AWSMP Flood Hazard Mitigation Working Group Meeting/Training Notes
December 17, 2014
10:00am—12:00 Noon
AWSMP Office, Shokan, NY

In attendance,

Phil Eskeli, NYC DEP
Dennis Dempsey, NYC DEP
Brent Gotsch, CCEUC
Sylvia Rozzelle, Town of Olive
Ellen Casciaro, Town of Woodstock
Candace Balmer, RCAP Solutions
Danyelle Davis, NYC DEP
Tom Story, NYSDOT
Aileen Helsley, NYSDOT
Leslie Zucker, CCEUC
Beth Reichheld, NYC DEP
Burt Samuelson, Ulster County Planning
Nate Hendricks, Catskill Watershed Corporation
Jim Fugel, Town of Olive
Andrew Emrich, UC Dept. of Public Works
Eric Hofmeister, Town of Shandaken
Rob Stanley, Town of Shandaken
Brian Drumm, NYSDEC
Tiffany Runge, UC SWCD
Allison Lent, UC SWCD
Glenn Hofstatter, Town of Hurley
Jennifer Bowman, CCEUC
Amanda LaValle, UC Dept. of Environment

Meeting began at 10:05AM. Brent G. opened meeting with welcome and introductions

Town of Shandaken Updates

Rob S. gave brief report on happenings in Shandaken. Town is proceeding with the Local Flood Analysis (LFA) process and NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program.

Town met with Ulster County and DEP to advance 18 parcel buy-outs in Shandaken. DEP is taking ownership of the parcels, but maintenance rests with the Town; related details are being worked out.

Town of Olive Updates

Sylvia R. gave a brief report. Olive Town Board approved a LFA proposal from Woidt Engineering. Town submitted a SMIP grant to AWSMP for LFA funding.

The Route 28 Five Arches Bridge in Boiceville is going to be replaced. NYC engineers met with Town of Olive. The Olive Flood Advisory Committee asked NYC Engineers to consider potential flooding and mitigation actions in bridge replacement. NYC engineers responded with willingness to work with Town on these issues.

NY Rising process is advancing and funding is expected.

Town applied for a Hudson Valley Greenway grant with Ulster County assistance. Town was awarded $8,500 to match LFA funds to develop a town-wide flood hazard mitigation plan.

Depth Grid Presentation

Phil Eskeli of NYC DEP gave a presentation on depth grids and how to use them. The presentation can be downloaded at: http://ashokanstreams.org/publications-resources/

Depth grids are a product of the FEMA mapping process. They were created using 2009 LiDAR. LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing technology that collects 3-dimensional point clouds of the Earth's surface. Depth grids are strictly advisory products and have no regulatory function.

Note on LiDAR: FEMA ground surveys used to generate flood maps – a separate product from depth grids, occurred after 2009. Elevation accuracies on LiDAR vary for different features on the ground. Accuracy for roads is under 6 inches (elevation), tree cover up to 4 foot error possible, grass has 2 foot possible error.

Depth Grids can be used for:

- Emergency Response
- Hazard Mitigation
- Emergency Preparedness

Depth Grids identify predicted flood elevations (measured in feet) at a given point in the flood zone. The data is stored in a geographic information system (GIS) computer system.

Depth grids are available for the 10-year, 25-year, 50-year, 100-year, and 500-year floods throughout the NYC West of Hudson Watershed. Depth grids for the 100-year flood have gone through the Quality Control/Quality Assurance process and are the most accurate.

The Depth Grids are public information available to anyone. DEP will help watershed communities to access maps and information if they don't have GIS. Contact Dennis Dempsey at DEP (ddempsey@dep.nyc.gov), 845-340-7842).

Questions/Discussion

Nate H. announced the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC)'s Sustainable Communities Planning Program, part of the CWC Local Technical Assistance Program, can award up to

$20,000 to watershed communities engaged in LFA for planning assistance. The program funds revisions to local zoning codes or zoning maps or to upgrade comprehensive plans in order to identify areas within those municipalities that can serve as new locations for residences and/or businesses to be moved after purchase under the voluntary NYC Flood Buyout Program. For more information, contact Nate Hendricks at the Catskill Watershed Corporation at (845) 586-1400 or nhendricks@cwconline.org.

1. When was LiDAR completed?
    a. 2009

2. Would it be helpful, valuable or possible to make flood information available online for access during a flood emergency? Problems for communities who lose power/communications during a flood/storm event.
    a. It would be a good idea for communities to have hard copies of flood maps and depth grids available in a binder to use if power goes out. Delaware County does this and it works well for them.

3. Who should I contact to have FEMA complete new flood maps for my community? How do you go about this?
    a. Most important/direct/influential person is your local federal representative. They can contact federal agencies. Also speak with Bill Nechamen, Chief, Floodplain Management at NYSDEC, as they work with FEMA to obtain funds and prioritize new map development.

4. When will Woodstock and Hurley have new flood maps?
    a. Both communities have new detailed maps; detailed maps are only available within the NYC Watershed. These are preliminary maps undergoing public review before adoption by communities. The 90-day public review period is complete. Next steps: FEMA sends Counties a letter of final determination; and a six-month review period begins before final adoption.

5. As new hydrologic information becomes available, will depth grids be made available in areas without them?
    a. New hydrologic information is not yet available. Older data (some from 1980s) can't be used to produce accurate depth grids.

6. What is the status of National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) flood insurance rate changes?
    a. With passage of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 ("aka" Grimm-Waters) flood insurance rates will gradually rise. Most currently subsidized properties will see rate increases of 5% to no more than 18% a year until actuarial rates are hit. There are additional changes as well. This topic may be good for a future working group training.

7. FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) program questions: How does a community get into the program? What is the process/workload like?

a. Town of Middletown in Delaware County has applied to CRS. CRS is a program to reduce flood insurance rates community-wide. Communities try to implement changes and enter the program at a low level, which corresponds to reduced flood insurance rates. Baseline is Level 10 and indicates no rate reduction. Middletown and Village of Margaretville entered the program at Levels 7 and 8, respectively. Towns collect points for different activities/services that they perform. Once 500 points are achieved a Town/Village can enter into a Level 9 (lowest level) for a 5% rate reduction. For each additional 500 points achieved (and related level increase) another 5% rate reduction is achieved.

8. Is it worth for Towns to hire a consultant to help with entering CRS?
    a. First step is for the Town to consider the number of policies and their value to help them determine if it's worth the effort to pay a consultant to do the data, research, and leg work. The goal of all this work is for the town to become a more compliant community and to have better flood mitigation plans and awareness.
    b. Even with a consultant assisting, knowledgeable staff in the Town Hall will need to locate and organize paperwork. CRS requires a lot of detailed record keeping that must be maintained year after year. Each local community needs to decide if it's worth all of the effort.
    c. Rob S. brought up the idea of creating a shared services agreement to fund a position serving multiple communities enter into the CRS.

Other Items

At a future meeting, Towns may share LFA modeling results for flood mitigation solutions.

Brent G. asked the group if there are any particular training needs related to flood mitigation topics -- please contact Brent with ideas at bwg37@cornell.edu or 845-688-3047. Brent is planning training courses for the coming year.

Next Meeting

TBA – likely for March