# MITIGATION Minute

NOVEMBER 2024

## Contents



## Three Forks Confluence Project Moves Forward

The city of Three Forks was awarded $4,152,375 in FEMA funding for the Jefferson River Flood Mitigation Project. The project will create a conveyance channel and culvert crossing designed to capture overflow flooding from the Jefferson River before it could reach the City of Three Forks.

The mitigation project will remove the western portion of the Three Forks from Jefferson River floodplains and floodway.

The Jefferson River flood mitigation project includes construction of an 8,000-linear-foot conveyance channel that will be 100-feet wide and 5-feet deep. It will carry water underneath Montana State Highway 2 and terminate back into the river channel.

The project will remove 946 structures from the Jefferson River floodplains, mitigating an estimated $62-96 million in damages to residential structures in the event of a 100-year flood.

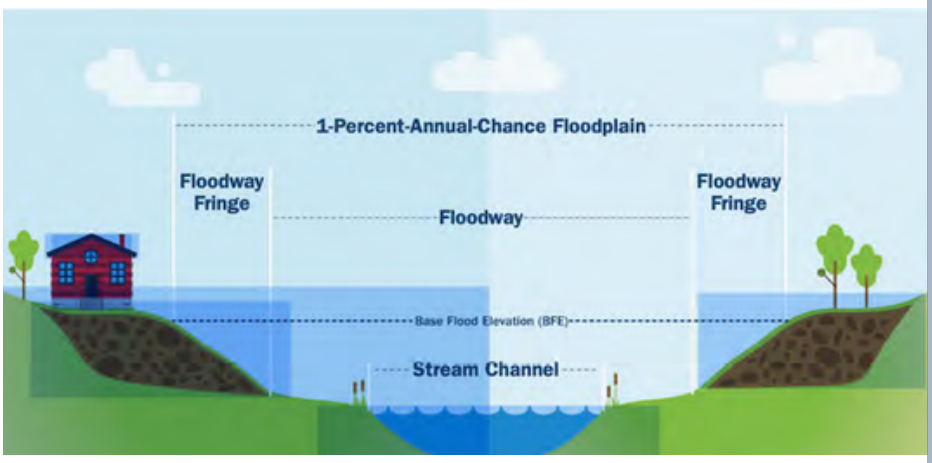
The total cost for the project is $5.5 million. FEMA money will cover 75% of that with the rest coming from revenue from assessments on properties within a Special Improvement District that are within the floodplain and will benefit from the project.

# Understanding Montana Floodplain Regulations Better

## Basic Floodplain Regulations

Anyone proposing a project near a stream or river should check with their local floodplain administrator to determine if a permit is required for their proposed project. This requirement should be met whether floodplain maps exist for a parcel or not. If floodplain maps exist for an area, then the maps usually identify whether the proposed project or building site is located within the floodplain.

For unmapped areas, floodplain administrators should make their decision about floodplain locations based on the best available data available. In some situations, local governments can require the property owner or developer to hire an engineer to determine the boundary of the 100-year floodplain. If it is determined that a building site or project is in the floodplain, the permitting process should be followed, with the local government ultimately deciding whether or not to issue a permit.




## Montana Regulations

Floodplain Regulations address both existing and new structures. Montana state law does not allow for new buildings or structures to be constructed in the floodway. However, in some cases, new buildings and structures may be allowed to be located outside of the floodway as long as a floodplain permit has been obtained and floodplain regulations and permitting conditions are followed. A joint stream permit application outlining the proposed project can be completed and submitted to each permitting agency. For a list of each agency's permit see: https://dnrc.mt.gov/licenses-and-permits/stream-permitting.

The floodplain permit is the last to be issued and requires that all other applicable permits and conditions be in place prior to the final decision on a floodplain permit application. There are time-specific public and adjacent landowner notices that are required for floodplain applications and could delay decisions by 30+ days. Be aware that Montana communities (towns, cities or counties) can adopt floodplain regulations that are stricter than state or federal regulations. These are called *higher standards* and can be incorporated and adopted within the floodplain ordinance.

There are several floodplain regulations that pertain to building a structure within the designated floodplain. It includes elevating structures so that the lowest floor of the building (including a basement) is two feet above the base flood elevation (BFE), and new structures cannot increase the base flood elevation of a 100-year flood. It is also important to know that there are additional requirements for septic systems. Septic system regulations are administered by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and local health departments. Septic systems and drain fields need to have at least 100 feet of separation from the floodplain. Contact your local floodplain administrator for more information on floodplain applications, permits, and regulations: https://dnrc.mt.gov/Water-Resources/Floodplains/Contacts.

