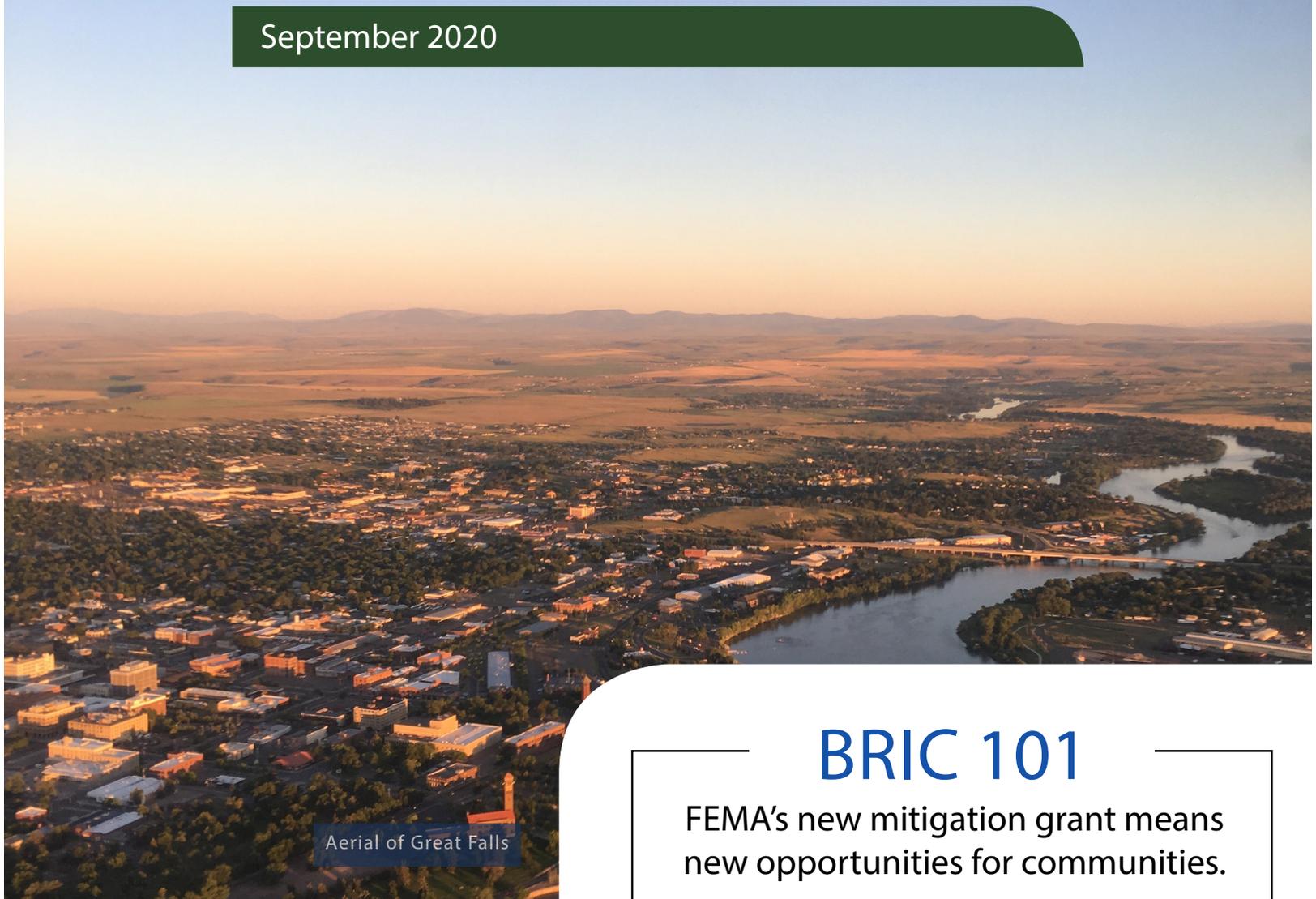


MONTANA HIGHGROUND

September 2020



Aerial of Great Falls

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BRIC 101

FEMA's new mitigation grant means new opportunities for communities.

Get more info on Page 5

RESOURCE SEMINAR

Montana is excited to partner with the Natural Hazard Mitigation Association for this year's seminar.

Get more info on Page 4



Photo by Aaron Bolton for
Montana Public Radio

WE'LL SEE YOU SOON!

We recognize the last few months have been unusual and disruptive in a whirlwind of ways—and for many that’s an understatement. Usually the Montana Floodplain Program spends a considerable amount of time visiting communities, whether it be to work through new mapping updates or to check in on local floodplain management. Since March, we’ve been staying in touch with communities through phone and video calls. While migrating to digital meetings has worked out well, we miss touring floodplains and interacting with local officials, floodplain administrators, and citizens.

