Natural & Beneficial Functions Committee
Annual Status Report

2020-21

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Introduction

The mission of the Natural and Beneficial Functions (NBF) Committee is to promote understanding and appreciation of the benefits provided by naturally functioning floodplains by the public, policy makers, and the association membership.

The committee champions the capacity of naturally functioning floodplains to provide multiple benefits to communities, including but not limited to flood damage reduction, water quality protection, habitat conservation, opportunities for recreation, and aesthetically pleasing landscapes. By raising awareness of and promoting the benefits provided by naturally functioning floodplains, the committee builds support for their protection and restoration. The committee works to pursue these objectives through leadership in the creation and support of educational tools, policies, and partnerships that advance and promote the protection of NBF as the primary option for flood risk reduction.

Key Accomplishments

This past year, the NBF Committee’s focus has been on tracking and providing support as needed regarding ASFPM’s position on federal legislation addressing or incorporating language around federal policy on natural functions or nature-based solutions.

The key accomplishment of this year was the Committee’s work on developing and planning the 3rd Natural Floodplain Functions Alliance (NFFA) Integrated Mapping & Functional Assessment of Riverine and Coastal Floodplains and Wetlands workshop. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this workshop was not able to be held in person in the fall of 2020, as originally planned.

- A virtual pre-workshop was held on February 10, 2021 in order to set the stage and begin discussion of policy issues associated with integrated mapping and functional assessments. A variety of partners and stakeholders from state and federal agencies, NGOs, and academia attended. The title of this workshop was Federal Program and Policy Changes Needed to Advance Integrated, Functional Mapping of Floodplains and Wetlands for Nature-Based Solutions.

Priorities

Our Committee’s ongoing work is the promotion of nature-based solutions (NBS) and natural floodplain functions throughout the world of floodplain management. To achieve this, our committee’s top priorities include:

- Track policy issues, inform members of developments, and assist ASFPM in development of positions and letters when needed. There has been significant activity on federal policy issues related to natural and beneficial functions of floodplains this year with the Biden administration and the changes in the control of Congress. The administration has had a
strong emphasis on promoting more climate change adaptation policy. There is a lot of work to do to recover lost ground on national environmental policies in the wake of the previous administration. Many programs and legislation touching on this work has been dismantled or significantly impacted, including the Waters of the US (WOTUS) legislation, revisions proposed for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Clean Water Rule.

- Ongoing engagement on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), funding priorities for FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) grant program and the anticipated re-instatement of the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) is anticipated in the coming year(s).
- Promotion of policies and strategies that support the work of the Social Justice Task Force.
- Promotion of policies and strategies that support the work of the Climate Change Task Force.
- Collaboration with other ASFPM Policy Committees to integrate nature-based approaches in their work.
- Host bimonthly conference calls to inform NBF Committee members of updates, new resources, innovative case studies, and other topics relevant to natural and beneficial floodplains.

**Recommended Actions**

1. Continue to track proposed rule changes or introduction of new legislation aimed at restoring environmental laws. Support ASFPM executive office with the development of comment letters
2. Integrate and promote NBF/NBS strategies that acknowledge and address social justice, environmental justice and social vulnerability concerns. This work would be done in conjunction with the ASFPM Social Justice Task Force.
3. Integrate, update and promote nature-based solution policy that is in alignment with the work of the Climate Change & Risk Reduction Task Force.
4. Inform ASFPM leadership of recommendations the Conservation Community is making to federal agencies that are relevant to floodplain management and NBF/NBS.
5. Update the NBF committee website.