

Reclamation Manual

Policy

Subject: Floodplain Management

Purpose: To (1) reduce the vulnerability of the nation to loss of life and property and the disruption of societal and economic pursuits caused by flooding or facility operations; and (2) sustain, restore, or enhance the natural resources, ecosystems, and other functions of the floodplain.

Authority: Reclamation Project Act of 1902 and Supplementary Acts; Reclamation Safety of Dams Act of 1978 and Amendments of 1984; National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended); Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management; Executive Order 11990 Protection of Wetlands; Energy Policy Act (EPACT) of 1992; Principles and Guidelines for Planning Water and Related Land Resources (1983); Federal Water Project Recreation Act (as amended); Migratory Bird Conservation Act (as amended); Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act; Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991; and Project Specific Authorizations.

Contact: Water, Land, and Cultural Resources, D-5300
Facilities & Operations Support, D-5500

1. Floodplain Management Policy.

- A. Reclamation, both independently and in partnership with others, will pursue and encourage appropriate use of floodplains. The objectives are to (1) reduce the vulnerability of the nation to loss of life and property and the disruption of societal and economic pursuits caused by flooding or facility operations, and (2) sustain, restore, or enhance the natural resources, ecosystems, and other functions of the floodplain. Reclamation's floodplain management activities will seek to balance the sometimes competing uses of floodplains in a way that maximizes benefits to society.
- B. In accomplishing these objectives, emphasis will be given to (1) utilizing cost-effective nonstructural approaches to reduce potential flood damage and enhance the functions of floodplains, (2) encourage pursuit of opportunities to operate facilities or undertake activities that benefit functions of floodplains, (3) approach watershed flow management and flood risk assessments on a systems basis; and (4) assisting, through partnering, development and implementation of community based sustainable solutions to floodplain management problems that avoid repetitive losses and fiscal outlays. This emphasis is not intended to totally exclude structural approaches in accomplishing the objectives.

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- C. Reclamation's floodplain management responsibilities include, but are not limited to flow management, channel maintenance, control of floodplain encroachment, hazard mitigation on critical infrastructure, environmental preservation and restoration, emergency management and preparedness, public safety, flood recovery, and other activities and actions involving use of floodplains. Reclamation's activities will be managed according to applicable directives addressing these issues in the Floodplain Management Directives document. Example applications are discussed in the Floodplain Management Guidelines.

2. Definitions.

- A. **Floodplains** are the low lands adjoining the channel of a river, stream, watercourse, ocean, lake, or other body of water that have been or may be inundated by floodwater. Floodplain lands and adjacent waters combine to form a complex, dynamic physical and biological system that supports a variety of natural resource and societal functions.
- B. **Floodplain Management** is a continuous process of decisionmaking and subsequent implementation of those decisions with the goal being appropriate use of the nation's floodplains. Appropriate use is any activity or action that is compatible with both the acceptable risks to human life and property from floods, and the floodplain's functions.
- C. **Functions (Natural) of Floodplains** include, but are not limited to natural moderation of floods; fish, wildlife, and plant resources and habitat; groundwater recharge; and water quality maintenance.
- D. **Uses of Floodplains** include, but are not limited to stormwater management; erosion control; open space; natural beauty; opportunities for scientific study, outdoor education, recreation, and cultural preservation; and compatible economic utilization of floodplain resources by human society.
- E. **Nonstructural Measures** alleviate flood losses by modifying the susceptibility of land, people, and property to flood damage or by modifying the impact of flooding. Nonstructural measures include, but are not limited to flood warning, flood proofing, acquisition, relocation, and dikes around individual properties. Nonstructural measures can also be used to acquire, perpetuate, restore, and enhance the natural capability of wetlands and floodplains to retain excessive floodwaters, improve water quality, sustain stream flows, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

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- F. **Structural Measures** modify floods and associated erosion and sedimentation. Structural measures include, but are not limited to, floodwater retarding structures, channel work, levees and dikes, floodways, floodwater diversions, sediment basins, grade stabilization structures, and streambank stabilization.