We’ve recently been able to begin making in-person visits again, and we’re looking forward to getting to visit you soon. With that, note that we’ll likely ask you to accommodate our visit with a few changes.

1. State staff will wear a mask during the visit and if traveling in vehicles with others
2. If meeting outdoors is not an option, a conference room will be best for providing adequate spacing
3. Meetings should be limited to as few people as possible
4. If you’re not feeling well, please cancel our meeting — we promise to do the same

DNRC staff may also use a combination of staff touring the floodplain and then following up with a virtual meeting. We will make sure to at least give you a wave from the vehicle when in your area.

FIRST STREET'S FLOOD FACTOR TOOL

What is it and what does it mean for me?

This summer, First Street Foundation, a nonprofit research organization, released their flood model and online risk visualization tool, Flood Factor. First Street promoted the tool as a new means to view the risk of flooding throughout the United States. We have heard from property owners and floodplain administrators across Montana with questions about Flood Factor and how it relates to FEMA maps.

First, it's important to define the intended use of FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). FIRMs represent the one-percent-annual-chance of flooding. They're designed to show minimum standards for regulating the floodplain, the highest risk areas, and flood insurance premiums. FIRMs are produced at the community-level following extensive local data collection, hydraulic and hydrological analysis, and community review. FEMA maps can be used as a tool to communicate flood risk, but they are effectively snapshots in time and do not address future changing conditions.

In comparison, First Street states their model includes country-wide coverage and incorporates changing environmental factors. The model relies on aggregated, generalized information from large national data sets that has been downscaled for use at the parcel level. Because First Street uses nationwide data (for example, 30-meter Digital Elevation Models for ground surface elevations), and their analysis doesn't model individual roads, culverts or bridges, First Street is able to generate flood risk information on a large scale, including areas that have never had a floodplain map.

The Flood Factor tool and FEMA FIRMs are developed using different data and analyses, and therefore depict different types of risk, but they can be used to complement one another.

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) noted that Flood Factor may be useful in making broad management or planning decisions or to inform risk in a non-consequential manner. According to ASFPM, Flood Factor can complement FEMA's risk awareness efforts by:

- Improving awareness of potential future flood risk among individuals, especially property owners and home buyers.
- Highlighting the gap in current FEMA mapping, especially in smaller communities and rural areas.

Property owners and floodplain administrators should explore differences between Flood Factor and FIRMs for their local community to build a more comprehensive understanding of flood risk. In areas unmapped by FEMA, Flood Factor can be a tool to communicate flood risk and mitigation opportunities. For instance, Flood Factor could be used to help visualize flood risk in unmapped areas or in communities not yet participating in the NFIP, and may help motivate elected officials and communities to join the NFIP.

Consensus among both FEMA and ASFPM is that Flood Factor is not an appropriate tool for making regulatory decisions, in/out determinations for insurance and zoning, or providing data for Letters of Map Change (LOMC).

At the Montana DNRC Floodplain Program, we are encouraged to have an organization join us in working towards the goal of improving the understanding and communication of flood risk, yet we will continue to work with property owners, realtors, lenders, and floodplain administrators to maintain community compliance with the NFIP and community-adopted FEMA maps.

UPDATING MAPS in Montana

- » Montana works closely with communities to identify, prioritize, and secure funding for new studies.
- » The MT Floodplain Mapping team will present the 5-year mapping plan on Tuesday afternoon of the Resource Seminar.
- » [Floodplain.mt.gov](https://floodplain.mt.gov) is your go-to hub for ongoing mapping projects.

[Register now!](#)

CAP Partners with NHMA for Training

In 2019 FEMA initiated a comparative evaluation of state Community Assistance Programs (CAP), called the Tiered State Framework (TSF). CAP in each state is partially funded through a federal grant to provide technical support to local communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The intent of the TSF is to increase transparency and enable performance-based program management in order to drive strategic long-term improvement. The evaluation addresses comprehensive characteristics of state programs, from financial grant management to the quality of communications with local floodplain administrators. The TSF categorizes CAP performance in each characteristic into three tiers—Foundational, Proficient, and Advanced—and also provides an overall evaluation. Following the 2019 review, Montana joined eight other states earning the designation of ‘Advanced’.

The results of the TSF evaluation motivated Montana to stay among the best performing states and support fellow state programs in attaining the Advanced tier. One avenue for securing Advanced designation in many characteristics is to find openings to partner to support NFIP, state, and local goals. For instance, partnering to address the TSF characteristic ‘Training Variety’ is an opportunity to improve training offerings, enhance CAP performance in TSF evaluations, and increase community capacity to administer the local floodplain program.

