private sector.

There are also many types of “publics.” These include property owners, permit applicants, builders, developers, special interest groups, such as neighborhood associations and environmental organizations, and elected officials. All of these should be seen as stakeholders. Winning their support is important because

- What they do is important to what you do,
- The public is your boss (or your boss’ boss). It’s always good to have the boss’ support,
- They can be your best allies and advertisers in support of your program,
- More things get done with willing partners, and
- Work is more fun with people on your side.

In most cases, you cannot order these stakeholders to do something, but if you can get their support, they will help you willingly and at no cost.

How do you know when you have public support? Here’s what you should be working toward:

- People agree that a problem or opportunity exists and
- People are willing to commit money, time, or energy to address the problem.

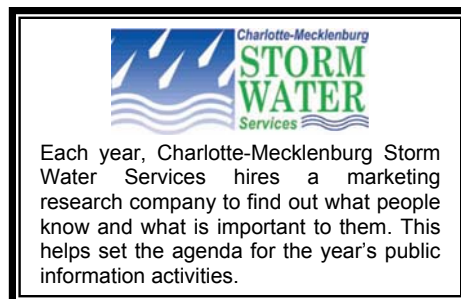
This definition of success works whether the “people” are permit applicants, floodprone property owners, builders, or elected officials. They’re all part of your public. The following pages review some proven methods to build their support.

2. General Principles

A review of the literature and discussions with experienced floodplain managers found numerous ways to be effective in building public support. These have been winnowed down to the following Top Ten General Principles.

1. Know your public. You must relate the message to what's important to the audience. You have competition – what you want people to do competes with behaviors and actions they are already undertaking. For example, unless they've just been flooded, most people care more about the appearance of their homes than protecting them from a rare flood occurrence. Your message will need to relate flood protection to property appearance, saving money, or other things that are important to them. You can find out what they are interested in by:

- Tallying complaints and inquiries,
- Conducting formal surveys,
- Having a customer satisfaction input web page,
- Asking your elected officials, and
- Above all, listening to the people.



2. Explain the problem. Most people view floodplain regulations as a restriction on their freedom to do what they want with their property, not something that will help them. This view changes when they accept that they have a problem. Therefore, the first step is to get the people you are dealing with to acknowledge that there is a flood problem that needs attention. If they are at risk, be sure they understand the repercussions.

If their property is not in the floodplain, they're still affected. They may have to drive through the floodplain on their way to work or school every day. They or someone they know may put themselves at risk trying to rescue or evacuate floodprone residents. Their business, their employer, or the stores they depend on may close if they're flooded. Their taxes will pay for flood fighting, rescue, clean up, repair, and recovery efforts. The impact of flooding goes well beyond the properties mapped as being in the regulatory floodplain.

3. Explain the solutions. It doesn't do much good to scare people about the flood threat if they don't know what to do about it. Make sure they know how to build properly, how to protect a floodprone house, and their role in preserving water quality and habitats. Explain the options and show how even small pro-active steps can help. Encourage people to have flood insurance, too. If they're helped after a flood with an insurance claim payment, they will be more supportive of your efforts.

4. Empower them to act. People need to recognize that they can have an impact. Reducing flood losses is not a job reserved only for the government. When it comes to protecting their own property, individuals are the most important actor. Conversely, people are responsible for their own actions. If they don't follow the rules, it may adversely affect their own property, their neighbors, their community, and the environment.

5. **Communicate to the audience.** Put yourself in the audience’s shoes. Avoid technical terms (“discharge”) and government jargon (“BFE”) when talking to the lay person. Avoid terms that are often confusing (“mitigation,” “100-year flood”). Be interesting. Make your written materials and presentations something that won’t put you to sleep. Add photos and color to a PowerPoint or a newsletter article. Use personal experience stories.
6. **Be positive.** Show the good reasons for your program and how it’s related to what’s important to the audience. Development regulations prevent flood damage, save lives, preserve local businesses and jobs, etc.. Following the rules will mean less flood damage, lower insurance premiums, and a healthier stream. You’re not just getting rid of floodprone structures, you’re making a new park.
7. **Use multiple methods.** Reinforce the message from different credible sources – your words, outreach projects, media materials, campaigns, your fellow co-workers. Public agencies have many ways to send out a message – e.g., signs in public parks, brochures in city hall, websites, inserts in utility bills, and the actions and statements of all employees. At the same time, be sure that the multiple messages are clear and consistent. Don’t trust word of mouth alone to convey important messages – put it in writing, too.

Greenville County, South Carolina, inspection staff complete a checklist at every site visit and leave a copy with the owner/builder.

8. **Use the networks.** People talk to each other, especially their friends and neighbors. You’ve probably seen the trouble caused by one outspoken, but misinformed, resident. The powers of informal neighborhood networks can be harnessed for your messages if you spend extra time with the leaders who influence the others. Studies of why people retrofit their floodprone homes have found that the most frequently mentioned source of information was not the government, but a neighbor or friend who had retrofitted.
9. **Remember the big picture.** Your efforts should be part of bigger operations that deal with surface water problems, land use, public safety, housing improvement, etc. The public sees you as an employee of your local government, not as a floodplain manager. You need to know what the other offices are doing to make sure that you are consistent and mutually supportive. You can also coordinate with the other offices and take advantage of their messages, such as energy conservation, better housing, or recreational development.

“Think holistically. The more comprehensive your program is, the larger your constituencies can be.” – Ann Patton, Tulsa Partners, Tulsa, Oklahoma

10. **Take advantage of opportunities.** Floods in your community, floods elsewhere in the country, permit applications, meetings, or even chance encounters all offer opportunities. Use people’s immediate interest in the topic of flood protection to give messages appropriate for the situation. For example, you shouldn’t have much trouble telling people who have just been flooded that they are at risk. Seize the opportunity to remind them that it can happen again and they should be working with your program to reduce the impacts of the next flood.

3. The Messenger

Before you ask people to support your program, ask yourself “why would they listen to me?” Are you a credible source of information? Are you someone people want to talk to? Take a quick self-test and see if you can answer “yes” to the following five questions.

- 1. Do you know what you’re talking about?** People respect those with technical knowledge. They will accept the bad news (e.g., it will cost more to build here) if they know it comes from a credible source. Are you credible? If you’re in the permit business, you can become knowledgeable and show it by becoming certified in your field (see box).



