



Montana Department  
of Natural Resources  
and Conservation

# FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Serving Montana's Communities  
Since 1974



Updated Model Floodplain Ordinance.....	2
CRS Changes for 2012.....	3
Welcome Mary Gibson.....	4
Familiar Face...New Position.....	4
Risk Map Funding Status.....	5
DNRC Launches New Training Program ....	6
3rd Annual Floodplain Resource Seminar ..	7
FEMA's Expanded Appeals Process.....	7
Updated Website .....	8
Living with Levees.....	8
Floodplain Meaderings Around Montana...9	

Sun River – photo by Mark Boesch

# HIGHGROUND

April 2012

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## Preparation, Mitigation and Recovery

13th Annual Conference - Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM)



Presenter Dave Martin entertains the group with a 3-D version of a flooding event, using the Rolling Rivers Trailer. The Rolling Rivers Trailer is a great visual tool that can be used at various outreach events. Photo credit: Mike DaSilva

The Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) hosted their 13th Annual Conference in March at the Hilton Garden Inn in Kalispell. "Preparation, Mitigation, and Recovery" was the theme of the conference, which was very appropriate given the extent of flooding that occurred throughout Montana last year. In 2011, 31 out of 52 Montana counties received individual disaster declarations for flooding, the most in the state's history. Many of the presenters at the conference shared challenging local experiences, photos and lessons they learned from the 2011 floods.

This year's conference offered sessions on what communities did (and should do) before, during and after flood events. Disaster and emergency services representatives

shared their perspectives, along with floodplain administrators, flood insurance underwriters and National Weather Service representatives from Montana. One of the days featured an interactive recovery workshop, giving participants and experts the opportunity to brainstorm and review roles and responsibilities

before, during and after a flood. The conference also held a half-day engineering session covering the basics of floodplains and encroachment issues for engineers and non-engineers alike and then delving into the engineering aspects of stream restoration structures and riprap designs. Other general conference sessions focused on permitting, insurance and ways to improve flood awareness.



Participants enjoy some camaraderie during a break. Photo credit: Mike DaSilva

continued...



Working through the logistics of a mock flood event during the interactive recovery workshop. Photo credit: Mike DaSilva

As always, social events and meals provided great opportunities to network and learn from other conference participants. Staff from DNRC, FEMA and other state and federal organizations, were on hand throughout the conference to assist with individual questions and issues. Thanks to all the conference sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, federal and state agency representatives, local floodplain managers, private sector participants and the AMFM Board Members and Regional Directors for a great 2012 conference!

Copies of the speakers' powerpoint presentations and materials from the conference are now available on AMFM's website: [www.mtfloods.org/Resources.html](http://www.mtfloods.org/Resources.html)

## Updated Model Floodplain Ordinance Ready for Comment

By Laurence Siroky, DNRC



Laurence Siroky, DNRC Water Operations Bureau Chief and Traci Sears, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Coordinator, work on a draft of the new model ordinance.

An updated draft of the Montana 2012 Model Ordinance has been developed. DNRC is seeking your review comments and suggestions before finalizing. The comment period is open until June 10, 2012. Send comments to [lsiroky@mt.gov](mailto:lsiroky@mt.gov).

The purpose of a model floodplain ordinance is to provide a template to local communities to establish or update their ordinances for floodplain management within specifically identified flood hazard areas designated by DNRC and FEMA. Updates to the most recent 2006 Model are needed to reflect new FEMA flood hazard reduction building standards, recent legislative changes and a few other updates and changes identified by the practice and use by local floodplain administrators.

A small work committee of DNRC staff, several active local floodplain administrators and other interested individuals has met several times to participate in the review and preparation of this draft and has provided valuable input to the needed updates. A widening circle of reviewers is sought now to finalize the 2012 Model Ordinance. Comments

and suggestions from members of the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) are being sought, along with comments and suggestions from the general public.

