

Foreword

The Floodplain Management Forum was held on June 8, 2000, in Washington, DC. A diverse group of floodplain management experts participated in the Forum and discussed the future of floodplain management in the United States. The Forum is part of a continuing process to increase the public dialog and develop strategies that better protect and enhance our Nation's floodplains and reduce the costs of flood disasters. I commend the participants for an informative discussion and many thought-provoking recommendations and policy options. This report captures the major themes that were presented by the participants during the Forum. The themes present a challenge not only to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other Federal agencies but also to State governments, community officials, and individual citizens.

Since 1968 the National Flood Insurance Program's floodplain management component has served as the Federal Government's principal tool for realizing the better and wiser use of the Nation's floodplains. Much progress has been made during the past 30 years in addressing the Nation's flooding problems through those efforts. However, despite this progress, the number and severity of flood events and the costs of flood disasters continue to rise. To reverse this alarming trend, we must develop innovative strategies, implement improved incentives, and establish effective partnerships. We must broaden the focus from solely flood-loss reduction to the creation of sustainable communities and the protection of the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains. We should create and support comprehensive watershed solutions for reducing flood damage and protecting and restoring floodplains.

We are all jointly responsible for managing our Nation's floodplains. Governments must improve policies and programs to increase the capability of and reward individuals and communities that make wise land use decisions that encourage the building of sustainable communities. Government agencies must improve communication and coordination to establish a unified Federal effort in the shared goal of natural resource protection and restoration.

However, regulatory standards and technical expertise from the Government will not be enough. There must be commitment and investment from communities, businesses, citizens, and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive watershed plans and implement sound floodplain management; to share responsibility and accountability for land use decisions that put people and property at risk to flooding; and to not solely rely on Federal disaster recovery assistance. We must recognize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains and exploit the link between floodplain management and the economic sustainability and environmental quality within a community. *Project Impact* has shown that through collaborative partnerships and planning, we can create disaster-resistant communities while enhancing economic vitality and protecting environmental resources.

FEMA looks ahead to continuing the national dialog and collaboratively working together to achieve these goals. We will never move ahead as a Nation on these issues until we all move ahead together.

James L. Witt
Director
Federal Emergency Management Agency