



FLOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 4, 2003

MEETING SUMMARY

The Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) meeting chaired by Bob Hainly began at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission office (DRBC) in West Trenton, N.J.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 3, 2003 MEETING

Mr. Zagone requested the phrase "the Corps" be changed to "FEMA" in the first and second sentences of the second paragraph on page 9. There being no other comments, corrections or additions to the Minutes, they were approved.

Mr. Fromuth announced that with the retirement of Dr. Tortoriello, DRBC Operations Branch Head, there have been changes within the branch and that an Engineer/Scientist II position will be open shortly. The position will be mostly hydrologic support for the branch with a large portion of the time devoted to flood loss reduction.

ACTIVITIES DURING FEBRUARY/MARCH '03 FLOOD POTENTIAL CONDITIONS

Mr. Fromuth commented that the Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS) products currently available were of great benefit to staff during late February and March when high water was a concern. Many questions could be answered by explaining the products and directing individuals to the AHPS website where they were able to obtain information directly.

He then noted that a press release was issued February 20 by DRBC addressing the high water situation and possible flooding. A statement currently on DRBC's website links people interested in flood information to the most real time information available through the AHPS sites, as well as, more educational information. Other additions to DRBC's website are links to the emergency manager's pages of the National Weather Service (NWS) for Mt. Holly, N.J. and Binghamton, N.Y.

Lastly, Mr. Fromuth noted there was a telephone conference with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the NWS on March 17 due to a high water forecast when there was still significant snow pack.

As coordinator for the Office of Emergency Management for Lambertville, Dave Burd noted that the AHPS information he obtains and is able to disseminate is extremely helpful. He asked that since the Lambertville-New Hope location has a manual reading through the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission a stage be established at which the data is provided to AHPS.

Mr. Baumgardner of the NWS stated there are plans to move AHPS in the direction of flash flood areas involving smaller streams. Currently, AHPS is being developed through the River Forecast Center, which involves larger stream locations. He noted that both Mt. Holly and Binghamton would be involved in the further development of AHPS in the flash flood areas.

Mr. Hainly noted that USGS has a water quality project currently underway on the mainstem of the

Susquehanna River around Harrisburg and the Chesapeake Bay area. As a result of AHPS, the USGS staff has been able to utilize the precipitation forecasts to determine the probability of achieving various target flows to obtain water samples.

Mr. Fromuth noted that AHPS is also being used at the DRBC for water quality monitoring and sampling programs.

Mr. Baumgardner encouraged documented continued positive support of AHPS as weekly and monthly reports and reviews of weather service programs are provided by the regional offices to the head of the Weather Service.

AHPS DEPLOYMENT IN THE DELAWARE RIVER BASIN AND DISCUSSION OF PRODUCTS

Mr. Hainly introduced Mr. Baumgardner of the National Weather Service (NWS). He asked that the presentation not only include a discussion of the products but to also provide background on the funding for AHPS, what allows the NWS to move forward on AHPS deployment in the basin, and how the NWS's effort fits in with furthering the committee's flood warning recommendations.

Mr. Baumgardner provided the committee with a presentation on the AHPS program, which is about the enhancement of flood warnings and water resource forecasts, as well as, meeting certain customer needs such as graphical products and longer lead times.

The three different levels in the AHPS program are:

- Basic -- Implemented at each AHPS forecast location or every River Forecast Center forecast location.
 - Enhanced river level or water supply forecast provided;
 - Observed river levels at flood only forecast locations not in flood;
 - Flood probability information.
- Full -- To be implemented as appropriate at AHPS forecast locations.
 - Flash flood forecast tools;
 - Short and medium term probability information;
 - Low flow and drought products.
- Partnered -- With partnered data to be implemented as appropriate at AHPS forecast locations. Local partnership can be varied from data mapping to partial funding.
 - Working with other agencies or organizations that have DEM data and other information necessary for flood forecast inundation maps;
 - Generating and displaying the maps.

Mr. Baumgardner noted that all of the Susquehanna, Passaic and Raritan rivers would be completed by September 30, 2003. All of the Delaware, Lehigh and Schuylkill rivers are scheduled to be implemented in the basic AHPS by the first half of fiscal year 2004 (March 31, 2004). The last half of fiscal year 2004, the NWS is scheduled to do the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers and in 2005 the remaining rivers in the mid-Atlantic forecast region.

He then noted that calibration of hydrologic models is now complete for all of the Susquehanna, Delaware, Lehigh, Schuylkill, Passaic, Raritan, Potomac and Shannondoah rivers.