The 2012 Model Ordinance draft, including additional information about the ordinance and process, is available online: [www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov](http://www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov), click on 'News and Announcements'. Please forward all comments and suggestions to [lsiroky@mt.gov](mailto:lsiroky@mt.gov).

## Community Rating System (CRS) Changes for 2012

Source: Excerpted from *NFIP/CRS Update* March 2012 Newsletter



*The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The CRS recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community actions meeting the goals of the program. Montana currently has twelve CRS communities.*

For more information on the CRS program, visit: <http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/crs.shtm>.

Changes to the Community Rating System (CRS) will be contained in the 2012 edition of the CRS Coordinator's Manual. The new Manual is expected to be released soon, and will be posted on [www.CRS2012.org](http://www.CRS2012.org). The new Manual will not take effect until the second half of 2012, to allow all communities to review their programs and determine how they can improve their CRS classification under the new manual. The major changes are highlighted in a "Summary of Changes" document that can be downloaded from [www.CRS2012.org](http://www.CRS2012.org), along with other materials.

In general, the Manual changes promote more flexibility in credit for local programs and increased credit for addressing protecting life safety, preserving floodplain natural functions, and future conditions (including climate change).

After the Manual goes into effect, participating CRS communities will need to meet new prerequisites and credit criteria at their next cycle verification visit. No new requirements, including annual recertification requirements, will take effect until the Insurance Services Office (ISO)/CRS Specialists review them one-on-one with their communities at the cycle visits. Kerry Redente is the ISO/CRS specialist for Montana. As with all verification visits, Kerry Redente will work with a community to identify additional activities eligible for CRS credit that the community might not have previously received.

The changes in the Manual will impact each CRS community differently. Some communities will see an increase in credit for their activities (e.g., Activity 420 (Open Space Preservation) credits are increasing). Other communities will

see a decrease in credit for certain activities (e.g., Activity 320 (Map Information Service) credits are decreasing).

Because many communities do not request credit for all the activities they currently implement, it is expected that many communities can improve their scores by seeking credit for activities they are currently implementing, but haven't sought credit for in the past. There will also be opportunities for new credits, especially credits for protecting life safety and natural floodplain functions.

For more information, including upcoming webinars explaining the program changes, see: [www.CRS2012.org](http://www.CRS2012.org).

## Welcome Mary Gibson!



Mary Gibson joined the DNRC floodplain management program in December as the new Flood Risk Map Program Coordinator for Montana. She will be managing the Risk Map program within Montana, working in partnership with FEMA, local communities and mapping contractors on multi-year projects to update communities' flood insurance maps to digital and coordinate new floodplain mapping studies.

She moved to Helena from Oregon, where she worked for 30 years in the field of planning. Mary jokes that she's "been involved in land use planning since we invented it". Most recently she operated her own planning consultant business, focusing on policy work for drainage districts in the Columbia River corridor. Her past experiences also include working for the Port

of Portland as a planner, including involvement with floodplain management, environmental permitting, industrial project development and coordination with planning commissions, local governments and regulatory agencies. She holds a B.S. from Oregon State University.

What prompted her move to Montana? Fly fishing is at the top of her list, so she's looking forward to exploring a lot of new streams this summer. Mary also has a daughter in Butte and one in Seattle. While her kids were growing up, she also spent quite a bit of time in Montana, vacationing at Hebgen Lake and Yellowstone and Teton National Parks.

Mary replaces Celinda Adair as Risk Map Coordinator. Celinda recently relocated with her family to Australia.

## Familiar Face...New Position



In November, Briana (Bri) Shipman began in a new capacity as DNRC's first Floodplain Training Officer. Bri is a familiar face in the floodplain field, she's been with DNRC's Water Operations Bureau since 2006.

Bri grew up in Omaha, NE. After attending Florida State University to pursue a vocal performance degree, she switched gears and moved to Montana. After twelve years in Helena, Bri has no intention of leaving as her love of Montana is fierce. She and her husband Dan are raising their two young daughters and spend a considerable amount of time outside, enjoying the beauty that Montana offers. In her spare time, Bri is the director for the Helena Youth Choir, fostering music appreciation in the Helena community. Additionally, she will finally be receiving an Associate's degree in May from UM-Helena.