- 2. Do you like your job?** Do you care? If you do, it will show. If you want people to agree with you, you need to act like you believe in your work. Actions speak louder than words. Start with a smile for your co-workers first thing in the morning.
- 3. Do you know why you’re doing it?** Do you have a sense of mission or do you view your job as grudgingly enforcing some unwelcome Federal mandate? Do you know the history and reasons for why your program or rules are the way they are today or do you just tell people they have to do something “because?”

“People on the front lines have to get it and buy it.” – Kyle Dreyfus-Wells, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Willoughby, Ohio

- 4. Do you like people?** Most of society’s activities, from running a business to government programs, depend on the support of people, be they customers, clients, constituents, co-workers, or comrades. Do you want to help people avoid the loss and suffering from floods?

Greenville County, South Carolina, developed the attitude that a permit office should want return business, so they treat applicants like customers. Now, the office only hires people who want to work as part of a team and who want to help their customers.

- 5. Is it *your* community, too?** Are you a fellow resident, a part of the community that you work for? Do you want to see it being a better place in the future?

Before he was a floodplain manager, Mike Prough ran an auction company. He knew most of Jersey County’s residents and most of them knew him. He also knew how to treat a customer. These traits paid off when it was time to go after violators. He found that one of the most effective ways to convince someone to bring his/her property into compliance was that it was needed to keep the County in the NFIP so their friends and neighbors could still get flood insurance.

If you answered “No” to these questions, think about whether or not generating public support is your forte. If you don’t like the public, maybe you’re not the person to build public support.

“HELPING OUR CITIZENS IS OUR BUSINESS” – Reminder at the end of every e-mail sent out by Gene Henry, CFM, Hillsborough County, Florida.

4. Face to Face

You are probably not a public information officer or public relations specialist, but you are the public's main and sometimes only contact with your local government. You meet face to face with the public every day. Here are some best practices on how to gain their support during these meetings and encounters.

1. **Treat them with respect.** They pay your salary and they deserve to have their needs met. The fact that they are not familiar with the details of your job is no reason to not treat someone the way you'd like to be treated. See the table on the next page for examples of how and how not to treat people.

"Most important of all – be polite and treat every one that you meet with respect. I went as far as filling out the floodplain development permits for people while they sat in my office with me. Then all they had to do was sign them. Those people told their friends it wasn't so bad to get a permit and the word got around." – Steve Samuelson, CFM, Floodplain Manager, Lyon County, Kansas



2. **Show the reason for the rule.** There is a reason for the rules that you are charged with enforcing. Taking time to explain them will ease your work and gain support from the person you're talking to.

"We all know how people feel when they are told they can't do something. Hence having a reason for the "rule" becomes tantamount." – Steve Mitchell, CFM, Director of Planning and Zoning, Pascagoula, Mississippi

3. **Listen to them.** It takes two to communicate. What's your communication style? Do you stop and give the other person a chance to talk? Do you ask follow up questions? Do you ask them if you answered their question? Do you watch for signs that they've given up on you by averting their eyes, not following up on their questions, or walking away?
4. **Show them how they benefit.** Most people assume that if the government is involved, it's contrary to their own interests. They need to understand that floodplain management rules are designed to protect people and their property. When people realize that there is something they can do about reducing their exposure to damage, they are more apt to act in support of your program. It also helps to show them how they benefit financially with lower insurance premiums by building properly and supporting activities that are credited under the Community Rating System.
5. **Have backup.** People will want to search out more information to validate what they heard from you. Show them more sources of information, such as a website or a brochure. Make

sure your fellow workers will say the same thing you do. An unhappy citizen will want to “see the manager” or will talk to their councilman, so know whether your boss supports you.

6. Be professional. You are a professional. Act like it. Don’t complain about being overworked or underappreciated or having to enforce stupid rules. If you can’t say “yes” to the questions on page 4, maybe you should limit your face time with the public.

7. Try the four step approach. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources contracted with the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning to help them deal with the public. The Institute recommends a four step approach to cool down a confrontation and build consensus with others. The Floodplain Management Program staff have found these four steps very helpful in many different venues, such as face to face encounters, public presentations, and committee meetings.

1. Make sure everyone agrees there's a problem, be it a flood hazard, too much development, loss of habitat, or whatever caused you to get together.
2. Make sure they agree you are the right people to deal with it. You and they have the expertise and the duty to tackle the problem.
3. Review approaches that look sensible to all.
4. Agree that not everyone will be happy, but that the approach selected makes the most sense.

For more information: www.ipmp-bleiker.com/

Talking to the Public	
What Not to Say	How to Say it Better
FEMA’s map put you in the floodplain.	It took nature thousands of years to form this area to carry and store excess water. Then one day, someone put your house in the middle of it. With this map, we can see better where the floodwaters are likely to go.
You have to do this.	In order to protect you and your neighbors, the County adopted some rules...
I agree with you, but it’s a federal law.	I’ve seen homes that were flooded and people who didn’t have the money to rebuild. I don’t want to see this happen to you. These rules look tough when you’re dry, but after a flood people thank us for enforcing them.
There’s nothing you can do about it.	Let’s look at what you want to do and figure out a way to do it while staying within the rules. We may have to redesign what you originally had in mind.
There’s a 1 in 100 chance that you’ll be flooded.	There’s a good chance that you’ll be flooded. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but being in a floodplain means that you’re much more likely to get flooded than if you were on higher ground.
You can read it all in this engineering study.	Let me summarize what the engineers found out.
I’m on my coffee break. I’ll see you in 15 minutes.	Would you like to join me for a cup of coffee while we go over this?
I have no idea.	I don’t know, but let me run down the answer.
That’s not my department.	Let me get you in touch with the person responsible for that.

5. Outreach Projects

Rather than just respond to an inquiry or wait for a permit application, you can reach out to build public support. Outreach projects should be considered the first tier of a two-tier public information approach – get people interested. The second tier is the references, libraries, websites, and personnel that can provide more detailed information and site-specific advice to those whose interest was piqued.