Montana tapped the Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) as a partner in providing training variety to local communities. Every fall, Montana CAP staff host a multi-day Resource Seminar to support cross-community networking, publicize technical resources, and provide floodplain management training. This year, NHMA will support the event with a day and a half of courses, with each day summing to a four to six-hour training on a specialized floodplain management topic.

Bringing in the NHMA expert team allows the Montana CAP program to provide diverse and valuable training for local administrators while also checking a significant box in the TSF. Following the roll-out of NHMA’s participation in the Montana Resource Seminar, NHMA will be ready to partner with other states to support their training and TSF goals.

Be sure to check out the 2020 Resource Seminar Agenda at the end of the newsletter!

This article originally appeared in FEMA’s Risk Mitigation Division News Flash monthly newsletter.

FEMA'S NEW GRANT PROGRAM

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)



Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) is a new FEMA mitigation program that replaces the existing Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program. Authorized by Section 203 of the Stafford Act, BRIC will support states, local communities, tribes and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from natural hazards.

Eligible activities include (1) Capability- and Capacity-Building, (2) Mitigation Projects, (3) Management Costs, and (4) Direct Technical Assistance. FEMA anticipates funding projects demonstrating innovative approaches to partnerships, such as shared funding mechanisms or collaborative project design. For example, an innovative project may bring multiple funding sources or in-kind resources from a range of private and public sector stakeholders or offer multiple benefits to a community in addition to the benefit of risk reduction.

Furthermore, BRIC awards will target community lifelines. FEMA defines the construct of 'lifelines' as the services that "enable the continuous operation of critical government and business functions and is essential to human health and safety or economic security". When lifelines are restored and stabilized, all other aspects of society are able to function. FEMA uses the construct of lifelines in tandem with the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), not as a replacement. Applicants should consider framing their project(s) in terms of one of more of the seven categories of community lifelines: safety and security; food, water, shelter; health and medicine; power and fuel; communications; transportation; and hazardous materials. [Click here for FEMA's Community Lifelines Toolkit 2.0.](#)

For additional information regarding the BRIC program, visit [FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grants website](#) or the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

Communities will apply for BRIC funding as sub-applicants through the State Department of Emergency Services.

Key deadlines are:

- Notices of Intent can be sent at any time to MT DES
- BRIC / FMA application period opens: September 30, 2020
- Complete sub-applications due to MT DES via FEMA GO: December 15, 2020

BRIC Grant Need-to-knows:

- Sub-applications are limited to \$50M and the State can submit an unlimited number of sub-applications in its application to FEMA.
- Sub-applicants may also received up to 5% of their award in the form of management costs, to cover management of their sub-grant.
- The period of performance for each sub-grant will be 3 years, starting on the award date.
- Funding is provided as a 75% federal reimbursement, with 25% match from the sub-applicant. "Small/Impoverished Communities", those with fewer than 3,000 residents and an average per capita annual income at or below 80% of the national per capita income, may qualify for a 90% federal share.

Contact Sara Hartley, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer, for more information: Sara.Hartley@mt.gov, 406.324.4794



Lewis and Clark County



NORTHWEST REGIONAL FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

September 22-24

<https://norfma.org/2020Conference>



MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

September 29-October 1

<https://www.mtcounties.org/events/annual-conference/maco-2020-annual-conference/>



MONTANA LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

October 6-9

<https://mtleague.org/conference/>



MONTANA SILVER JACKETS TEAM

Postponed until Winter, stay tuned for the new date!

Around-the-state FLOODPLAIN ADMINISTRATOR STAFF UPDATES

Welcome to incoming

Local Floodplain Administrators:

- PAGE DRINGMAN | Carbon County
- TARA OSENDORF | Whitefish County
- ANGELA STAHL | Treasure County
- MELINDA BURNS | Pondera County

[Click here for an updated list of local FPAs](#)

Contact Shaye Bodine with updates
shaye.bodine@mt.gov | 406-444-1343

Congratulations CRAIG TAFT

There is a confirmed rumor that Big Horn County may be saying happy retirement soon to Craig Taft who has been with the county for over 41 years. Craig also served as Planning Director, Environmental Health Officer, Safety officer, and about ten other positions for the county.

UPCOMING CFM EXAM DATE

DECEMBER 11, 2020
HELENA, MT

Only 2 slots remain

Contact Traci Sears, tsears@mt.gov, if you would like to test.



