Chapter District 1
Status Report 2020

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ASSOCIATION OF STATE FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS

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Introduction and Area Overview

District 1 encompasses FEMA Regions I and II, which include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont as well as the territories of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

The ASFPM state chapters in District 1 are:
- Connecticut Association of Flood Managers (CAFM)
- New Jersey Association for Floodplain Management (NJAFM)
- New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NYSFSMA)
- Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association (RIFMA)
- In addition, there is the Massachusetts Association for Floodplain Management, which is getting more organized and will hopefully work toward becoming a chapter.

Key Accomplishments of District 1 Chapters

As in the rest of the nation, the current pandemic has upset many chapter plans. While chapter conferences were held in the fall of 2019 in New Jersey and Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island were forced to cancel their spring 2020 conferences and New Jersey has already announced the replacement of its fall 2020 conference with a virtual conference.

The following are some status items for each of the chapters, plus the Massachusetts association.

Connecticut

Connecticut is still planning for an October 28, 2020 conference however the pandemic may upset those plans. They also had to cancel a mid-year elevation certificate training event. They are weighing whether to extend existing memberships through 2021 rather than requesting membership renewals.

In order to increase visibility, the chapter has ramped up its newsletter output and has suggested working with other chapters in the region to coordinate joint newsletters, or at least some joint articles.

Connecticut officers would love for ASFPM to assist with some ready-to-use content for webinars with CFM credits. They are also interested on help with platforms for webinars, and with help on how to better manage emails, documents, and files. They are a small chapter and are beginning to see founding members transitioning off of the board so they need a centralized file management system.

New Jersey

New Jersey has been forced to cancel its three-day conference in Atlantic City slated for next October. They are instead offering a series of one-hour webinars. They have recently been offering weekly virtual seminars on Fridays with CECs included. Those events have been very well attended. Information on the seminars can be found at https://njafm.wildapricot.org/event-3814454.

The New Jersey chapter also offers periodic educational dinner seminars which have been put on hold. In 2019, the chapter hosted an extremely successful conference and the Larry Larson speaker series.

The NJ chapter has a legislative chair who would like to interface more with ASFPM on legislative/policy ideas. This would be beneficial to their members in establishing a more active connection to the organization.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Chapter developed a detailed strategic plan with the help of an outside consultant. They presented at one of the all-chapters calls this year.
The next Rhode Island conference is tentatively scheduled for April 30, 2021. They have requested that an ASFPM representative be available to speak at the conference. As it is within driving distance of the Chapter Director, I may cover that request.

Like people across the country, RI board members have been pulled in many different directions per their organizations’ needs, so unfortunately RIFMA activity has slowed down. For example, the Vice Chair works for the RI Emergency Management Agency and was pulled into COVID response, which is still his top priority. They had to cancel this year’s conference scheduled for May 1, 2020, and would still like to do something virtually (e.g., a series of short webinars) but have limited capacity right now. They would love to learn from other chapters’ experiences.

Rhode Island is also interested in sending a board member to Washington to meet with their state’s Congressional staff when safe travel is again possible.

New York

New York was forced to postpone and then cancel its May conference. The chapter is currently working on plans for a series of workshops and / or panel discussions throughout the fall.

Much of the chapter’s efforts during the past year have been in two areas. One is to beef up the stormwater part of the chapter’s mission. Current chair Ricardo Lopez-Torrijos is leading that effort. In New York, there is no explicit legal mechanism for local jurisdictions to establish stormwater taxing districts. However, the city of Ithaca got around that by simply doing it and charging an annual fee to property owners, including the two colleges in the city, based on non-permeable acreage. This fee has raised funds to improve local drainage and reduce urban flooding. The chapter has been working with Ithaca to bring that story to the rest of the state and is advocating for a change in state laws that would provide a more explicit mechanism for local communities to create stormwater fees.

The second area that the Chapter has been working on is to rebuild its website with a particular focus on floodplain related training. A planning committee was formed, led by Stevie Adams of the Nature Conservancy, to develop training priorities for local floodplain administrators and to update the chapter’s website to include more links to training materials. Ultimately, the chapter hopes to have a group of approved and vetted trainers who can deliver credited floodplain and stormwater related training across the state or in regions of the state, or virtually.

To help update the website, the Nature Conservancy offered the chapter a grant that was used to hire a web designer. Like some other chapters, New York uses Club Express to manage membership and communications. Club Express is a template driven host for membership organizations and also provides the ability to collect credit card payments. The chapter found a web design firm that was willing to work within the Club Express templates and the result is a very sharp looking new web presence at www.nyfloods.org.

Massachusetts

The association board has been meeting in person and via conference calls for more than two years. During that time, they have:
- incorporated as a 501c3
- held numerous training events and calls spread around the state.
- opened a bank account and a post office box.
- started putting out a quarterly newsletter.

They have yet to have a formal election, so the board has essentially been self-selected with four officers and five regional representatives. They were hoping for a September 14 annual membership meeting but Covid-19 has upset those plans. They are uncertain about a virtual meeting with electronic voting.

When in-person meetings can happen again, they are hoping for a one-day conference with a goal of 100 people. Meanwhile, they have about 30 members.
Challenges for District 1 Chapters

Covid-19 has affected how chapters can approach training, conferences, and member services. The emergency has also provided opportunities to develop new ways of delivering the information that state chapter members need. Some of these new virtual tools will still be with us when the pandemic subsides and will provide for a better and wider assortment of training and communication approaches.

Recommendations

Over the next year, I plan to work with the other Chapter Directors and the Board to promote the adjustment of chapter director boundaries in order to even out the work load between the chapter directors. I will also continue to work with Massachusetts to help them formalize their association, build their membership and work towards becoming a chapter. I hope to attend the RI conference in the spring and will attend the NY conference, also in the spring, assuming that safe travel can resume.

ASFPM can assist by providing tools and recommendations for virtual training and conferences. The smaller chapters also need assistance with basic business record keeping.