

BACKGROUND

In support of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has undertaken a massive effort of flood hazard identification and mapping to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Shawnee County, including incorporated and unincorporated areas. These maps are created to reflect the base flood event, defined as the flood having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year (also referred to as the 100-year flood).

MAP PRODUCTION PHASES

PAST ACTIVITIES

Pre-Scoping:

FEMA and the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources (DWR) sent letters and informational packets to Shawnee County communities that were funded Flood Map Modernization. This letter kicked-off the modernization process with what are known as *pre-scoping activities*. The purpose of these activities is to research and accumulate resources that will contribute to the map update project. Such activities include digital base map inventories, mapping needs assessments, and Letters of Map Change collection.

The digital base map inventories involved obtaining the best available base map materials, such as corporate limits, roads, aerial photography, stream centerlines, and topographic data. Mapping needs assessments include the collection of needs from FEMA's Mapping Needs Update System (MNUSS). This system was developed to track and prioritize mapping needs identified by communities. FEMA and DWR will perform an in-house mapping needs assessment by compiling needs from community files (Community Assistance Visit Reports, correspondence, effective flood map panels) and an approximate (unnumbered) A-Zone analysis. This analysis involves measuring densities of structures within or near an approximate A-Zone.

The study contractor will also use this time to compile all approved Letters of Map Change (LOMC), including Letters of Map Amendment (LOMA), Letters of Map Revision Based on Fill (LOMR-F) and Letters of Map Revision (LOMR). These LOMCs will be addressed during *Map Production*, but an accurate list is necessary so all are addressed in the project.

Scoping Meeting:

The next stage of this process is called the *Scoping Meeting*. This meeting presents an opportunity for all interested parties to gather, finalize the scope of project and confirm project task assignments. The scope of project formally identifies where new flood studies will be conducted, their type, and their limits.

Mapping needs play an integral role in the *Scoping Meeting* as well. The meeting provides an excellent opportunity for federal, state and private entities to collect local mapping needs. Such needs will be documented and provided as impetus for future flood study funding.

Map Production:

Following the conclusion of the *Scoping Meeting*, entities involved in the map update begin their partnership roles in *Map Production*. This step of the update process involves the completion of all tasks identified and assigned during the *Scoping Meeting*. For instance, the paper flood maps will be digitally scanned and geo-registered during this phase. This is also the time when the newly created digital flood layers will be fine tuned to fit the best available topographic data. If any flood studies are performed, this would be the phase for their completion and incorporation into the new maps.

Letters of Map Change (LOMC) will also be addressed during this phase. Each FEMA-approved map change will be handled in one of four ways: 1) *incorporation* into the new maps; 2) *revalidation*; 3) *superseded*; or 4) *case-by-case* review. Letters of Map Revision (LOMRs) (not those based on fill, or LOMR-Fs) will be incorporated into the new flood maps. Large-scale LOMR-Fs and Letters of Map Amendment (LOMAs) may be incorporated into the new maps depending on their size. However, most LOMAs and LOMR-Fs will be revalidated since they are too small in scale to be represented on the maps. If a new study has been performed on a watercourse near any LOMCs, the LOMCs may be superseded or may need case-by-case review.

Digital maps created during this phase will be reviewed by FEMA so as to ensure that they meet the *Guidelines and Specifications for Flood Hazard Mapping Partners*.

Preliminary Maps:

Preliminary Maps and a preliminary Flood Insurance Study (FIS) are released for public review when all tasks have been completed, and the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) have been printed. Each community will receive copies of the preliminary flood maps, a preliminary FIS report, and a preliminary Summary of Map Actions (SOMA). This last document summarizes what happened to all of the Letters of Map Change affected by the map update. Once the *Preliminary Maps* are released, community officials are encouraged to review the maps for accuracy and completeness.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Public Meetings and Open House:

Once the *Preliminary DFIRMs* are released and communities have an opportunity to review them, FEMA will coordinate a series of community open houses and public meetings. The open house involves two (2) different meetings: local officials meeting (known as the Community Coordination Meeting) and public meetings. Federal and State officials will meet with community officials to discuss the new maps, any issues associated with them, and their implications. This meeting was held with community officials on November 12, 2009. Once this meeting has concluded, FEMA, DWR and community officials will host public meetings and open houses to answer public inquiries regarding the preliminary maps. Community officials have determined to hold no less than six (6) public meetings/open houses beginning January 2010. Questions generally range in topic from flood insurance and building requirements to mitigation opportunities and map changes.

Public Comment Period:

Sometime between January and March 2010, is when it is anticipated FEMA will publish the preliminary Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) in the *Federal Register* (only if BFEs have changed), and they will notify the CEO or each community regarding this publishing. Additionally, FEMA will post this information in local newspapers twice in a two-week period. On the date of the second publication, the *90-Day Appeal Period* begins, and this is when property owners, communities and other interested parties may submit new flood data (appeals) or map corrections (protests) to their community floodplain officials for possible incorporation into the new digital FIRMs. At the end of the *Appeal Period*, FEMA will resolve all appeals and protests to finalize the maps and the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report.

If BFEs have not changed due to the map update (such as in the City of Auburn and the City of Silver Lake), a *90-Day Appeal Period* will not be held or applicable within those communities. Rather, *30-Day Comment Period* will be held in its place, and this will still provide citizens and community officials an opportunity to submit protests.

Letter of Final Determination:

When the maps are finalized, FEMA will issue the communities a *Letter of Final Determination (LFD)*, and this initiates the mandatory update of their floodplain regulations. A LFD is anticipated to be issued by FEMA during the Summer of 2010. A community has six (6) months from the LFD to update their floodplain regulations. If a community's floodplain regulations are not approved by the Division of Water Resources and adopted by the effective date of the maps, the community will be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Potential consequences associated with suspension include flood insurance unavailability and some disaster assistance unavailability.

Flood Maps Effective:

Communities have six (6) months from the date of the LFD to update their floodplain regulations to reflect the new maps. After this period, the new maps are *effective*, and are the tools the communities must use to implement their floodplain regulations. Most flood insurance policies written on or after the effective date will be based on the flood hazard data on the new maps. The new DFIRMs and FIS report are anticipated to become effective in January 2011.

In terms of logistics, the map update process takes approximately 2-3 years from the initial *Pre-Scoping Activities* until the maps become *effective*. This period of time depends, in part, on the types of studies conducted in a given county and the amount of floodplain located within its boundaries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION Visit <http://www.smapmod/snco.us> to view the new digital flood maps, see the areas that are changing flood zones and learn how Shawnee County as a whole will be affected. Visit www.FloodSmart.gov for more information about how to protect against flooding and the steps local residents may need to take to ensure that they have proper insurance coverage to protect their investment.