ABOUT THE MONTANA HIGHGROUND

We are always accepting articles and ideas for this newsletter! Please email your contributions at anytime to shaye.bodine@mt.gov.

The Highground Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Montana DNRC Floodplain Program. This newsletter & other DNRC Floodplain Program activities are funded, in part, through grants from FEMA.

Persons with disabilities who need an alternative accessible format of this document should contact the DNRC Public Information Officer at: 406.444.0465.

MONTANA DNRC FLOODPLAIN STAFF

1424 9th Ave, PO Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601

Steve Story
Water Resources Bureau Chief
406.444.6816 | sestory@mt.gov

Tiffany Lyden
Outreach Specialist
406.444.0599 | tlyden@mt.gov

Doug Brugger
Engineering Specialist
406.444.1300 | douglas.brugger@mt.gov

Peri Turk
Floodplain Mapping Specialist
406.444.6656 | peri.turk@mt.gov

Katie Shank
Flood Hazard GIS Specialist
406.555.6664 | katherine.shank@mt.gov

Nadene Wadsworth
Outreach Specialist
406.444.6732 | nadene.wadsworth@mt.gov

Traci Sears
CAP/NFIP Coordinator
406.444.6654 | tsears@mt.gov

Shaye Bodine
Floodplain Specialist
406.444.1343 | shaye.bodine@mt.gov

MONTANA DNRC REGIONAL ENGINEERS

Sam Johnson
Billings Regional Office
406.247.4423 | sam.johnson@mt.gov

Larry Schock
Missoula Regional Office
406.721.4284 | lschock@mt.gov

Anthony Moritz
Havre Regional Office
406.265.5516 | anthony.moritz@mt.gov

Sterling Sundheim
Lewistown Regional Office
406.538.7459 | ssundheim@mt.gov

Marc Pitman
Kalispell Regional Office
406.752.2713 | mpitman@mt.gov

Brent Zundel
Bozeman Regional Office
406.556.4508 | bzundel@mt.gov



www.floodplain.mt.gov



2020 Montana Floodplain Resource Seminar Empowering Montana to be Disaster Resilient September 14-17, 2020

The Floodplain Resource Seminar offers free training on various topics to Montana's floodplain professionals and others interested. All sessions will be hosted via Adobe Connect. A link to the seminar will be sent the week prior to the email you provide at registration.

Please use the link below to register for the Resource Seminar. The registration form will inquire as to which sessions you plan to attend, however your responses will not impact your access and you are welcome to adjust as necessary throughout the week.

[Registration Link](#)

Monday, 9/14

Community Resilience, Part 1

▶ Understanding community vulnerabilities to natural disasters

9:00 am – 10:00 am

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

Promoting natural hazard mitigation and disaster risk reduction begins with understanding community dynamics and vulnerabilities. This session will introduce the NHMA's approach to community resilience, including advocacy for: sharing ideas and experiences; promoting greater awareness of the social, economic, and environmental components of safe and resilient development; and creating more equitable, safe, and sustainable hazard mitigation programs so that that foreseeable natural events do not become disasters.

▶ Achieving community buy-in for disaster risk reduction

10:00 am – 11:00 am

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

Incentivizing community resilience can take thoughtful negotiation and outreach. We will discuss basic principles to address the growing toll of disasters, climate change, and safe and sustainable development.

▶ Stronger Codes, Stronger DRR

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

Strengthening local zoning regulations and building codes provides an opportunity to increase disaster risk reduction and community resilience. We will describe why and how zoning regulations and building codes are developed and identify opportunities to adopt DRR best practices to enhance local planning and building regulations.

▶ Risk Assessment Basics

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

Risk assessment is an essential element in the disaster risk reduction decision-making process. The objectives of this module include defining risk, explaining the role of benefit-cost analysis in risk assessment, and providing resources and decision tools.

▶ Wildfire-Flood Connection

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

After a wildfire, flood risk increases during heavy rains because the burned ground is unable to absorb water, producing runoff conditions. This session incorporates perspectives from the western U.S. and other high-risk locations for insights, best practices, and creative funding solutions to encourage communities in addressing the post-fire flood risk, fire-flood connections, and reducing future damage.

Tuesday, 9/15

Mapping, Part 1

▶ **Navigating the alphabet soup of LOMCs**

9:00 am – 10:00 am

CECs: Pending

Presenter

Tiffany Lyden – Outreach Specialist, MT DNRC Floodplain Program

Description

LOMA, LOMR-F, LOMR, CLOMR-F, LOMR-FW, CLOMA, MT-1, MT-2..... What do they all mean? And when do they apply? This presentation will provide an overview of FEMA Letter of Map Changes, including what they are, the purpose behind them, and when they are needed or required. We will give a high-level overview of how LOMCs are submitted, reviewed and finalized, and how to search FEMA's Map Repository or the National Flood Hazard Layer to find LOMCs that have been issued, and why you might need to look for them. The presentation will also discuss ways to understand and explain Letters of Map Change to landowners, elected officials, and clients, without using confusing acronyms or jargon.