Examples of outreach projects include newsletters, newspaper articles and supplements, signs, websites, presentations to neighborhood associations or civic organizations, brochures, flyers, cable television “crawlers,” and message boards. The Community Rating System credits outreach projects. The best guidance on conducting them can be found in *CRS Credit for Outreach Projects*, which is available free from NFIPCRS@iso.com.

1. Follow the guidelines. The CRS publications include their guidelines for outreach projects that are, not surprisingly, similar to this catalog’s General Principles:

1. An initial outreach document should not be long and detailed. The objective is to raise the property owner’s interest by explaining the general idea of flood protection....
2. The message must be clear and unambiguous. It should be consistent throughout the material used. It should be written to be understood by the lay person.
3. The information should be geographically personalized so that readers see that it specifically addresses their situation....
4. The recipient must view the information source as credible, authoritative, and relevant....
5. The information should cover the risk of flooding without being too technical. Property owners must be convinced that they will be flooded someday.
6. The message must clearly articulate the most desirable measures. These measures must be appropriate for the hazard, affordable, and perceived as “realistic” by a property owner. They should fit in with the appearance of the area’s housing.
7. The information should discuss the costs and benefits of various protection measures.
8. Because no retrofitting measure is foolproof, especially against higher, less frequent floods, flood insurance should always be recommended.
9. A comprehensive program that reinforces the message from several sources at the local level is more productive.

– *CRS Coordinator’s Manual, 2007*, page 330-6



Outreach projects should be short and simple messages to advise the public that there is a problem and there is something they can do about it.



Outreach projects reach out to groups like this neighborhood association
– courtesy City of Gainesville, Florida

2. **Make them local.** Too often projects are copied from other communities or national models that may or may not be locally relevant. A recently completed evaluation of the CRS credits concluded that communities were not doing enough to address special local audiences. Because of this, the CRS is promoting more locally designed programs through its public information program strategy credit.

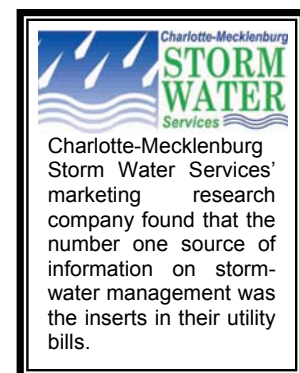
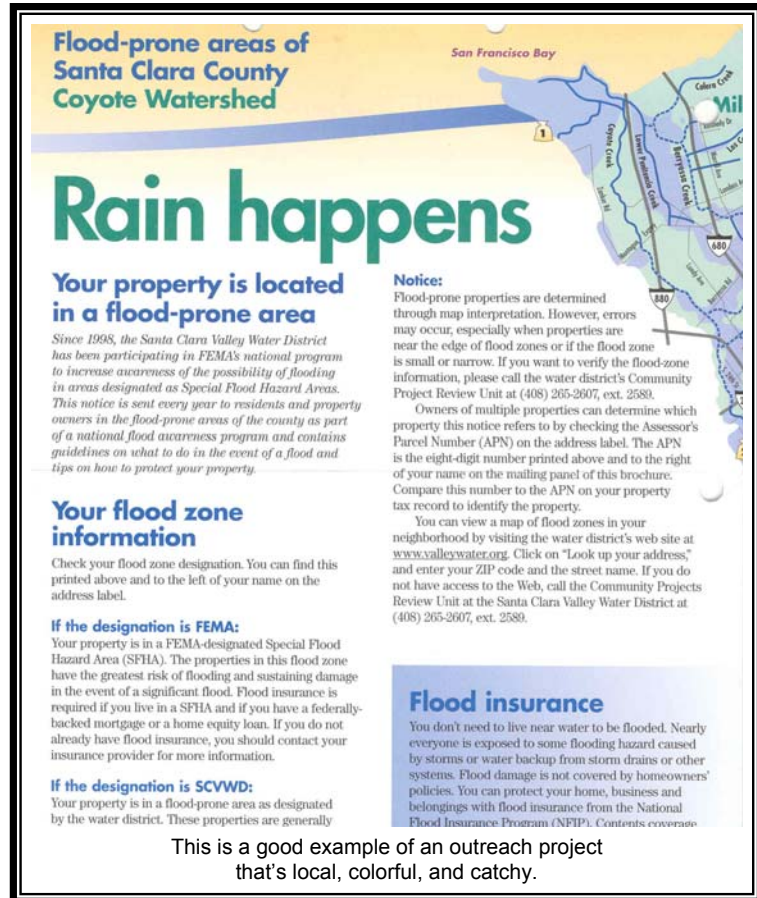
3. **Make them interesting.** Printed materials are more likely to get read if they are colorful and have photos or graphics. Talks and presentations work best if the speaker is believable and enthusiastic and the Power-Points have more pictures than words.

4. **Develop a master strategy.**

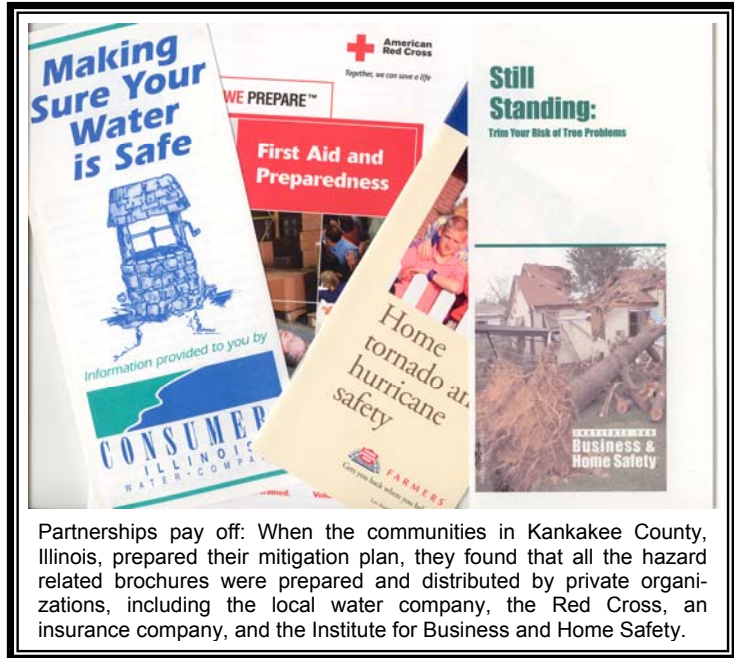
Don't just have an ad hoc program that uses available materials. The CRS strongly encourages a public information program strategy that follows these steps:

- Design the strategy with a team that includes members from your target audience,
- Make sure you all agree on the local flood hazard,
- Agree on the flood safety and property protection measures appropriate for that hazard,
- Review the flood-related public information activities currently being implemented within the community (including those by non-government agencies),
- Set goals for the program,
- Determine the outreach projects that will be done each year to reach the goals, and
- Monitor and evaluate the projects each year.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services prepares a master public relations plan each year, which is described on the next page.



