

THE FLOOD CURRENT

MARCH --APRIL 1992

Gov. Walters Proclaims March Flood Awareness Month

Because March marks the unofficial beginning of Oklahoma's flood season and to make citizens cognizant of flooding problems and solutions, Governor David Walters has designated March as "Flood Awareness Month."

"The spring flood season is one of the most dangerous times of year. The Governor's proclamation in 1991 was of tremendous help to the OWRB in educating the public on flood safety procedures and floodplain management techniques and spreading the word about the availability of affordable flood insurance," said Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator.

Oklahoma has experienced flood disasters since before statehood. Of

the 30 presidentially declared disasters in the state since 1955, 24 have involved flooding. In an effort to mitigate such emergencies, the OWRB was named the state coordinating agency for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by Governor Dewey Bartlett in 1969. The NFIP assists Oklahomans by making flood insurance available at affordable rates and helping communities to make wise decisions concerning floodplain use.

"Many property owners and renters do not realize that their homeowners' policies do not offer protection against flood losses," Morris points out.

As part of Flood Awareness Month,

several flood insurance/management meetings have been scheduled across the state. The Water Board, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and several sub-state planning districts, will host four floodplain administration workshops to update state and local officials on floodplain management activities in Oklahoma. The dates and locations are March 5, Wilburton; March 17, Muskogee; March 19, Miami; and April 2, Duncan. For more information or to register, call Morris at (405) 231-2533.

Finally, FEMA is sponsoring agent/lender combined workshops on March 31 in Oklahoma City at the Holiday Inn, 3535 N.W. 39th Expressway; and April 2 in Tulsa at the Holiday Inn, 8181 East Skelly Drive. The cost is \$25; to register, call Deborah Frank at (713) 690-0115.



Don't get caught high and dry by rising floodwaters—BUY FLOOD INSURANCE!

All Floodplain Uses Deserve Scrutiny

In the business of promoting floodplain management and risk reduction one question always haunts us—What is the best land use within the floodplain?

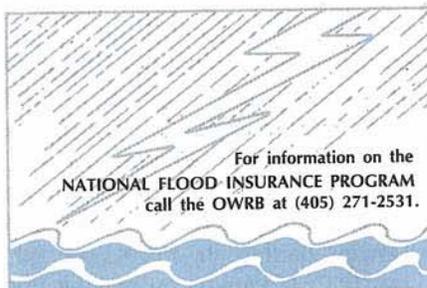
The best use is that which imposes no human designed uses and allows the floodplain to continue its natural function. While it is true that recreational uses are probably the most compatible, we must understand that even these uses will have an impact on the floodplain. Recreational uses are not a panacea. Within the floodplain there are many subclassifications, including wetlands, floodways, floodway fringes, coastal high hazard areas, barrier islands, channels, sand dunes and riparian zones. Each has a differing set of characteristics which must be used in guiding both natural and designed uses.

For example, consider the riparian zone—technically, the adjacent area along the banks of rivers and streams which has been expanded to include areas bordering springs, wet meadows, ponds, lakes and reservoirs. Some areas are able to withstand heavy use by humans with little damage to the ecosystem; other areas are very fragile and can be severely damaged by even moderate use. Some areas recover quickly from impacts; others will take years.

Even seemingly harmless uses (hunting, fishing and other recreational activities) can damage the floodplain. Access to humans and motorized vehicles can harm vegetation, cause damage to stream banks, lead to excessive erosion, cause loss of habitat and nutrients and disrupt the food chain. In turn, such problems

can lead to changes in stream width and depth and water temperature, a decrease in the underlying water table and an overall change in the area's natural characteristics. Recreational use of a floodplain can, in fact, destroy the very resources which originally gave value to the area and render it useless for its natural purpose.

Excerpted from the Texas Water Commission's Floodplain Management Newsletter, Spring 1991



Project Improves Bixby Drainage

Flooding and drainage problems in Bixby have been alleviated somewhat through a recent channelization project, according to Ken Morris, of the OWRB's Engineering Division.

"Bixby has had numerous flooding problems over the years, primarily due to the presence of two drainage ditches built in the 1920's as agricultural levees. Accumulation of brush, trees and various debris and increased urbanization in the area have decreased the ditches' ability to accommodate elevated flows," Morris pointed out.

Late last year, OWRB and Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives performed a community

Verify Flood Insurance

Residents are asked to be aware of recent attempts by some lenders to unnecessarily compel the purchase of flood insurance by property owners residing outside of designated floodplains.

"Several residents in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa areas have received letters from firms which have misled them into purchasing flood insurance when in fact they are not required to," said Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator.

"In these cases, we suggest that property owners contact their lenders and ask them to verify in writing whether the structure securing their loan is located in the special flood hazard area. Such a determination is the responsibility of the lender, not the borrower," he stresses.

assistance visit with Bixby officials in an attempt to solve the recurring flooding nuisance. As a result, the city was required to complete flood prevention modifications by March. Three floodways which flow through Bixby, all tributaries of the Arkansas River, are now being cleaned out and better maintenance measures will be implemented to prevent future problems.

"Bixby officials have worked diligently toward compliance with state and federal floodplain management regulations. They deserve much credit for their efforts to alleviate their flooding problems," Morris emphasized.

Fry 2 Ditch, a 70-year-old agricultural drainage canal, before and after being purged of vegetation and debris. The levee is one of three sites included in Bixby's flood management compliance scheme. Better maintenance will allow the areas to remain relatively free of material which inhibits the flow of floodwaters.