▶ **Community responsibilities**

10:00 am – 11:00 am

CECs: Pending

Presenter

Tom Birney – Natural Hazard Program Specialist, FEMA Region VIII

Description

MT-1 Community Acknowledgement Form: Do you know what you have just done? The discussion will be centered on what this form is, who should be signing them and what are the ramifications of signing and not signing the form. We will finish with an overview of an issued determination, what communities should be looking at and what does it potentially mean for a community's ordinance.

Mapping, Part 2

▶ **DNRC Mapping 5-year plan and mapping projects update**

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenter

Doug Brugger – Civil Engineering Specialist, MT DNRC Floodplain Program

Description

This session will provide an overview of Montana's floodplain mapping program, and how DNRC works collaboratively with FEMA and communities to update and produce new floodplain maps. We will give an update on current and future floodplain mapping projects around the state and introduce new staff that have joined the DNRC team.

▶ **Montana Lidar**

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenter

Katie Shank – Flood Hazard GIS Specialist, MT DNRC Floodplain Program

Description

This presentation will go over where lidar has been collected in the state, where people can access/obtain that data, and examples of how lidar can be used. An overview of the State Library's Montana Lidar Inventory web application will show users how to navigate the site and obtain data. There will also be Montana examples of how lidar is being used, including how the DNRC Water Operations Bureau uses it in floodplain mapping.

▶ **Floodplain Design, Construction, and Impacts on Flood Insurance**

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

CECs: 1 AIA-HSW, 1 ICC-CEU, 1 CFM-CEC, or 1 PHD

Presenter

Bryan Christopherson – Flood Mitigation Specialist, Floodproofing.com

Description

This session provides insight into the importance of proper foundation flood vents and dry floodproofing techniques for buildings located in a flood zone. It will identify FEMA Technical Bulletins 1,2, and 3, the NFIP, ASCE 24, ICC, and Building Code regulations and standards as they relate to sustaining foundations and overall business continuity in flood hazard areas. This session will also analyze the role of building compliance in securing lower flood insurance rates and what mitigation solutions are available for both residential and non-residential structures.

Wednesday, 9/16

Working in and around floodplains, Part 1

▶ **How to locate a property on a flood map and use online tools**

9:00 am – 10:00 am

CECs: To be announced

Presenters

Stephanie Dibetto – Floodplain Management and Insurance Manager, FEMA Region VIII

Description

This workshop should provide important information for surveyors, engineers, local officials, and others who work in floodplains as they navigate through the regulatory requirements to reduce flood damage and risk. Topics will include how to: use paper maps, identify if a property is located in the SFHA (FEMA), utilize the FIS, and employ online tools.

▶ **Technical Assistance Program**

10:00 am – 11:00 am

CECs: To be announced

Presenters

Steve Story – Bureau Chief, MT DNRC Water Operations Bureau
Traci Sears – NFIP/CAP Coordinator, MT DNRC Floodplain Program
Ada Montague – Legal Counsel, MT DNRC

Description

The DNRC provides technical assistance to communities with limited resources and expertise to help them evaluate sufficiency of floodplain submittals and make sound floodplain management decisions. This session will review the general services provided and the technical review process.

▶ **Legal and policy opportunities for disaster risk reduction**

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

This session is specifically designed to fit into the FEMA Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning (aka Risk MAP) vision of using the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as the basis of future planning and hazard mitigation. Questions considered include: What impediments are there to hazard mitigation, such as perceived legal concerns or external dynamics? What makes sense for pre-disaster preparation for local jurisdictions and insurance requirements of reconstruction? What is the law?

▶ **Design for Flood Resilience**

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

We design for flood resilience to protect communities and regions through (1) floodplain management and (2) flood-resilient design of buildings and infrastructure. This session will include a focus on the special challenges and opportunities in Montana.

▶ **Overcoming Impediments to Flood Resilience**

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

CECs: Pending

Presenters

Natural Hazards Mitigation Association (NHMA) Speakers

Description

It's critical to understand the limitations of current National Flood Insurance Program mapping in identifying flood risk. This session will explain common impediments to flood resilience and suggest ways to overcome them. Higher standards are a critical part of the long-term solution to flood loss, including the Community Rating System (CRS).