Mr. Baumgardner then discussed the basic AHPS webpage that shows the present configuration of the service areas of the different weather forecast offices for the eastern region and the proposed configuration, which would take on the appearance similar to the central region for a national graphic presentation.

He recapped the basic and full AHPS levels by noting the basic AHPS is getting the forecasts out on the website and will be completed by March 31, 2004 for the basin. He noted the full AHPS is a five-day

probabilistic river forecast based on current basin conditions, short-term probabilistic QAF, QPF scenarios based on comparison of historic forecast and observed maps and expected value plots for ten locations. The full AHPS model also includes minor, moderate and major flood levels. This level will be implemented in communities when the NWS partners with the communities. Partnered AHPS involves flood inundation maps. As the NWS does not have DEM or GIS data, partnering with other agencies, organizations or communities will provide information available from all aspects.

Mr. Baumgardner requested committee feedback on areas of interest. The more information provided to the NWS helps improve the tools currently available to assist everyone.

Lastly, Mr. Baumgardner noted that the NWS is in contact with The Coastal Services Center out of Charleston, SC, which is part of NOAA. They are currently working on a project with the Atlanta River Forecast Center on flood inundation mapping and hydraulic modeling on the Tar River in North Carolina and have expressed extreme interest in partnering with the NWS on the Delaware River.

Some discussion occurred about how different agencies, organizations, and communities are already merging resources to produce the best end result possible. It was noted that with continued support from the communities, FEMA and now the NWS positive results will continue to occur.

Concluding the presentation, the following websites for drought and flood information was provided:

<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/marfc/>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/oh>

<http://www.drought.noaa.gov/>

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov>

Mr. Baumgardner again encouraged the committee to provide feedback to him within the next month as to what type of information each committee representative has and is looking for and location designations for full AHPS components beyond the basic AHPS program as the NWS budget for 2004 will be set prior to the committee's next meeting date.

ON-LINE FLOOD HAZARD ASSESSMENT DATA ANALYSIS PROPOSAL

Mr. Fromuth noted a written proposal was prepared on the concept presented at the last committee meeting, which was to have a Delaware River Basin On-Line Hazard Assessment site. It would provide information concerning the 100-year flood plain or the latest information the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had available. In today's handouts, D2 is the proposal for development of the idea. It was presented to the DRBC Information Management Advisory Committee (IMAC) in March.

As there were concerns about the quality of the data being made available, it was suggested a data analysis be performed. Handout D-1 is a proposal from CyberTech, the consultant New Jersey has retained to work on the i-Map system (on-line ability to do overlays). The current DRBC map software CyberTech has written does not include a flood component. The proposal was to develop a work plan and perform a data analysis for approximately \$15,000.

Discussions with Mr. Mangeri during the past few weeks revealed that FEMA is moving ahead with this very same aspect, a website with the address "HazardMaps.Gov" can be accessed through Internet Explorer. It provides a multi-hazard mapping capability for risks from different events, including flooding.

The committee agreed that this FEMA product should be further explored as it addresses much of the proposal that was developed for the Delaware basin. Mr. Fromuth noted the product doesn't complete all the goals of the original proposal but it is a start and perhaps it can be tailored to the Delaware River Basin so a product can still be delivered for the DRBC's website. One point of interest made was that FEMA had a greater chance of keeping the data up-to-date and getting the best data available. Mr. Mangeri stated he will be

meeting with FEMA authorities in the next week and will check on the status of their direction with this program.

FLOOD WARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Fromuth informed the committee that each year the DRBC directors attempt to obtain support from Congress for the original Flood Warning Recommendations plan put together by the committee a few years ago. He provided the committee with a copy of a letter of support from Congressman Rob Andrews to Chairman Frank Wolf of the Subcommittee on Commerce as well as information from the Northeast Midwest Institute to provide examples of DRBC's efforts.

He commented that the results so far may not be what the committee expects by means of direct funding but he believes it has assisted in establishing priorities with funding being indirectly made available for portions of the recommendations. For example, the fact that the flood warning recommendations have been linked to AHPS may have assisted the AHPS program because there was a consistency and the wording that appeared in the last budget to continue the Susquehanna River work and repeat it through a similar effort in the Delaware River was a directive to the NWS.

Mr. Hainly noted that after the last committee meeting when it was announced that the NWS received funding to commence working on AHPS in the Delaware Basin, a small group met to discuss what this meant. One of the things discussed was that the NWS would like some assurance that the stream gages that support the forecast points in the Delaware Basin would be funded and maintained for the long-term. In addition, there may be need for some new gages.