5. **Get someone else to do the work.** The CRS outreach project evaluation also found that communities that built cooperative programs with other public agencies and private organizations were more successful in reaching their publics and in getting CRS credit. There are many private companies and civic, business, and professional organizations interested in flood protection, often for their own protection, but also because they want to live in a community that will be viable after a disaster. For example, one could approach the local Toastmasters International club to see if it would sponsor presentations on flood protection.



One of the best government groups to coordinate with is the office responsible for water quality and meeting your community's NPDES obligations. These offices usually have their own outreach projects and clean water is a topic that people are interested in year round. Try joint messages or just adding yours to their projects.

How They Did It: Joint Agency Public Relations Plan



Each year the City of Charlotte's stormwater office and its County counterpart prepare a joint plan for public information. The attitude of the participants is expressed on the first page of the plan, "Education knows no jurisdiction. When citizens request service, it matters not where it comes from as long as the service is complete and helpful."

The FY 2008 plan sets four goals that show how floodplain management activities are coordinated with other priorities:

1. Demonstrate to the public that Storm Water Services benefits the whole community;
2. Change public behaviors to reduce sources of water pollution;
3. Change public behaviors to protect lives and property from flooding; and
4. Create awareness among employees that they are part of a joint agency.

An implementation schedule and budget identifies 45 projects to be implemented in FY 2008. These include utility bill inserts, newsletters, website pages (<http://stormwater.charmeck.org>), brochures, a workshop for real estate agents, adopt-a-stream, storm drain marking, and the "Big Sweep" where citizens clean trash from creeks.

Success of each project is reviewed at an annual meeting of the drafting staff. They also review the findings of their annual public opinion survey (see box, page 2)

6. The Media

“There is no better vehicle for getting information to the public than the newspaper, radio or TV station. The media are the eyes and ears of the community. The general public looks to the media to report all sides of an issue.” – *Building Support for Increasing User Fees*, USEPA, 1989, page 9.

“The media can be your worst enemy or your best ally.” – Mike Prough, CFM, Code Administrator, Jersey County, Illinois

Here are some best practices that can help get your local media to help you build public support for your programs.

- 1. Develop your contacts.** There are two types of contacts you want to develop: the bosses in charge of the editorials and the reporter who covers your area. Larger papers and broadcast stations have city hall or environmental reporters. For smaller operations, both jobs may be held by the editors or news directors. These people’s business is news and you can supply them with business – respond to their calls, stay in touch with them, and help them. If you build a relationship of mutual trust and support, it will pay off later.

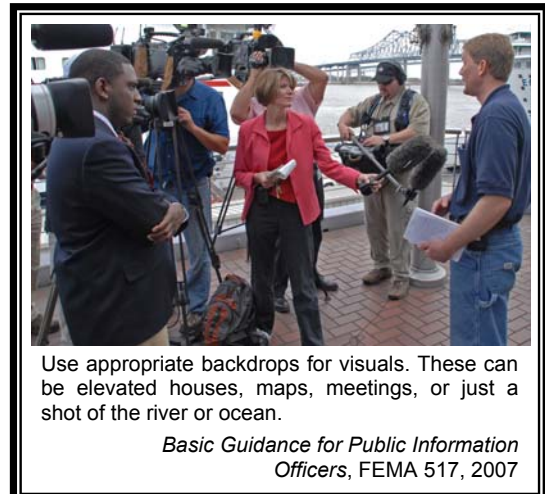
“Journalists will be more open to your concerns and priorities if they know you’re factual, cooperative, straightforward and not trying to manipulate them.” – *Building Support for Increasing User Fees*, USEPA, 1989, page 10.

- 2. Educate your contacts.** Newspapers, radio, and TV staff want facts. Hold backgrounder sessions or briefings. Keep them posted with fact sheets, phone calls, and frequent contacts. Some local officials have even had their own newspaper columns.

“Reporters, for the most part, are generalists who are parachuting into a topic. They are not experts in your field. So, keep in mind that half the time they will start off not knowing what the heck you are talking about, or only be vaguely aware of it. Before the interview concludes, you should get a feel for whether the reporter truly understands whatever point you are trying to make. If you sense any uncertainty on the reporter’s part, spend more time on the phone or in the interview and consider other ways to get your point across.” – Greg Garland, Reporter, Baltimore Sun

- 3. Provide appropriate materials.**

- Newspapers and television like visuals, but don’t just show flood scenes and suffering. Include illustrations of good practices.
- Newspapers will have more space for the details, but think in terms of the headline.
- Radio and TV can record a live happening, like a house raising.
- Use a standard media release format. The standard is double spaced with wide margins. Note whether there’s a release date or it’s “for immediate release.”



- Remember the General Principles on page 2. Especially # 5 – avoid the jargon and make it interesting.
- Make sure your information is consistent with other messages being disseminated by other offices in your agency or route all media correspondence through the same office.
- Do it face to face. Soon after he was hired, Mike Prough sat down with each local newspaper and radio station, gave them the County’s ordinance, and explained how he was going to enforce it.
- Tell the reporters if their work had errors in it.
- Make sure you meet reporters’ deadlines. If you’re late, the story may have already gone to press without your information.
- All reporters like sound bites.

4. Use events to generate coverage.

Events make news – you will have the media’s attention. A flood is the best event to promote your message, even a flood in a different community. A great example of good timing is the editorial to the right. While you don’t have to prepare a news release or a public service announcement, you should have fact sheets or a media kit ready to make your message clear to reporters.

5. Make your own events. You don’t need a flood to make your point. Take advantage of ground breaking or dedication ceremonies for flood control facilities, release of a new study or floodplain map, the presentation of a CRS plaque, or an annual flood awareness week or month.