Bri looks forward to providing Montana's floodplain management professionals with comprehensive and valuable training materials, resources, and educational opportunities. Input and suggestions for training development are welcome – please contact her anytime at 406-444-1300 or [bshipman@mt.gov](mailto:bshipman@mt.gov) with ideas.

# Risk Map Funding Status

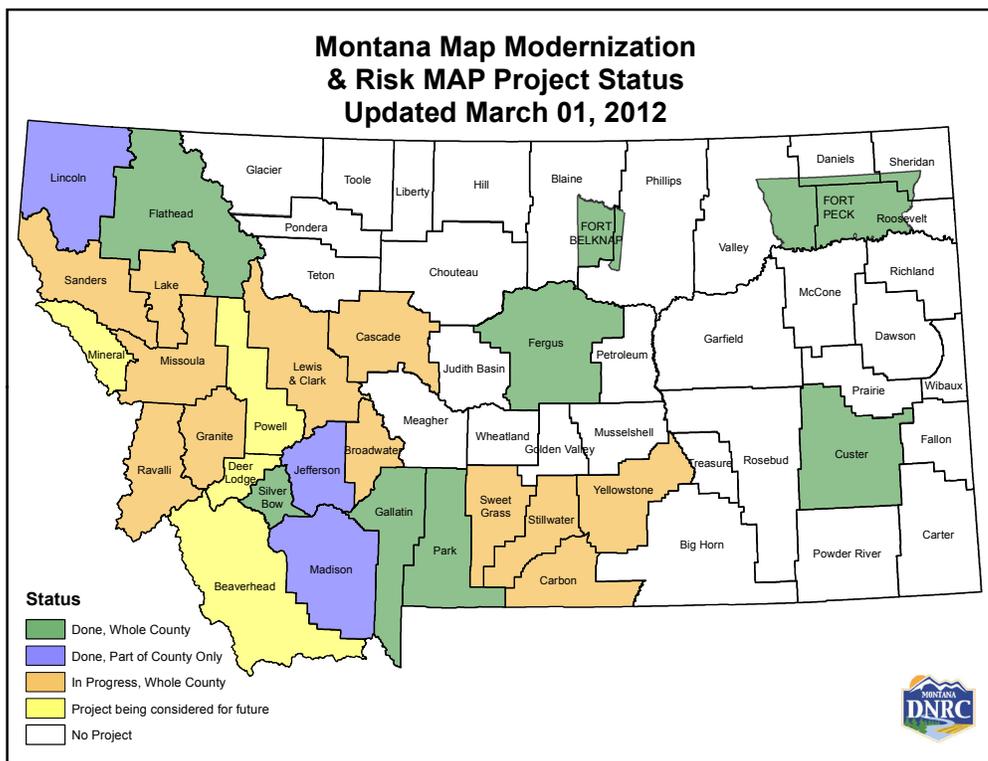
By Mary Gibson, DNRC Flood Risk Map Program Coordinator

Federal funding for FEMA's Risk Map program, which allows for the conversion of traditional paper Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) to digital format (DFIRMS), along with the undertaking of new flood studies and other non regulatory flood risk mitigation products, has been cut by 60% nationwide in Fiscal Year 2012.

The State is in the process of reviewing the priority needs list submitted by the communities, to decide where to go for the next mapping project. Based on this, one or more grants will be readied for the next FEMA grant submission opportunity early this summer.

Community support is an important consideration in this selection process. Over the next few weeks, the DNRC will vet the potential projects from the needs priority list already compiled from the communities. Before deciding to recommend any project to FEMA, DNRC will talk to local community officials to be sure the community is ready to launch such a project in the coming year and is supportive of the undertaking.