Mr. Hainly further stated that in order to ensure that stream gage funding is stable, two approaches were considered. One was to use what was done in the Susquehanna River Basin, where Congress appropriated funding to the NWS to support the USGS stream gaging activities and the support of real-time telemeters in the Susquehanna Basin. The second approach was to combine the USGS National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and AHPS in an attempt to get them moving in parallel directions and to support the stream gages where AHPS is being implemented. The goal of the USGS program is to provide more federal funding to the USGS to support the mission of stream gaging.

Subsequently, Mr. Hainly had a teleconference with several associates from the USGS Surface Water Division who control the national program and proposed the second idea to them. The positive outcome of the teleconference was that they support the idea of the priorities of the NSIP program move along with the AHPS program so that if more funding becomes available it would be moved into those basins where AHPS has been or is being implemented. The negative outcome of the teleconference was that there is no money available for fiscal year '03 and probably not any additional money available in fiscal year '04. However, depending on federal budget situation, there may be funds available in '05.

Mr. Hainly requested that if new gages or telemetry are installed by any of the USGS districts that the information is passed onto Mr. Fromuth so that the map can be kept current of what is available in the basin.

On a somewhat related topic, Mr. Kane of NYC DEP informed the committee that a discussion among agencies and public representatives will occur to discuss emergency action plans on the Cannonsville and Downsville dams with regard to minor and major failures on the dams. He asked that if any committee member feels their agency would be interested in being invited to this meeting, to please inform him of such.

BASIN PLAN ISSUES

Mr. Fromuth informed the committee that the DRBC staff has produced a second draft of the Basin Plan, which will be discussed at a Watershed Advisory Council Workshop (WAC) on June 10, and 11. The DRBC commissioners' comments on it will be discussed at the workshop, as well as laying out the adoption process

for the plan. Mr. Burd, who is a member of the WAC and the FAC, will represent the FAC at the workshop.

There are objectives in the plan that have had a lot of committee input and there are some subject areas that the DRBC may not have traditionally dealt with nor are there organized committees to deal with them. One such item being stormwater. Because of this, a Land Use Advisory Committee was formed for the Basin Plan. It provided three objectives, which are listed in the plan under Goal 3.1 -- Restoration of Hydrologic Cycle Integrity.

Handout F-1, a copy of the goal and objectives, was provided to the committee. Mr. Fromuth summarized the three objectives as follows: the first relates to land use that has as minimal impact on stormwater as possible; the second deals with retrofitting; and the third discourages land use that makes hazardous conditions worse.

The FAC was provided this information because stormwater contributes to flooding. Mr. Fromuth asked the committee for feedback if they are aware of programs or contact people within their states or organizations to provide more assistance with these objectives. Mr. Kane requested Mr. Principe and Mr. Rush of New York State be made aware of this information as they can possibly provide additional information.

Mr. Fromuth reviewed the following additional handouts related to the Basin Plan. F-2 is the DRBC webpage that lists the documents available on the plan. The plan consists of a write-up that provides a general description, a purpose, and then goals and objectives for five Key Result Areas of Water Resources Management. The plan is supposed to apply basinwide strategy. It is designed to be a guidance document, which is complimented with matrixes such as the ones the FAC worked on. F-4 is the Implementation Steps that were laid out for the two Objectives. Table A is for the Flood Plan (Objective A - Upgrade and Modernization of Flood Warning Capabilities) and Table B is for everything else involving flood loss reduction/mitigation (Objective B - Characterize Flood Damage Risk and Prioritize Actions). F-5, which is Key Result Area (KRA) 2 of the Basin Plan was reviewed and discussed.

Mr. Gilman voiced strong opposition by himself and other New Jersey representatives to the wording throughout the KRA 2 document, and provided written comments for use in making revisions.

Mr. Burd acknowledged that whatever plan is developed must be approved and endorsed by the basin states. He further commented that when such a large document is prepared to be accepted by so many entities while staying consistent with the political initiatives of the states, etc., some of the wording may become soft.

Mr. Mangeri commented that perhaps review of the document should reveal that specific statements are "textbook" but should be abandoned for realities. Everything he has been taught about mitigation or risk management indicates it must be reasonably acceptable to the people that will be implementing it or it is worthless.