Remember: one of your key “publics” is your elected officials. They will help you get media attention. A photo op of the mayor signing the proclamation for flood awareness week may draw the reporters and be a venue for disseminating your message.

THE NEWS TRIBUNE
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OUR VIEWS

Flooding disaster holds a lesson

Pierce County officials should resist calls to undermine tough flood zone rules that limit building and save taxpayers money.

Pierce County residents dodged a bullet – or more precisely, a deluge – in the great storm that flooded much of Southwest Washington this week.

But that near-miss still holds a lesson.

This time, even those who live near the Puyallup River and other areas hit hard by flooding in the past decade suffered no significant damage. No South Sound rivers topped their banks, and Pierce County officials said most problems were caused by leaves that plugged storm drains.

So county residents can be grateful that state and federal disaster declarations won't be needed to help with the kind of cleanup and rebuilding efforts underway in other parts of the state.

The storm should serve as a cautionary tale, however, for county residents and officials involved in a current controversy over floodplain regulations.

Since 1996, county government has spent at least \$20 million on floodplain acquisition. The county has also built several "setback levees" that allow rivers to follow a more natural course. These levees not only mitigate flooding but also improve fish and wildlife habitat.

County Executive John Ladenburg has strongly backed a policy of managing flood plains with long-term sustainability and risk management in mind. Constantly building up levees is hugely expensive and not always effective.

Restricting development in the most flood-prone areas makes more sense – and costs taxpayers less – in the long run.

Two years ago, the Pierce County Council approved a so-called "Directions" package of regulations designed to protect the county's most sensitive natural areas, including flood-prone areas and wetlands.

Since then, federal authorities have issued a new and more restrictive flood map based on a finding that lower Puyallup River levees may not withstand a 100-year flood. Although the federal map is not final yet, the county and the City of Fife are now using it to manage development in floodways.

That is why some county residents near the lower Puyallup are up in arms about "FEMA Nazis." They complain that the new rules preventing them from even rebuilding homes and other structures on their property.

The outcry prompted council members to order a review of the flood plain regulations. The county Planning Commission is considering amendments in hearings that will resume in January.

There may be some minor adjustments to the rules that make sense. But by and large, the commission and the council should stick with with the 2005 policies. They are not only good for the environment but also – as this week's flooding demonstrates – highly prudent.

This type of media support is priceless.
– Tacoma News Tribune, December 6, 2007

7. Elected Officials

Your elected officials are a special audience that deserve special attention. Not only are they your boss, they have direct access to their constituency, the public you need support from.

“[A permit applicant] will often times seek relief from his elected officials. Support from the elected officials is critical.... When one examines the CRS communities with the best ratings it becomes apparent the elected official’s support of the concept is a major contributing factor to that rating.” – Steve Mitchell, CFM, Director of Planning and Zoning, Pascagoula, Mississippi

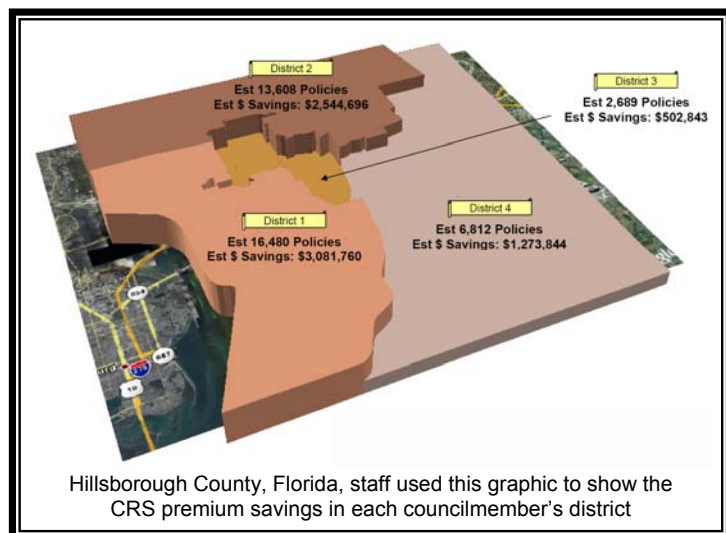
- 1. Know your officials.** What are their interests? What did they campaign on? What has been their experience with flooding? Who is chair of what committee? Who is the best person to brief on proposed new regulations? Are there key staff persons or assistants you should talk to first? Knowing the answers to these questions will greatly facilitate your work with your council or governing board.
- 2. Keep them informed.** Elected officials are responsible for your agency’s activities. They need to know what’s happening and what is going to happen. They don’t appreciate surprises or blindsiding, so it helps to be the first to tell them of an impending problem, before it pops up.

“Don’t keep elected officials in the dark. Let them know what is going on... before they get a phone call at home one evening from someone who is upset about being told to elevate a structure.” – Steve Samuelson, CFM, Floodplain Manager, Lyon County, Kansas

Greenville County, South Carolina, staff hold workshops for County Council members before they start a new initiative. These are open to the public, so citizens hear the same things their representatives learn.

- 3. Show them the benefits.** The number one concern for many elected officials is “what will it cost and what are the benefits?” Give them the facts and background information in these terms (remember the General Principles). They should understand that there are costs to inaction, such as damage to public property, loss of tax base, and exposing the community to a lawsuit if people are flooded.

Make sure they see how their constituents benefit from your work. One effective way is to show how much residents are saving in flood insurance premiums under the Community Rating System. The graphic to the right shows an interesting way to convey this message. You can get the dollar savings for your community for each CRS class from your ISO/CRS Specialist.



4. **Use NAI.** ASFPM's No Adverse Impact program provides a basis for good floodplain management that elected officials can relate to. They do not want to see their constituents flooded or harmed due to the actions of someone else. Once they realize that their community will pay the price of bad decisions over the long run, that the Federal and State minimum requirements are not sufficient to adequately protect their citizens, and that they are liable for knowingly allowing flood problems to increase, they can become strong supporters of better programs. NAI helps them understand these concepts and provides illustrations of good practices.

For more information and materials on NAI (like the poster below), see www.floods.org. There is also a good NAI factsheet for local officials at www.trorc.org/wq_flood.html.



