

Virgin River Watershed Floodplain Management Strategy Meeting
St. George, Utah
August 14 2007

1. Approximately 17 people participated in the floodplain strategy meeting on August 14. Attendee list is attached. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update on the floodplain management strategy work to date and to develop management goals and actions for consideration in the strategy document.
2. National Flood Risk Management Program: Kim Gavigan (Corps) presented an overview of the program. The program mission is to integrate and synchronize the ongoing, diverse flood risk management projects, programs and authorities of the Corps of Engineers, and with counterpart projects, programs and authorities of FEMA, other Federal agencies, state organizations and regional and local agencies. Presentation is available for download at <http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/virginriver.htm>
3. Floodplain Management Strategy Update: Pat Quinn (JE Fuller) provided a status update on the strategy. The data collection effort is nearly completed having contacted as many stakeholders as possible via telephone and email. Approximately 51 were contacted throughout the watershed and asked for information to assist in understanding the problems, opportunities and constraints. Presentation is available for download at <http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/virginriver.htm>

Key points can be summarized into the following areas of challenges and opportunities:

Challenges

- Multiple flood hazards exist – Inundation, Erosion, Aggradation/degradation, Debris blockage
- Changes in watershed conditions directly impact floodplain management – Invasive species impacts, Vegetation changes in response to wildfire
- Land use planning/development directly impact floodplain management – Response to urbanization, Floodplain encroachment, Imperviousness of watershed cover
- Standardization/consistency issues exist – Technical design standards/guidelines, Floodplain regulations/ordinances, Permitting processes/outcomes

- Coordination/communication need improvement – Cross-jurisdictional agencies, Upper/lower watershed communities, Emergency response/non-emergency protocols
- Communities lack sufficient resources to address floodplain management issues at local level – Need coordination to pool/leverage available resources and take advantage of available existing programs/products

Opportunities

- Functional natural river reaches exist – Opportunities for reach preservation
- River restoration/maintenance activities on-going – Opportunities to apply non-conventional flood hazard assessment methods, to refine/implement mitigation actions, to inform design/ regulatory standards formulation
- Regulatory floodplain management tools available – Opportunities to prepare floodplain delineations and to provide draft floodplain regulations, drainage/erosion hazard ordinances to communities
- Joint venture funding – Opportunities to combine resources/ programs to fund vegetation management in conjunction with structural flood control
- Educational outreach to communities – Opportunities to use existing products or to develop new databases/informational materials/ and/or presentations for agencies, decision makers, and the public
- Communication Plan – Opportunities to streamline communication protocols through the use existing products or new database

Identification of the flood hazard and risk included the following key items.

- Inundation
- Erosion Hazard Areas / Delineations
- Sedimentation & Debris / Trends in Channel Change / Maintenance
- Response to Urbanization / Encroachment / Watershed Cover
- Response to Wildfire / Vegetation Changes
- Invasive Species Impacts / Tamarisk / Cheat Grass
- Flood Warning / Flood Response

4. Workshop discussion included goals and actions for floodplain management. In addition to the goals and actions identified in the presentation some additional items were discussed and listed by the group.

- Maintenance- need better consideration and planning for regular periodic maintenance of structures and projects. (e.g., sedimentation, bank stabilization, tamarisk, etc.)
- Need easier way to obtain permits for maintenance activities (i.e., annual maintenance agreement to allow channel vegetation management).
- Prioritize floodplain and erosion hazard delineations away from major water courses and recommend detailed studies where needed.
- Need to prioritize mitigation activities and assess the associated risks, (i.e., tamarisk and maintenance activities).
- Communication needs improved and funding is needed for that. A handbook with information on flood risks for decision makers, public, realtors and lenders would be beneficial communication. Model ordinances are also needed in several areas.
- Gauges- need more throughout the watershed, including for emergency alert during monsoons.
- Contact information to be shared in form of a book or database for both non-emergency uses and emergency response coordination.

5. Summary of information discussed from different entities is included below:

Santa Clara City- technical needs are largely addressed. Needed are: streamlined permitting for annual maintenance, early flood warning, flood response plans, handbook, funding or assistance in finding it such as describing priorities and deficiencies. Recommends a coordination committee or other organizational body to coordinate floodplain management strategy implementation activities similar to the committee set up to coordinate watershed fire management issues.

St George City- flood response plan, disaster response plan could be improved based upon 2005 flood experiences. An early alert system is also needed. Communicate flood hazard information focused on specific potential problems in the community to the public by sending a professional-looking brochure via a general mailing to residents.

Mohave County- Ordinances, mapping of washes, needed. Considering an ALERT system for Beaver Dam Wash. Discussion that Clark County is also interested in additional warning from upstream in the watershed.

Gunlock- Flooding occurred again a week ago, an organized alert and response plan is needed.

Washington County Water Conservancy Dist- Evaluation of the flood potential on Fort Pearce and Beaver Dam washes is needed.

Utah DWR- gauges are partially funded but cutbacks occurring. If the need for gauges is shown it may assist in maintaining funding.

When asked to prioritize needs the following were included.

WCWCD: tamarisk toolbox, permitting needs, early warning, Ft. Pearce and Beaver Dam wash flood risks addressed, communication plan.

Santa Clara- early warning, document needs for funding including benefits and risks, permitting for maintenance.

Mohave County- regulations and ordinances, expanded floodplain mapping.

Discussed that additional erosion hazard mapping is needed in several areas. There was also discussion of need for an ALERT system regionally.

6. Upcoming schedule includes a draft strategy to be delivered during the week of September 24 for comments from stakeholders. A follow up meeting to discuss the details and an implantation and communication plan is anticipated sometime the week of October 29. Final strategy should be completed the end of November.
7. Slides from presentations are included at the end of this memo.
8. Questions or comments may be directed to Scott Estergard at 602-640-2004 ext 242 or via email at scott.k.estergard@usace.army.mil

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