

2019 Act 157: Flood Risk Reduction Pilot Project

Showcasing natural flood management techniques to prevent flood damage



2019 Act 157 - Flood Risk Reduction Pilot Project

Act 157 provides \$150,000 to Ashland County toward the development of up to three natural flood management demonstration projects. This funding can be used for engineering and design, materials, construction, monitoring, and project management.

Ashland County must submit a report to the DNR summarizing the results.

The DNR will submit a report to the Legislature, the Division of Emergency Management, and the Department of Military Affairs summarizing the results and making recommendations for how state policies or funding streams could create incentives to protect and restore natural infrastructure and reduce floods.

Who supported WI Act 157 and why?

Act 157 was authored by Senators Petrowski and Bewley, and Representatives Steineke and Meyers. The proposal also had 29 cosponsors and passed with unanimous, bipartisan support through the legislature before being signed into law by the Governor.

This broad support reflects that flooding is a statewide concern and policymakers are interested in innovative and cost-effective approaches to flood risk reduction.



Tim Jacobson

Natural Flood Management

Natural Flood Management (NFM) is a watershed-based approach for implementing hydrologic restoration practices that reestablish the landscape's natural capacity to store and manage water.

For more information contact Wisconsin Wetlands Association Local Government Outreach Specialist Kyle Magyera by email at kyle.magyera@wisconsinwetlands.org or by phone at (608) 575-3702.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association Case Study, FEMA Project, and Act 157 Support

The restoration work to be completed under Act 157 is one element of a larger flood risk reduction collaboration between Ashland County's Land Conservation and Emergency Management Departments, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and other partners.

The collaboration emerged following release of a 2018 WWA case study that documented how fluvial erosion hazards (FEHs), such as incised headwater streams, gullies, and eroding ravines, have caused the loss of watershed storage and increased storm-related damage to vulnerable roads, culverts, and bridges in the Marengo River Watershed¹. Although wetlands are abundant on the landscape, many are degraded and underperform during storm events.

The case study recommended demonstration projects to show and quantify the benefits of natural flood management practices. This is why WWA helped develop and build support for Act 157. WWA will provide pro-bono support to help select sites, design restoration practices, and report the results of Act 157-funded projects.

The case study findings also helped County staff and partners secure a FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation Advanced Assistance Grant to gather data on these degraded conditions and identify natural flood management solutions such as repairing wetlands and reconnecting streams to their wetland floodplains. WWA will receive a sub-award to help manage the FEMA project and has committed an additional \$17,000 in match. This project is the first FEMA-supported project focused on natural flood management in the State of Wisconsin.

FEMA Project Goal Summary:

- ◆ Identify vulnerable infrastructure and fluvial erosion hazards
- ◆ Scope mitigation practices and potential project areas
- ◆ Engage stakeholders and append the Ashland County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Long-term Benefits

Combined, this natural flood management collaboration:

- ◆ Enhances Ashland County's long-standing effort to identify and implement cost-effective practices to slow the flow of runoff
- ◆ Brings additional attention, expertise and resources to help Ashland County and towns address flooding and reduce damage to infrastructure
- ◆ Helps the County integrate Land and Water Conservation Department and Emergency Management priorities
- ◆ Positions the county as a statewide leader in the development of natural flood management approaches and projects
- ◆ Will inform statewide efforts to increase the tools, trainings and technical support available to help all Wisconsin counties address a variety of water management concerns



¹ [*Exploring the Relationship Between Wetlands and Flood Hazards in the Lake Superior Basin*](#)