5. **Give them the credit.** Your elected officials deserve the credit they're due for enacting, funding, and supporting your program. There are several ways where you can help each other. Examples include:
- Media events, such as a ground breaking in the district
 - Asking the councilmember to host or chair a public meeting in his/her district
 - Helpful handouts that they can give to their constituents. If you design a brochure, flyer or guidebook with space for the official to put his/her name, you'll have a free distribution system for your message.

8. Stakeholders

Who are the key stakeholders for your work? Here are some likely audiences that you may need to make a special effort to reach:

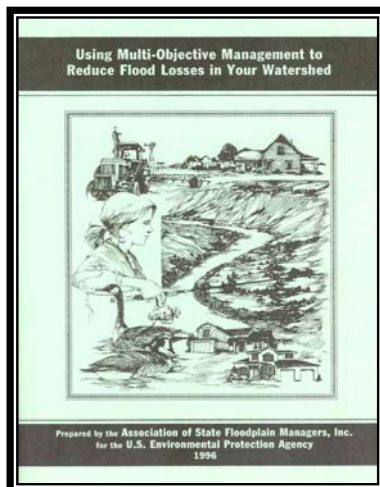
- Property owners and neighborhood associations
- Contractors and home builders
- Hunting, fishing, recreation or environmental organizations
- Non-English speakers
- “Good government” groups like the League of Women Voters and people interested in sustainability, smart growth, green development, and No Adverse Impact
- Fellow professionals, involved in water quality, stormwater management, water supply, and wetland protection

You should develop a toolbox of different approaches for different audiences with different messages. Here are some good practices for reaching special audiences.

- 1. Know your audience.** This gets back to General Principle #1, you must relate the message to what’s important to the audience. You should also identify any special media that they currently look to. Non-English speakers may have their own newspapers and radio stations. Organizations and businesses often have their own journals or local association newsletters. Managers of these organizations and their editors are always looking for copy or a speaker for the monthly meeting.
- 2. Identify mutual concerns.** Many groups and people will support good floodplain management if they see how it supports their efforts.

The floodplain is not just a hazardous area. The floodplain, the watershed, wetlands, and other flood-related areas have many different uses, most of them beneficial to the community. The multi-objective management approach brings together the people and groups that have interests related to all these water-related uses. It helps reduce conflicts and increase the opportunities for mutual support. Your flood loss reduction measures become tools to meet other objectives, too. By allying yourself with these other interests, you gain longer-lasting, broader support for your

common concerns. – *Using Multi-Objective Management to Reduce Flood Losses in Your Watershed*, ASFPM, 1996, page vi.



Using Multi-Objective Management to Reduce Flood Losses in Your Watershed reviews these mutual concerns for the following types of stakeholders. You can get a free copy of this reference at www.floods.org/Publications/free.asp

- Recreation
- Fish and wildlife
- Water supply
- Water quality
- Urban redevelopment
- Economic development
- Housing improvement
- Agriculture
- Historic preservation
- Education
- Transportation and infrastructure.

- 3. Work with the leaders.** Give the leadership special attention with background briefings, fact sheets, and copies of relevant studies and reports. Listen to them and their concerns. Recognize them and their efforts publicly to help them with their constituencies. Once you have champions for your cause, make sure they have all the information they need.
- 4. Ask for their help.** You don't have to spy on a group to learn about their concerns and priorities. You should ask directly for their thoughts at meetings or ask for their comments on a specific written proposal. You can do this formally with an advisory board with representatives from the various stakeholder interests. This is often done when developing a plan or designing a new program (see the examples "How they did it" on pages 18 and 19).

"If you want to build goodwill with the community, make them part of the process. It builds trust."
Robert Hall, Floodplain Manager, Greenville County, South Carolina.

When a large corporation's executive was asked why he took the time to participate on the County's Local Mitigation Strategy team, he answered simply "I live here." – reported by Frank Reddish, Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

- 5. Work with the builders.** Builders and developers don't automatically oppose your regulations. They are usually more concerned about arbitrary requirements put in place with no warning or chance for comment. Remember that they are in business, and delays and unreasonable requirements can directly impact their revenue. On the other hand, they know it's not good for business if the homes they built are flooded. Further, many builders and developers "get it" and want to avoid problem areas and use natural functions as amenities to help sell their properties.

Billerica, Massachusetts, prepared a guide to the Town's permit system. It took away the mystery of the bureaucracy and gave users some notion of what to expect in terms of the time needed to process a permit. Builders appreciated it.

- 6. Educate school children.** School children need to know about flood hazards and flood safety. They also can be vehicles to reach two other special audiences: the media (who can resist a photo like the one to the right?) and their parents.

Charleston County, South Carolina has conducted a variety of projects to reach school children, including science fairs, "game shows" at school assemblies (with local media personalities as master of ceremonies), distributing Master of Disaster kits from the Red Cross, funding art and music production numbers on hazard-event themes, student-created public service announcements in school media (that were judged by a local TV meteorologist and a panel from a County committee), and scout patch programs. The County found that projects directed at young people are very successful at also reaching their parents, since the students talk about what they learned in school and will often convince their parents to take steps to minimize their hazard loss potential.






9. Starting a New Initiative

Want to start a stormwater utility? Want to enact a tougher floodplain ordinance? Want to prepare a really effective mitigation plan? All of these initiatives are major undertakings and all will be much better with the support of the public. Before they are started, it is useful to plan out a strategy for building support for them. Here are some good practices.

- 1. Poll the public.** As with General Principle #1, knowing the attitudes of the public and stakeholder groups before you begin can be very helpful. A good example of this the “How They Did It” story on floodplain maps on page 18.
- 2. Work with allies.** Build on the work and messages of the stakeholder groups like those listed on page 14. Piggy back on other initiatives, such as the state’s hurricane safety month or the contractors’ home improvement fair. Your biggest payoff may come with other departments in your own agency that are interested in starting their own wetlands protection, stormwater management, water quality improvement, or other initiative.
- 3. Create an advisory body.** An advisory committee or task force that represents the various interests related to your initiative is universally recommended (and it receives extra credit under the CRS). Be sure to include people who oppose the initiative or don’t trust the government. There are many publications on how to make such a body work, two of which are quoted on the next page. See also the CRS’ *Example Plans* (free from NFIPCRS@iso.com) and *Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning* (FEMA 586-1, found at www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/howto1.shtm).

