

THE FLOOD CURRENT

MAY - JUNE 1999

Buy-Out Legislation, Workshops Usher In Flood Awareness Month

Ken Morris, Oklahoma NFIP Coordinator

This year has been a busy one for members of the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association. The organization hosted two important events -- the Spring Technical Conference in Tulsa and the annual Legislative Reception at the State Capitol.

The March 9 reception, attended by more than 200 Capitol residents, gave the OFMA membership an ex-

cellent opportunity to share with legislators the many benefits of wise floodplain management and flood damage mitigation in Oklahoma. Central to these issues is House Bill 1841, signed by Gov. Keating April 6, which creates a state flood hazard mitigation program fund to assist state communities in reducing their repetitive loss properties. Passage of this important measure demonstrates that Oklahoma's governor and legislature intend to take a proactive stance regarding flood mitigation. I express gratitude to the many individuals who supported enactment of HB 1841, including authors Rep.

Larry Rice and Sen. Kevin Easley; Albert Ashwood, Director of the Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management; Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director; Paul Zachary, OFMA chair; Danny George, Oklahoma Municipal League; and numerous support staff of the OWRB, ODCEM and House of Representatives. Next year, the Legislature will consider funding levels for the flood hazard mitigation program.

In the near future, the OWRB and OFMA members would like to see the legislature address unimproved real estate disclosure for floodplain lands. Too often, citizens are unaware that the land they purchase is in a flood hazard area. Then they are frequently faced with prohibitive construction costs to

build structures above the established base flood elevation.

Earlier this month, the OWRB also hosted our annual series of one-day floodplain management workshops in Norman, Tulsa, Woodward and Lawton. This outreach program provides an excel-

lent opportunity for community floodplain managers from across the state to keep abreast of the latest NFIP compliance requirements and related regulations as well as measures to improve local floodplain management programs.

I also want to encourage all state floodplain officials to attend the 23rd Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers in Portland, Oregon, May 23-28. The theme is "Planning Ahead: Flood Loss Reduction in the 21st Century." The program, which includes the unveiling of the national floodplain managers' certification accreditation, looks excellent and will provide a great learning opportunity. Remember OFMA is a Chapter member of ASFPM, Inc. If you're interested in attending, please give me a call at 405-530-8840.

We are again honored that Governor Keating has proclaimed May 1999 as "Flood Awareness Month" in Oklahoma. Historically, Oklahoma's worst flood disasters occur that month and most, but not all, warrant federal aid. For those who live in a flood-risk area, the absolute best form of protection against flood-induced, personal economic ruin is the purchase of flood insurance. For all floodplain managers in Oklahoma, Flood Awareness Month is an excellent time to encourage your residents to purchase flood insurance. And remember, use good judgement when building. It's always better to build up and away from the water! □



Ken Morris listens to questions concerning HB 1841 posed by Representative Barbara Staggs.



Senator Paul Muegge visits with Caroly Schultz of the OFMA during the reception at the Capitol.

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REMEMBER

*Don't Drive
Into Floodwaters!*

May is Flood Awareness Month



Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association Board members display proclamation signed by Governor Keating declaring May Flood Awareness Month. Left, Cliff Pittner, McAlester; Anna Lee, Woodward; Ken Morris, OWRB; Barbara Hall, Oklahoma City; Ron Flanagan, OFMA vice-chair, Tulsa; Paul Zachary, chair, Tulsa; Hank Elling, OWRB, Lawton.

Gov. Keating Signs Bill Enabling Flood Hazard Mitigation Fund

A bill signed by Governor Keating on April 6 could help turn the tide on Oklahoma flood waters. Senator Kevin Easley and Representative Larry Rice authored House Bill 1841, the Oklahoma Flood Hazard Mitigation Act.

The measure is designed to provide a fund from which municipalities can draw loans or grants to acquire repetitive flood loss structures in the regulatory floodplain and move them to higher ground.

House Bill 1841 also expands uses of the Statewide Water Development Revolving Fund, allowing creation of a flood hazard mitigation account within the Revolving Fund to be administered by the OWRB. Proponents of the new law see it as means to prevent property owners from building in the floodplain; encourage the purchase of flood insurance; reduce the cost of disaster response and recovery operations; and encourage cities and towns to develop a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan. It establishes the State Hazard Mitigation Team.

Should the legislature later appro-

priate money, or funds be made available from other sources to support the program, the fund will be used for flood mitigation opportunities at the local level, with the local jurisdictions responsible for at least 25 percent of the costs if a grant is used, or for the entire amount of funds if a loan is used. Hazard mitigation project eligibility is clearly defined in federal administrative procedures, and those procedures will be tailored to Oklahoma's program.

How will projects be reviewed for eligibility?

The State Hazard Mitigation Team will be made up from its members of 13 state agencies and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The team will have the primary responsibility of reviewing all flood mitigation project applications submitted by the local jurisdictions and recommending an order of priority for approval and funding.

Members will be actively involved in reviewing all applications submit-

NFIP Workshops Scheduled

As the designated coordinating agency for the National Flood Insurance Program in Oklahoma, the OWRB sponsors regular workshops on the program. It is the goal of the NFIP to make low-cost flood insurance available to property owners or renters whose homes lie in the floodplain, thereby reducing losses of lives and property to flooding.

The OWRB conducted workshops in Norman and Tulsa earlier this month and announces two more one-day workshops for local floodplain administrators in Woodward and Lawton. Workshops are free and begin at 9 a.m.

Woodward - May 11, 1999

High Plains Institute of Technology
3921 34th Street

Lawton - May 13, 1999

Great Plains Area Vo-Tech
4500 SW Lee Boulevard
Bldg. 600, Room 656

Although there is no charge, NFIP Coordinator Ken Morris requests advance registration by phone. For more information or to register, please call 405-530-8800.

ted by the local jurisdictions for use of the funds. The intent of the program is to help communities that are helping themselves. Project priorities will be developed and funding will be provided based upon locally demonstrated self-help initiatives.

Why do we need it?

The estimated dollar amount for damages to residences as a result of flooding in Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Miami equals approximately \$12,400 per residence per flood event. Recent information provided by FEMA indicates that the state has 664 properties that have repetitive losses -- which means the properties have flooded more than twice.

It is estimated that only about 20 percent of the residential structures that flood throughout the state are covered by flood insurance. Clearly, with approval of HB 1841, Governor Keating and the Oklahoma Legislature have taken a giant step toward enabling removal of repetitive loss properties from the floodplain. Funding and development of a fine tuned and coordinated state and local action plan can indeed turn the tide on Oklahoma's costly flood waters. □