



Association of State Floodplain Managers, Inc.

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Summary of the Key Policy Changes, Challenges and Efforts Addressed by ASFPM Fiscal Year 2020 (July 2019-June 2020)

The Policy Team's work is based on the ASFPM mission statement: to promote education, policies and activities that mitigate current and future losses, costs and human suffering caused by flooding, and to protect the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains - all without causing adverse impacts.

ASFPM specifically partners with Federal, State, local and NGOs in the accomplishment our mission. In FY20 the Policy Team continued to proactively reach out to Legislators and Congressional staff to provide local and state practitioner perspective on legislation, rules and program implementation, and provide expert testimony when asked. We realize our voice and opinions can be made stronger through alliances with other NGO's, where each partner brings their unique perspectives to add to the discussion and strengthen our message. ASFPM's policy team is often contacted by national and local media on technical and policy issues.

The ASFPM Policy focus for FY20 included:

1. NFIP Reauthorization. The big issues ASFPM supports include affordability, and strengthening and reinforcing the National Flood Mapping Program, which must include mapping future conditions, residual risk associated with dams and levees, and mapping of the 2.3 million stream miles not currently mapped; having an authorized and well-funded CAP-SSSE program; building and strengthening state and community capabilities; and improving risk assessments and communication of all flood risks. We ask to ensure that adjustments to facilitate private sector involvement in flood insurance do not harm the other elements of NFIP (mapping, mitigation and flood risk management).
2. Pre- and Post-Disaster mitigation. Both funding and rules for the new Mitigation grant program called BRIC (formula funded replacement for pre-disaster mitigation program), must be focused on Nonstructural measures and incorporate future risk from Climate change. ASFPM comments submitted on proposed [BRIC policy are here](#). We have also provided comments supporting state revolving loan funds to promote affordability of mitigation and supported efforts to adjust tax codes to incentivize mitigation.
3. Corps of Engineers priorities. ASFPM worked on the USACE authorization bills for WRDA to include more Technical Assistance to states and locals as well as implementing effective nonstructural and nature-based mitigation options. We expressed concern with the unrestrained spending and feel there is a need to modernize approaches to water resources disaster assistance in PL 84-99; reform and update economic and environmental principles and guidelines for planning and implementing water resources projects; support program-wide consideration of future conditions in water resources planning. We also supported full implementation of national Levee Safety Program with caveats to provide with effective approaches.

4. Support for legislation that will improve flood risk management in the nation; and oppose legislation that increases at-risk development in high-risk residual risk areas.
5. Support for legislation and policy that increases state and local capability to manage disasters, promote long-term recovery and resilience, and reduce flood risk through efforts like NFIP, Digital Coast Act and others. Building incentives for states and communities to improve their capacity is important.
6. Support funding for periodic updates to Atlas 14, a key publication from NWS used to calculate flood flows for flood mapping, dam safety and all infrastructure. Unfortunately, this data is not regularly updated, so extreme flood events like Harvey and other recent storms result in flooding outside the identified flood hazard areas, resulting in citizens and communities having unexpected damage. A small amount of funding in this NOAA program would ensure this data is updated every 5 years—an effort ASFPM is promoting widely.

Congressional (legislative) actions:

ASFPM supports important programs across several agencies like the USGS's 3-DEP program to produce LiDAR for the nation and USGS stream gauging program, USACE technical assistance programs like Silver Jackets, FPMS and PAS, and other programs in NOAA, NRCS, HUD, EPA and others. ASFPM works independently and builds coalitions to create support. A report on ASFPM's FY 20 federal legislative activities is contained in a separate document titled: [Legislative Report – Association of State Floodplain Managers](#)

Working with federal agencies and national partners to implement current programs/policies:

- ASFPM officially provided comments on many federal activities, usually in response to proposed federal rule making or guidance. A few of these include: Clean Water Act (Waters of the US) changes that would reduce protection of the nation's waters and wetlands, Elevation Certificate guidance, Coastal Barrier Resource System mapping updates, the Endangered Species Act, the guidance for Section 1206 of Disaster Response and Recovery Act (DRRA) and the implementation of the new Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program.
- We continue to support a modern federal Flood Risk Management for use of federal taxpayer funding following disasters. HUD implemented a Federal Rebuilding Standard to protect federal taxpayer investments in federal actions for the disaster supplemental funding (HUD got tens of billions for CDBG disaster funding for the 2017 and 2018 hurricanes, flooding and wildfires). In addition, Congress directed the Dept. of Defense to rebuild any of its damaged facilities to either 2 feet (normal facilities) or 3 feet (critical facilities) above future expected flood elevation to protect taxpayer investments.
- ASFPM staff and leaders continue to participate on a number of advisory groups and committees including the National Academies of Science; FEMA's Technical Mapping Advisory Council and Operating Partners; the Community Rating System Task Force; the Advisory Committee on Water Information; the Flood Insurance Producers National Council; the Natural Hazards Center Advisory Board; DHS's Flood Apex Research Review Board; DHS's Dam/Levee Sector Advisory Council and the National Research Council Canada.
- ASFPM participated in NOAA's Digital Coast Partnership (partners include American Planning Association, Coastal States Organization, National Association of Counties, NERRA, NSGIC, The Nature Conservancy and the Urban Land Institute) to provide communities tools for managing coasts and flood risk.