Whether or not we get additional funding for a partial project in 2012, we currently have 13 projects under way and the possibility of one project resuming map production, Missoula County, bringing our total number of active projects to 14. Administration of the State's Risk Map program will continue to be funded in the upcoming fiscal year, to manage the large load of projects in process. The State of Montana has fared well in the FEMA floodplain mapping program, often achieving grant awards of over a million dollars a year and undertaking one to two countywide projects a year. Currently the State has 20 counties and Indian reservations in which mapping has been converted countywide or in which countywide mapping is currently being completed and three counties in which partial mapping has been completed. All of this mapping conversion has been achieved since the State began applying for FEMA floodplain mapping grants in 2005.



Since 2005, 20 Montana counties and Indian reservations have begun the digital conversion process through FEMA's Map Modernization and Risk Map programs.

Due to the federal budget cuts, here in Montana we will not have enough funds for a full county wide or watershed wide DFIRM conversion project this coming year. Our plan is to take the grant money we do have and apply for additional smaller amounts of grant funding in order to have enough money for 1-2 detailed studies, which will contribute data to a full countywide/ watershed wide study in future years. The money might be put toward new floodplain studies in unmapped areas or in areas with dated maps.

## DNRC Launches New Floodplain Training Program

By Bri Shipman, DNRC Floodplain Training Officer

This past fall, the MT DNRC Floodplain Program received additional funding from FEMA to implement a new Floodplain Training Officer position within the Water Operations Bureau. This position will be working on developing new training tools, including:

- Floodplain Training Modules and online learning capabilities
- Interactive GIS mapping application
- Training tracking system intended to better gauge community specific training needs and assist in the development of future training

### Floodplain Training Modules

The Floodplain Training Modules represent several years of effort to establish a comprehensive reference for Montana's floodplain administrators. The training modules incorporate the Montana Codes Annotated, the Administrative Rules of Montana, the new draft model floodplain ordinance, the Code of Federal Regulations, FEMA-480, older versions of the Floodplain Guidebook and various publications from other state floodplain programs. In their entirety, the modules will comprise the most updated version of the Floodplain Guidebook. Topics address the broad spectrum of elements floodplain administrators must consider when carrying out their job duties, including:

- The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- Relationship Between Communities, the State and FEMA
- Communities and Flood Insurance
- FPA Roles and Responsibilities
- Permit Issuance, Subdivisions, Inspections
- Variances and Appeals
- Enforcement

- Community Rating System
- Standards for Floodplain Development
- Flood Hazard Maps, Letters of Map Change, Elevation Certificates
- Flood Disaster and Recovery
- Mitigation

Several draft modules are currently posted on the DNRC floodplain website and are open for comment. Please visit [www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov](http://www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov) and click on the 'Training' button to access these draft modules. Any input is welcome and will be incorporated into the final training modules.

### Interactive GIS Mapping Application

Development is underway on an interactive GIS mapping application that represents community NFIP participation in Montana – elements include one click access to community floodplain administrator contact information, local community floodplain management ordinances, and access to local community floodplain or planning websites. This tool will be dynamic and the current development is considering future components to incorporate based off of input received from end-users. A pilot test run is anticipated for early summer.

### Training Tracking System

A training tracking system is in the works, with the purpose of allowing the Floodplain Program to better identify training needs and tailor them to accommodate the diversity of Montana's local NFIP participating communities.

For questions or comments about the floodplain modules, the interactive NFIP participation map, or to request more information about training, please contact Bri Shipman at 406-444-1300 or [bshipman@mt.gov](mailto:bshipman@mt.gov).

## 3rd Annual Floodplain Resource Seminar – July 16-20, Helena

Save the Date!



Looking for more in-depth training on permits, engineering, flood insurance, GIS mapping, or other floodplain-related topics? Mark your calendars for this free educational opportunity in Helena, offered by Montana DNRC.

Other topics will include: reducing flood risks through mitigation, natural and beneficial functions of floodplains, the Montana Silver Jackets program and the Certified Floodplain Managers (CFM) exam.