Mr. Fromuth stated that the FAC's input regarding the narrative is critical at this time as the document is still in draft form, but the DRBC is moving forward to have the plan approved by the governors. He further commented that staff would be advised that the committee has requested to make changes to it. Mr. Fromuth and Mr. Burd requested all comments be submitted within the week so they can be compiled for the upcoming WAC meeting on June 10-11.

Mr. Burd noted that at a March WAC workshop meeting, commission representatives were to go back to their respective state agencies with the document to determine where there is discontent and/or common ground and provide this information at the June meeting.

Lastly, Mr. Fromuth discussed Handout F-3, a notice from the Association of State Floodplain Managers regarding the status of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding proposal. Funding through the program, as it is currently known, will be eliminated in favor of a competitive pre-disaster mitigation program. He further noted that the notice provides various names and addresses of people who should be contacted if

anyone wishes to state their objections and comments. It was agreed that individual letters rather one group letter could provide better results.

Mr. Mangeri noted that this is the third time HMGP funding has been eliminated from the budget but has always been reappropriated. Last year it was reappropriated at 7.5 percent rather than 15 percent. He further noted that all New Jersey state mitigation officers and state directors have been requested to put together letters of protest to this proposal. If it weren't for this program, New Jersey would not have received over 11.5 million dollars in federal funding in the last 10 years, which mostly went to direct acquisition of properties in high-hazard areas.

Mr. Mangeri further commented that this is happening because there is a perception that the program did not work. He noted that this perception stems from a flawed General Accounting Office (GAO) report that used inadequate data to support its findings related to the HMGP. Mr. Mangeri noted that over the last three years it has been suggested that a "blend" program with both pre- and post-disaster components would result in the best outcome.

Mr. Zagone also commented that in many other states, matching funds for such a proposed program depend upon a federal disaster declaration. He also commented that FEMA is supporting a competitive type of mitigation activity, but they are definitely not supporting not funding the HMGP. They would like to see a blend of the HMGP and PDM programs. He lastly noted that Secretary Ridge of Homeland Security has apparently heard about this situation so any connection that can be made to Secretary Ridge could prove beneficial as well.

Ms. Lear, NJ Office of Emergency Management, informed the committee that they are currently doing a project with Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) and counties selected with the highest number of repetitive flood losses. Workshops were held in each of the counties to present the PDM program to their municipalities for encouragement to do the required planning. With the help of Stevens Institute to compile the data from the municipalities and put it into a Mitigation 20/20 database which will then be used for the county plans that will be submitted to FEMA. She noted they are now looking for counties for next year's program.

Mr. Mangeri stated that the Mitigation 20/20 software is an access-based software program to assist in automating the planning process. The state has acquired the complete set of the software so every county in the State of New Jersey is receiving Mitigation 20/20 software to support local mitigation planning. And the towns that have heard the presentation at their workshops are eager to participate.

He then spoke of this year's PDM funds of approximately \$240,000 available and after discussions with Clark Gilman, State Floodplain Manager, he proposed to DRBC to use the funds for the same type of things being done for the other counties for the counties in the DRBC jurisdiction. A task list has been provided to the DRBC for consideration. Due to a deadline by the end of July to inform FEMA of the state's intention for the money, a proposal must be in place including matching funds in a relatively short amount of time.

Lastly, Mr. Mangeri noted the State of New Jersey has been informed that they will be receiving Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) funds of approximately \$560,000 for both planning and project initiative. A search is currently on for municipalities to do flood mitigation planning. He also commented that Harmony Township, which is in DRBC's jurisdiction, was recently awarded funds to elevate two properties with history of repetitive flooding.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Flood Advisory Committee was scheduled for September 3, 2003. (Subsequently changed to October 2, 2003.)

FLOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JUNE 4, 2003

ATTENDANCE

NAME	AGENCY
BAUMGARDNER, Thomas	National Weather Service - Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center
BURD, David K.	Merrill Creek Reservoir
FROMUTH, Rick	DRBC
GILMAN, Clark	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
HAINLY, Bob	U.S. Geological Survey - Pennsylvania
KANE, John F.	New York City Department of Environmental Protection
LEAR, Kathy	New Jersey Office of Emergency Management
MANGERI, Anthony S.	New Jersey State Police - Office of Emergency Management
REUBER, Michael	National Park Service - Upper Delaware
RUPERT, Clarke	DRBC
SCHAFFER, David J.	U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service
SCHOPP, Robert	U.S. Geological Survey - Trenton, New Jersey
TUDOR, Robert	DRBC
ZAGONE, Joseph N.	U.S. Department of Homeland Security - Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region III

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