- ASFPM works with numerous partners on flood risk policy, including groups from the insurance, disaster, mitigation, environmental, taxpayers, resilience, state and local governments and others to promote good public policy that will support strong social, economic and environmentally-sound communities and states. Some of the active partnerships this past year have included the American Planning Association; American Rivers; American Society of Civil Engineers; Association of State Dam Safety Engineers; Association of State Wetland Managers; Coastal States Organization; Community Enterprise Institute; Consumers Mortgage Coalition; Environment and Energy Study Institute; Federal Alliance for Safe Homes; National Association of Counties; National Wildlife Federation; Natural Resources Defense Council; Pew Charitable Trusts; The Nature Conservancy; Union of Concerned Scientists and Western Governors Association.

Other Policy Initiatives

Assisting states/communities to improve their flood risk management efforts: While ASFPM chapters are well positioned to provide support to states and communities, ASFPM also provides states and communities support to enact and maintain effective programs and regulations that reduce flood risk. This year ASFPM has provided assistance to the State of Missouri as they looked toward strengthening their Floodplain Management law and provided background information to the Wisconsin Chapter for testimony related to a bill to modify substantial improvement determination and another to change the ranking system for flood mitigation grant projects that could negatively impact buyouts. ASFPM worked with the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to recommend changes to the authorizing language in WRDA for the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation grant program to improve the application process and implementation of the grants. ASFPM has also provided support to the Chapters by attending annual conferences to provide policy updates. States and communities have also reached out relative to the impact of the implementation of FEMA's new Flood Insurance data system, PIVOT/PART, limiting the ability of communities and states to obtain data needed for planning, response, recovery, grant processing, compliance monitoring, CRS certification and outreach and education activities, as well as clarification of guidance/policies on treatment of agricultural structures in the floodplain and the reuse of open land associated with mitigation projects. In each case ASFPM has worked with FEMA and partners to express concerns, get clarity on the issue and attempted to reach a reasonable resolution. The ASFPM Foundation has held state symposia in conjunction with our chapter/state members to identify which policies, laws or programs can be updated in that state in order to better manage flood risk. The state/chapter write up their findings and recommendations and then work with state decision makers to foster change. ASFPM also provides technical assistance to organizations like the National Conference of State Legislatures on floodplain management issues in proposed state laws and other national organizations like Pew Charitable Trusts that have field organizers supporting effective state level policies.

Carrying the message to Washington: ASFPM members have traveled to D.C. to help their representatives understand how federal programs are working or not working at the local and state level. Members of Congress are especially interested in hearing from their direct constituents, so those visits can have great impact. Letters from those constituents are another effective means of helping inform them on which programs and actions are especially effective at the local/state level and which programs need modification. A number of Chapters and states informed their Congressional members of the importance of flood mapping funding this past year, with positive results in more funding. Appropriators have expressed the importance of hearing from many voices concerning funding levels for programs. ASFPM has staff and an apartment in D.C. if an ASFPM chapter wishes to send a group to meet their representatives. In 2021, ASFPM will be adding a new advocacy tool on its website that will allow members and chapters to more easily weigh in on federal and state issues.

Disaster assistance programs: We must break the American myth that the federal taxpayer will make you whole after a disaster (especially if you refused to buy flood insurance). We support former FEMA Director

Gaynor's statement that disaster response and recovery should be "federally supported, state managed and locally executed." Communities and citizens must carefully plan where and how they build or buy. Perhaps working to implement that vision is what keeps us coming to work each day.

Looking ahead to FY21

The impact of COVID 19 on communities, states and the nation will continue to shape budgets and policies throughout FY21. Climate change will not take a break because of the virus and we will continue to push for consideration of the current and future impacts in legislation, guidance and program implementation. Economic stimulus efforts will likely contain funding for large infrastructure and economic development projects to help the economy recover. The Policy Team will endeavor to make sure the bills contain language consistent with improving the resilience of infrastructure and communities. FY21 will provide the opportunities to weigh in on appropriations, NFIP reform and a new WRDA bill as well as resuming the move towards implementation of Risk Rating 2.0 and flood mapping. We will continue our focus of encouraging support and funding for important programs like 3DEP, USGS stream gauges, NOAA updates to Atlas 14 and USACE technical assistance programs. We will also pursue opportunities to assure that impacts of our changing climate are appropriately considered in legislation, rules and guidance.

Find ASFPM positions on 400 national flood policies at [National Flood Programs and Policies 2015](#).