All sessions (with the exception of insurance training for agents and lenders) will be offered at no cost. Classes and workshops will be scheduled throughout the week. Pick and choose which sessions and/or days you want to attend.

More details, including registration information, will be available soon on the DNRC website: [www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov](http://www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov), under 'Training'. For more information, contact Bri Shipman, 406-444-1300 or [bshipman@mt.gov](mailto:bshipman@mt.gov)

## FEMA's Expanded Appeals Process

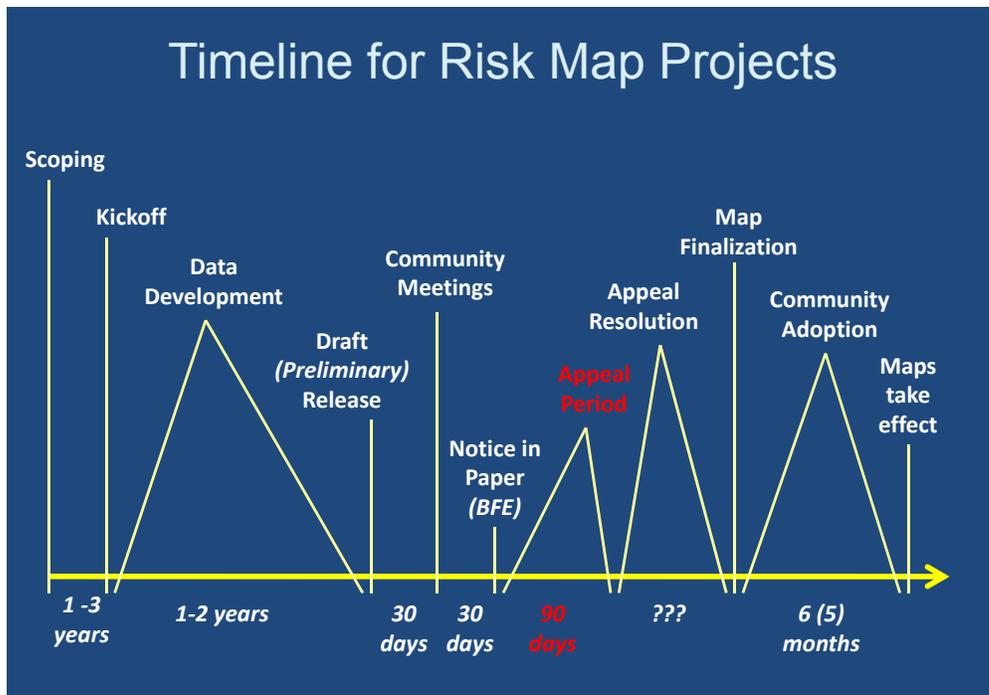
By Mary Gibson, DNRC Flood Risk Map Program Coordinator

When FEMA undertakes new floodplain mapping in a community, there is an opportunity for citizens and local officials of the community to participate in checking and correcting any mapping errors. This

is a very important step in the map finalization process.

In the official mapping process, this local correction happens during the appeal period. The FEMA rules were recently changed with respect to what and how communities can appeal errors in the maps before they become final and are adopted by the State. The new rules apply to Risk Map appeals processes starting after December 2011. In Montana, this will apply to mapping projects in Broadwater, Stillwater, Ravalli, Granite, Flathead and possibly Missoula counties. The new appeals information is available on the FEMA website at: [www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4938](http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4938)

"These documents clear up what is expanded in the appeals process from just BFEs to boundaries of Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) or floodways and zone designations. The appeal policy criteria will help administrators explain to the public what is needed in an appeal and it certainly is good information that Floodplain Administrators should know", explained Marc Pitman, DNRC Regional Engineer from the Kalispell Unit office.



Floodplain mapping projects under the Risk Map program include a 90 day appeal period when citizens and local officials can submit comments and appeals. The date when floodplain maps become final depends on the number and extent of comments and appeals that are received and how long it takes FEMA to resolve those appeals.

