

THE FLOOD CURRENT

JULY-AUGUST 1993

Program Funds Flood Projects, Prevents Future Damages

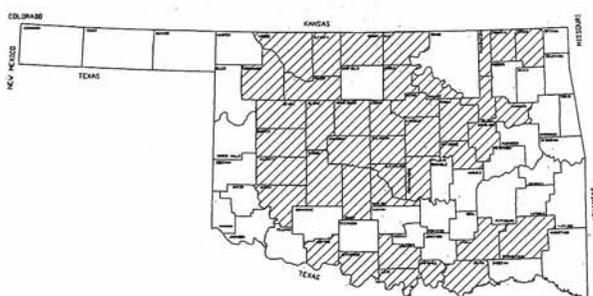
Responding to May floods which caused more than \$10 million in damages throughout Oklahoma, the OWRB and other agencies are working to identify flood mitigation projects that could

the potential for future damages as well as the need for state and federal financial assistance," he adds.

Of the 41 federal disaster declarations in 1991, 30 were caused by flooding. From 1982 through 1991, nine such declarations were made in Oklahoma resulting in more than \$50 million in federal aid to the state.

Morris is also the OWRB representative on the State Hazard Mitigation Site Survey Team, formed to identify projects in the disaster areas that could be eligible for HMGP

grants. The team, which includes officials from FEMA and the Oklahoma Office of Civil Emergency Management, recently toured areas of the state hit hardest by the devastating May floods.



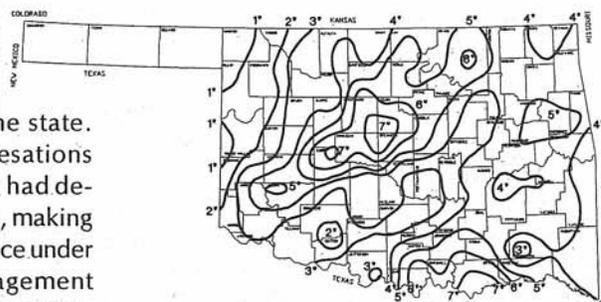
OKLAHOMA COUNTIES DECLARED FEDERAL DISASTER AREAS

MAY 1993 FLOODS

soon be eligible for federal funding.

From May 7 to May 9, heavy rainfall -- in some areas, totaling more than seven inches in 24 hours -- caused widespread flooding problems which claimed the lives of four Oklahomans. Less tragic, but more costly, was the ensuing damage to infrastructure, homes, property and businesses in the state. Within three days following cessations of the rains, President Clinton had declared 43 counties disaster areas, making them eligible for federal assistance under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

According to Ken Morris, OWRB floodplain coordinator, the HMGP was created in 1988 to reduce a community's vulnerability to flooding and related natural disasters. "In turn, projects funded through the program decrease



STATE PRECIPITATION TOTALS

May 7 through May 10, 1993

Data courtesy Oklahoma Climatological Survey and National Weather Service

"Our primary objective is to prevent, or at least decrease the likelihood of, future flood-related disasters -- especially loss of life," Morris said.

The HMGP provides a 50/50 cost-

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Common Myths About the NFIP

Myth: You can't buy flood insurance if you are located in a high-risk flood area.

Fact: You can buy federal flood insurance no matter where you live if your community belongs to the NFIP. In fact, as a condition to receiving a federally backed mortgage loan, borrowers whose property is located within a Special Flood Hazard Area are **required by law** to purchase flood insurance.

Myth: You can't buy flood insurance immediately before or during a flood.

Fact: You can purchase flood coverage at any time. However, there is a five-day waiting period after you have applied and paid for the premium before the policy is effective. No waiting period is required if a property's title is transferred. New policies do not cover a "loss in progress" and coverage cannot be increased during this initial one-day period.

Myth: Flood insurance is available only for homeowners.

Fact: Flood insurance is available to protect homes, condominiums, apartments, commercial structures and their contents.