Good public policy happens at the intersection of grassroots citizens and technical experts. – Dr. Mark Meo, University of Oklahoma

- 4. Adopt a symbol.** A symbol, slogan or logo can help people identify with your program. Think of the effectiveness of Smokey the Bear and “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.” The slogans work because they are clear, concise, and catchy.

 <p>What started as a joke by a citizen member of a flood committee became Sammy Sandbag, the mascot of the Village of Lansing’s (Illinois) flood protection program. Sammy was drawn at no cost by a friend of the committee member.</p>	 <p>Sammy Salamander lives in Greenville County, South Carolina. He teaches residents about water pollution, soil conservation, and stormwater management. See www.greenvillecounty.org/soil_and_water/game/game.htm for a fun interactive game for children.</p>	 <p>This phrase was developed by the National Weather Service to help remind people to avoid the number one cause of death during floods – driving in flooded areas.</p>
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A Testimonial for Public Involvement

Public involvement activities and education can help to overcome opposition to flood management projects. The key to success in this case and likely other projects is to use an interactive process to help municipal officials and the public realize the multiple benefits of flood management projects. From a start in February of 2000 to a finish six months later, public outcry had turned to public embrace.

- “Flood Management in Hart Park: From Abhorrence to Zeal” in Proceedings of the 2001 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, Charlotte, NC.

Making Plans that Matter – Citizen Involvement and Government Action

Dr. Ray Burby, FAICP, University of North Carolina
Journal of the American Planning Association, Winter 2003

The single most effective step planners can take to secure broader involvement by stakeholders is simply to invite a variety of groups to take part in the planning process. Beyond that, planners can induce greater participation by ensuring that participation is meaningful to citizens. Planners make participation meaningful by providing citizens with information about problems and alternative ways of solving them and by providing opportunities for dialogue among citizens and between citizens and planners. This can occur in the deliberations of advisory committees, discussions at facilitated meetings, and through other means. The key is for planners to work hard to both educate and learn from citizens. (page 44)

When planners in Florida and Washington involved a broader array of stakeholders in plan making, they produced stronger plans and policy proposals that were much more likely to be implemented than was the case when participation was limited. ... hazard-mitigation measures proposed in plans increased 72% (from an average of 2.9 to an average of 5.0) when the number of stakeholders who participated in making the plan increased from less than 5 to 10 or more. Implementation success more than doubled. Planners batted 50-50 (a success ratio of 1) when they involved few stakeholders in plan making, but this increased to a success ratio of 2.4 when they involved 10 or more stakeholders....

When property owners and environmental groups participated, plans were stronger on average, and proposals made in plans stood a much higher than average chance of being implemented. Since these two groups often have conflicting interests, it seems possible that citizen involvement processes that included them provided a forum in which consensus about appropriate policies could be achieved. (page 39)



How to Overcome Barriers to Public Involvement

- Assess before you act
- Provide transparency and access
- Avoid being an add-on
- Find people to involve
- Build capacity for involvement
- Get the right information to the right people at the right time
- Use the public's ideas in making decisions
- Evaluate your activities
- Involve those who traditionally don't participate

These pointers are from a helpful USEPA brochure that can be found at www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/brochures/barriers.pdf

How They Did It: New Floodplain Maps



In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison caused widespread damage and killed 22 people in Harris County, Texas. FEMA and the Harris County Flood Control District initiated the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project (TSARP). There were three objectives:

- Better tools for planning and building flood control projects,
- A better public understanding of their risks, and
- Up-to-date Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the County.

A comprehensive approach was used to build public support for the program and the subsequent maps. It had five elements.

1. Public opinion polling – It was important for the agencies to determine what the public actually believed about flooding and flood risks, rather than what the agencies thought the public believed. A public opinion telephone poll called 511 randomly selected Harris County homeowners. The poll found the 93% of homeowners favored updating the county's floodplain maps.
 2. Message development – The polling's high level of support meant that the communications campaign should focus on solidifying support for the project, rather than changing the minority opinion. Four key messages and themes were developed:
 - (1) The majority of floodplain maps for Harris County were 20 years old, and all of the maps should be updated using the best available technology to assure their accuracy;
 - (2) Even if it increases the cost of insurance for some homeowners, it is better to update the County's floodplain maps to know who is at risk instead of waiting for the next big disaster;
 - (3) The mapping project was conducted jointly by the Flood Control District and FEMA; and
 - (4) The advanced technology used to update the maps was the same used to assess the damage and helped in the clean up and recovery efforts at Ground Zero in New York City.
 3. Stakeholder engagement – Four committees were organized to coordinate input:
 - Executive Committee, a select group of elected and appointed public officials
 - Technical Committee of local engineers
 - Stakeholder Committee: representatives from a cross section of Harris County ethnic, geographic, professional, and educational organizations
 - Users Group, floodplain administrators and others who regularly use the mapsMeetings were held on a regular basis to update each committee on the TSARP process, answer questions that they may have, and gain their input on issues as they arise. A speaker's bureau was also formed. Members gave over 60 presentations.
 4. Media relations – The team pursued special efforts like those discussed in Section 6.
 5. Materials development – These included
 - A unique TSARP logo and brand for the project (see above)
 - The project website, www.tsarp.org
 - A project brochure that provides a broad overview of the project and its benefits.
 - A 36-page report entitled "Off the Charts," which was included in copies of the *Houston Chronicle* on the one year anniversary of Tropical Storm Allison.
- From "Public Education and Outreach Regarding a Major Reassessment of Local Floodplains: The Case of Harris County, Texas" in Proceedings of the 2003 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, St. Louis, MO.

How They Did It: A Regional Floodplain Management Plan



The Maumee River Basin Commission covers parts of five counties around Fort Wayne, Indiana. The MRBC Master Plan was widely embraced by various agencies and interest groups that have become strong supporters and contributors towards its implementation. The MRBC Master Plan's initial success can be attributed to the public involvement and consensus building process followed throughout the study process. In short, this process involved:

- (1) Gathering input from various agencies, interest groups, and the general public by conducting several public meetings in various locations in the early stages of the study;
- (2) Acknowledging the receipt of, considering, and screening all suggestions offered by MRBC Board members, various agencies, environmental groups, farm interest groups, previous studies, and those identified by the consultant;
- (3) Wide distribution of the draft reports throughout the basin area, including all area libraries, and soliciting comments during an extended comment period; and
- (4) Documenting and responding to every comment received by preparing and publishing a separate report volume, and either incorporating the comments or providing a reason why they would not be incorporated.