# Updated DNRC Website



DNRC's Floodplain Management website [www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov](http://www.mtfloodplain.mt.gov) has a whole new look and a LOT more resources and information. To make it easy to find exactly what you are looking for, the site is now organized into nine different areas:

- Contacts
- Insurance
- Permitting and Regulations
- Mapping and Technical Resources
- Disaster and Recovery
- Training
- Outreach
- Flood Photos
- News and Announcements

'Disaster and Recovery' is a completely new addition to the website, which will eventually include

resources on substantial damage, mitigation grants, emergency preparedness and disaster plans. The 'Training' section has been expanded to include resources from past events and presentations, upcoming training opportunities, as well as independent-study resources and materials.

As you navigate through the site, you'll notice some items are not yet 'live'. Bear with us, as the website is still a work in progress. We hope to have more of the links activated and more resources posted in the near future. If you have suggestions for additional resources or links you don't see listed, or comments on the website itself, please let us know: [tlyden@mt.gov](mailto:tlyden@mt.gov) or 406-444-1343.

## Living with Levees – It's a Shared Responsibility

Source: FEMA



*Some levees are designed to protect against a certain level of flooding. However, levees can and do decay over time. Levees can also be overtopped, or even fail during large floods.*

Did you know that while levees can help reduce the risk of flooding, they do not eliminate the risk? FEMA's National Levee Outreach Program is aimed at educating communities, the public, and other stakeholders about the risks levees pose and at dispelling myths about the ability of levees to always protect communities.

Visit FEMA's recently updated levee webpages to get the facts you need about levees and levee flood risk. FEMA's Living with Levees homepage ([www.fema.gov/levees](http://www.fema.gov/levees)) serves as the portal to all of FEMA's levee-related information online, with content tailored specifically for:

- Homeowners, Renters and Business Owners
- Community Officials
- Real Estate, Insurance and Lending Industry Professionals
- The Media/Press

- Cooperating Technical Partners, Engineers, Surveyors and Contractors

And don't forget to check out the new Levee Resources Library, your 'one-stop-shop' for basic information on key levee-related topics.

Remember, living with levees and levee risk is a responsibility we all share in:

- Know your risk
- Know your role
- Take action today to protect yourself, your family and your community

## Calendar

### May 4

Miles City Floodplain Awareness Day

### May 11

Lewis & Clark County Flood Awareness Day

### May 20-25

Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) 36th Annual National Conference – “Mission Mitigation”. San Antonio, TX

### June 10

Comment period ends for Montana 2012 Model Floodplain Ordinance Draft

### July 16-20

Floodplain Resource Seminar – Helena

## Floodplain Meanderings Around Montana

**Sanders County:** New DFIRM maps are expected to be released in June. The county, Town of Plains and City of Hot Springs are working on updating their floodplain ordinances to coincide with the effective date of the new maps.

**Ravalli County:** Eric Anderson, Floodplain Administrator for Ravalli County recently accepted the position of Ravalli County Road Department Supervisor. The county is in the process of filling the Floodplain Administrator position. Preliminary new DFIRM maps for Ravalli County will be released for review later this spring.

**Flood Awareness Days:** Miles City and Lewis and Clark County are hosting flood awareness events in May. Flathead County recently completed another successful flood awareness outreach event in April.

### DNRC Floodplain Staff Updates:

Tiffany Lyden is filling in as temporary DNRC floodplain outreach specialist for Mary Guokas, who is on extended sick leave. Sarah Yancy was recently hired as Administrative Support.

### New Communities Looking Into Joining NFIP:

At least four communities are actively looking into joining (or re-joining) the NFIP program. Recent flooding events in some of communities brought to light the importance of flood insurance availability to area residents, prompting community officials to pursue NFIP participation.

**Town of Wibaux:** Long-time town clerk and floodplain administrator Ginny Archdale has passed away. Our condolences to Ginny's family.

Highground Editor - Tiffany Lyden

Graphic Design - Martha Hodder

Persons with disabilities who need an alternative accessible format of this document should contact DNRC public information officer at 406-444-0465.

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