### Floodplain Permitting

The floodplain permitting process considers several factors based on public health, safety, and welfare. To better understand how floodplain regulations apply to permitting and allowed uses, the following four terms are important to know.

**100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN** includes the area adjoining a stream or river that has a one percent (1%) chance of flooding in any given year. This means a home located in the 100-year floodplain has a 26% chance of flooding during the life of a 30-year mortgage. The 100-year floodplain consists of both the floodway and the flood fringe. (100-year floodplain = floodway + flood fringe.)

**FLOODWAYS** carry most of the flood water in a stream. Technically, floodways are the channel in a water course or drainage way, and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel that are reasonably required to carry and discharge the floodwater of any water course.

**FLOOD FRINGE** is the portion of the 100-year floodplain outside of the floodway, including the flood storage and backwater areas subject to shallow water depths and low velocities.

**BASE FLOOD ELEVATION (BFE)** is the predicted water level for a 100-year flood.

# Mitigation Funding Opportunities for 2024

| Funding Opportunity | Funds Available | Application Deadline |
|---|---|---|
| **DR-4726** | *$178,746 | January 12, 2025; (*Pending 2nd Extension*) |
| **DR-4745** | *$389,004 | December 9, 2024; (*1st Extension*) |
| **FM-5507** | *$985,111 | May 31, 2025 |
| **DR-4801** | *$380,210 | June 18, 2025 |
| **DR-4813** | * $424,520 | July 22, 2025 |
| **Nationally Competitive Funding** | | |
| **BRIC 23** | TBD | TBD |
| **FMA 23** | TBD | TBD |

*Current Estimated Amounts*

If you are interested in any open mitigation funding opportunity, please complete a NOI (Notice of Intent) located on the Mitigation Grants page on the MT DES website and submit it to the Mitigation team. Once we receive your NOI, we will reach out to you to further discuss project eligibility and the application process.

# State & Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates


State Plan Update:
- Approved and Adopted

Western Regional Plan Update:
- Base Plan: FEMA Review
- Annexes/Addendums: State Review

Central Regional Plan Update:
- Base Plan: FEMA Approved
- Annexes/Addendums: FEMA APA, Pending Local Adoptions

Eastern Regional Plan Update:
- Base Plan: State Review
- Annexes/Addendums: Final Edits/ Beginning State Review

To obtain updates on HMP status, please view the MT Regions HMP Status Tracker.

# FEMA Encourages FY 2024 Flood Mitigation Assistance Applicants to Start Preparing

FEMA encourages potential Flood Mitigation Assistance applicants to start preparing for the upcoming fiscal year 2024 grant cycle. While the official funding opportunity and application requirements will be announced later in the year, FEMA is providing this information on priorities and areas of focus now to help communities jumpstart their application planning.

**Key Information**

The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant program which is primarily funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), is one of several Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs in FEMA's overall hazard mitigation grant portfolio that can be leveraged to drive national resilience.

FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance grant program offers funds to help state, local, tribal and territorial governments reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The funds can also be used for large community flood projects in communities that participate.

FEMA is providing the following advanced information so communities can start preparing for the upcoming grant cycle. Available total funding of $600 million is allocated into three categories:

- **Capability and Capacity Building (C&CB) Activities:** Up to $60 million for mitigation plans, technical assistance, project scoping, and other C&CB activities that improve flood hazard planning.
- **Localized Flood Risk Reduction Projects:** Up to $420 million to address community flood risk for the purpose of reducing (NFIP) flood loss payments.
  -- Eligible applicants and sub-applicants submitting localized flood risk reduction projects for funding should also consider applying to the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program to maximize access to FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding.
- **Individual Flood Mitigation Projects:** At least $120 million for projects that mitigate the risk of flooding to individual NFIP-insured buildings.

FEMA recognizes the value of local identification and planning for the mitigation of damage to structures with repetitive and substantial flooding. In fiscal year 2024, additional points will be added to the final score for Repetitive Loss Strategies proposed under the C&CB activity type where the project also incorporates development of Substantial Damage (SD) procedures.

FEMA's Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and new policy went into effect on Sept. 9, 2024. FEMA plans to incorporate Updates to the Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands Regulations to Implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard into the upcoming funding cycle.