The MRBC Flood Control Master Plan was able to foster a sometimes rare—but very much desired—broad consensus among various governmental agencies, agricultural interests, and environmental groups.

- From “Sharing the Challenge: Lessons Learned from the Maumee River Basin Master Plan Implementation” in Proceedings of the 2000 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, Austin, TX.

How They Did It: Rebuilding Resident Confidence



In 1990, the Little Calumet River flooded higher than anytime in recorded history. Hundreds of homes in South Holland were damaged and residents were angry. They spoke out at Village Board of Trustee meetings and made their displeasure at their community's lack of flood protection well known.

The Village established a Flood Liaison Committee composed of residents and staff. They agreed to work together to seek out the best solutions to the flooding problem. The Village asked its consulting engineer to review flood control alternatives, including a levee and a diversion tunnel.

With input from the Flood Liaison Committee, the Village applied to the Community Rating System and became a Class 7. When the engineer's report concluded that no structural flood control project was cost-effective, the Village opted to prepare a comprehensive floodplain management plan following the CRS guidance. The Flood Liaison Committee acted as the planning committee.

The planning process took almost a year, but during that time, Committee members learned about the variety of nonstructural ways to prevent and reduce flood losses. One of the plan's many recommendations was an original and award-winning rebate program to provide financial assistance to property owners for individual flood protection measures. There is also a strong public information element and a permanent “Flood Assistance Coordinator” on the Community Development Department staff.

South Holland is now a CRS Class 5 and enjoys widespread resident support for its floodplain management program. One of the original Flood Liaison Committee members was elected to the Village Board of Trustees and another is on the local Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

10. Flood Time

“Any great disaster or problem usually produces a by-product called ‘opportunity.’ This is no less true today as we review our policies for managing floodplains.” - Honorable Jim Edgar, Governor of Illinois

Floodplain managers recognize that there is a “window of opportunity” for a few months after a flood or other disaster. Both the public and the media are interested in what happened and what can be done to prepare for the next one. Take advantage of that window before it closes.

1. Be prepared. Have pre-printed messages, fact sheets, and handouts ready. They should cover the following messages, which are taken from page 10-13 of *NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements*, FEMA 480 (www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=1443).

- Take care of oneself (Step 1 in *Repairing Your Flooded Home* (see box)),
- Get a quick inspection by the permit office to determine whether a building is safe to reenter and repair
- Take the safe, healthy and proper steps to repairing and rebuilding. These are explained in steps 2, 3, and 4 in *Repairing Your Flooded Home*.
- “Returning to normal” means returning to a building that will be damaged by another flood, so include property protection measures as part of repairing homes or businesses.
- Activities that require a permit
- Activities that do not require a permit
- The substantial damage rule
- How Increased Cost of Compliance flood insurance claims work
- Other sources of financial assistance to mitigate
- The need for licensed contractors, if licensing is required by the community or the state
- Where to get more information, especially from local and disaster-specific offices and websites

STEP
8 *Rebuild and Floodproof*

Don't just build it back; build it better. Now is the best possible time to think about floodproofing your home because you can take definite action to protect your property in the future. many floodproofing measures are quite simple, cost effective, and easy to put in place. By floodproofing as you rebuild, you can make the next flood easier on you and your wallet.

Floodproofing
Floodproofing means to remodel or rebuild using materials and methods that will prevent or minimize damage from future floods. Consider the benefits to floodproofing your home:

- By protecting your home from damage, floodproofing will save you money and aggravation during the next flood.
- Many floodproofing measures are inexpensive.

for the government to act; you can take care of protecting your home when you are ready.

- Floodproofing won't make it possible for you to stay at home in a flood. But it is likely to make it much quicker and easier for you to clean up the next time.

Before you repair or rebuild, the first thing you should do is talk to your town's or city's or county's building department. You will need to ask the following questions:

- What are the procedures for applying for a building permit? What inspections will need to be done?
- Is your home substantially damaged? (Substantially damaged means that the cost to restore your home to its "before damaged" condition would equal or

Excerpt from *Repairing Your Flooded Home*. FEMA or the Red Cross can supply large numbers of this publication which provides step by step guidance on what to do after a flood. It is made to be photocopied easily and it can be put on a website.

2. **Help people.** It should go without saying that helping flood victims is a key way to build public support. Don't assume that the state and federal disaster response and assistance programs are (1) easy to understand or (2) available to everyone. You can help by offering a place for a disaster assistance center, explaining the assistance programs, and providing the appropriate support, such as letters needed to trigger an Increased Cost of Compliance claim payment.
3. **Coordinate the message.** Make sure the Mayor is not saying everyone should go back and rebuild as quickly as possible while you need to remind people to get a permit and incorporate flood protection measures as part of reconstruction. Talk to the public information office and the emergency manager who are talking to the media and providing background information to the elected officials. Monitor the reports and articles and send corrections when needed.
4. **Take advantage of the event.** As noted in General Principle #10, now is the time to explain your program and how it made a difference.

- Collate and summarize the statistics on the flood. Clarify the causes and whether recent construction had an impact.
- Write a summary of what did and did not happen.
- Identify some properties that did not get damaged thanks to your regulations or mitigation work.
- Arrange for tours of the sites and interviews of the owners or residents.
- Remember the emotional aspect of the situation (see box).
- Organize a post-flood committee to guide recovery and redevelopment policies and to help identify mitigation opportunities (see "How They Did It: Rebuilding Resident Confidence" on page 19).

Facts vs. Emotions After a Flood

Experiments conducted in the United States in 1999 tested the following hypothesis: When a proposed public policy solution to the flood hazard is framed in an emotion-evoking manner it will be viewed as more salient by readers than when framed in a less emotion-evoking manner....

Findings: These experimental tests offer support for the theory that news reports on flooding that make use of emotion-evoking text and imagery can affect the importance and relevance individuals assign to the issue.

— From "*Telling the Story of Floods: News Framing and Emotion*" in Proceedings of the 2000 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, Austin, TX. Pages 314, 317