Myths, Continued on page 2

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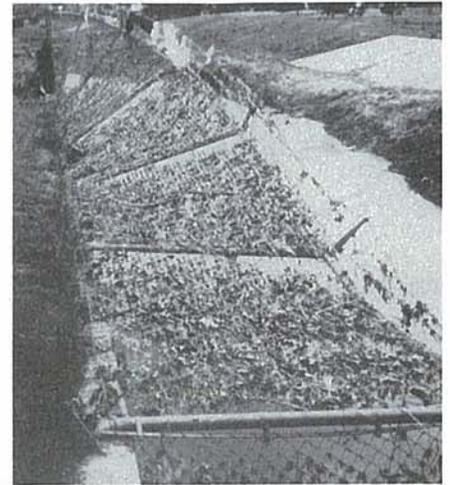
Program, continued from page 1
 match for both public and private projects, including those for structural hazard control, such as debris basins or floodwalls; retrofitting, or floodproofing to protect structures from future damage; acquisition and relocation of structures; warning systems and accompanying disaster preparedness and mitigation plans; and development of state or local protective standards.

Findings and project recommendations of the Site Survey Team are currently under review by the Interagency Hazard Mitigation Team, a second, much larger contingent of state and federal agencies involved in flood fore-

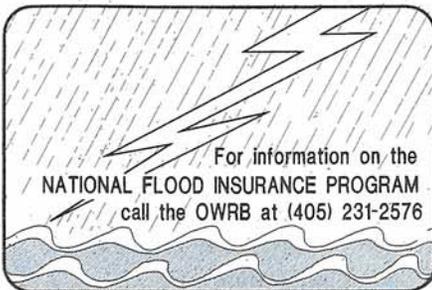
casting, preparedness, management and response. A final report will be released in the coming weeks.

Morris encourages local communities in the disaster areas to take a more active role in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. "We want floodplain administrators throughout the state to assess their flooding situations and recommend local projects that are needed to prevent a recurrence of what happened in May. These officials know their communities and counties better than anyone," he said.

To accelerate the grant process, Morris also hopes that Oklahoma will someday establish a ready-made funding source for the state's required 50 percent match.



Fences in floodways often catch leaves and other debris that obstruct flood flows. Break-away fence posts, an example of projects eligible under the HMGP, allow floodwaters to pass safely downstream.



Myths, continued from page 4

Myth: You can't buy flood insurance if your property has been flooded.

Fact: It doesn't matter how many times your home, apartment or business has flooded, you can purchase flood insurance if your community is an NFIP member.

Myth: Only residents of high-risk flood zones need to insure property.

Fact: It is advisable to have flood insurance even if you live in an area which is not flood-prone. One-third of the NFIP's claims come from outside high-risk areas.

Myth: Federal disaster assistance will pay for flood damage.

Fact: Before a community is eligible for disaster assistance, it must be declared a federal disaster area. (Such declarations are awarded in less than 50 percent of flooding incidents.) Federal flood insurance premiums are usually less expensive than federal disaster loan payments. If you are uninsured and receive federal disaster assistance after a flood, you must purchase flood insurance to receive future disaster relief.

Be Aware of Flood Policy Regulations

The following story, from the FEMA newsletter *Watermark*, highlights the need for greater public awareness regarding flood policy requirements. Educational efforts should not only target property owners such as "Mable" (an alias), but also those involved in buying, selling and renting properties exposed to flood hazards. Insurance agents, in particular, should be aware of their obligation to provide flood insurance, if at all possible, to eligible policy applicants -- as demonstrated by the following true account.

Mable, 66-years-old, lives in Texas with her 86-year-old mother. Their only income is social security and they rent a home in what is considered a low-rent part of town. Mable's home was flooded in May 1989 and, because of her limited income and lack of flood insurance coverage, she applied for and received \$10,300 in federal assistance to cover the loss of personal belongings and household furnishings.

Mable lives in the 100-year floodplain and, as a result, she was required by law to purchase a flood insurance policy in the amount of the grant she received from the federal government. Mable called every insurance company in town but had no success in obtaining a flood policy on the contents of her home. Some agents told her flood insurance was not available for contents only (untrue); others said she could not purchase flood insurance because she resided in the 100-year floodplain (also untrue); still others told her they did not write policies in her area (probably untrue). Frustrated and confused, Mable abandoned her efforts to obtain flood insurance and, instead, hoped for the best.

Luck was not with Mable -- she was flooded again the following year. She applied for another federal grant but her request was denied because she had been required to purchase a flood insurance policy and keep it in force for three years as a condition of receiving disaster assistance the previous year. As a result, Mable and her mother have permanently lost almost all of their valued possessions because they were unable to locate an informed insurance agent who recognized his or her civic responsibility to protect and serve other residents of the community.

It is likely that there are other Mables in the U.S. who will become future victims of a similar situation. While only a minority of insurance agents are unaware of flood insurance policy regulations, citizens who depend upon these individuals often suffer.