# DNRC Impact of Fuel Reduction and Suppression Efforts

Now more than ever, DNRC is better prepared to increase the pace and scale of forest and wildfire management through $60 million in funding secured via House Bill 883.

With the additional funding, the DNRC has expanded its wildfire prevention and suppression efforts by using cutting-edge technology to find fires before they show visible smoke, securing additional equipment to fight fires faster, and addressing forest health through fuel reduction work.

This year, DNRC secured additional fire equipment that was strategically located around the state to supplement the department's preparedness for the wildfire season. Among the additional resources was a contracted helicopter capable of carrying more than 2,000 gallons of water and a large air tanker capable of dropping more than 2,500 gallons of fire retardant. The equipment was used as a key resource for recent large fires, including the Remington fire, the Barber Draw fires, and other fires across the state.

DNRC has also deployed new innovative technology to detect wildfires earlier, when they are barely detectable, small, and easily manageable. Through infrared imaging technology, a plane is able to fly at night to detect small heat signatures on the ground. Firefighters receive the analyzed imaging data and are able to quickly dispatch, investigate, and respond.

In a joint press release with the Governor's Office, Montana DNRC Director, Amanda Kaster stated: "As Montana is facing longer and more severe fire seasons, DNRC is using every resource available to suppress wildland fires aggressively and safely." She added that new technology allows DNRC to catch fires sooner, therefore requiring fewer resources.

Beyond technology, DNRC is actively addressing the forest health and wildfire crisis through numerous on-the-ground projects across the state. These projects, aligned with the Montana Forest Action Plan, involve strategic, cross-boundary treatments in priority areas, including forest thinning and fuel reduction to mitigate wildfire risks and promote healthier forest ecosystems.

For example, the Good Neighbor Authority Basin Creek watershed project in Butte is protecting the area's water supply by using hand and mechanical thinning to reduce fuel loads caused by a massive mountain pine beetle outbreak. By mitigating wildfire risks, this project helps ensure clean drinking water for the community.

"In just one year, the DNRC has increased its capacity to sustainably treat more acres," said Dir. Kaster. "But it's not about the numbers, it's the strategic impact of these projects that makes the most difference, especially when they protect critical watersheds and communities in the wildland-urban interface."

As increased funding enables the use of advanced technology alongside proactive forest management, DNRC continues to enhance its ability to prevent and respond to wildfires, ensuring a safer future for Montanans.

# NEMA AND FEMA HOST WORKSHOP ON COMMUNITY DISASTER RESILIENCE ZONES

*Above Left:* MT DES State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Sara Hartley discusses CDRZ designation process.

FEMA, in partnership with NEMA, hosted individuals from across public and private sectors on August 22–23, 2024, in Kansas City, Missouri, to discuss the Community Disaster Resilience Zone (CDRZ) program. The goal of the workshop was to elicit state and local perspectives on CDRZ designations and program implementation, and to identify opportunities for improvements.

During the two-day event, FEMA personnel from various programs, including the Office of Resilience Strategy, the Risk Analysis, Planning, and Information Directorate, and the Hazard Mitigation Directorate, shared valuable insights into the proposed approach for future CDRZ designations.

Workshop attendees representing local and state governments, emergency management organizations, four private sector partners, NEMA and FEMA shared perspectives on how collaboration among stakeholders could improve future designation processes and support effective implementation. State and local partners shared interest in having greater involvement and visibility in the decision-making process, balancing their desire to provide input early and often with the recognition of their limited capacity.

## Training Opportunities

**L0102 FEMA Science of Disaster.** Part of FEMA Basic Academy. December 3rd-5th, 2024. Fort Harrison, Helena MT. To register, email: Betsy.Ross@mt.gov.

**DNRC Floodplain Resource Seminar. Save the date- more information to come.** December 16th - afternoon; mornings of December 17th and18th.

**Association of MT Floodplain Managers Conference.** February 26th-28th. Missoula, MT. Abstracts for presentations due Dec. 20th. For more information: Association of Floodplain Managers.

**G318 Local Mitigation Planning.** April 15th-17th. Fairmont Hot Springs. Save the date- additional details to come.

**Floodplain Bootcamp Weekly Workshop:** Starts January 10, 2025. POC: Shylea Wingard, Shylea.Wingard@mt.gov.

MT DES
1956 MT. MAJO STREET
FORT HARRISON, MT 59636-4789
OFFICE PHONE: (406) 324-4777
EMAIL: MTDES@MT.GOV