Region 6 Annual Status Report

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FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT FROM APPALACHIA TO THE ATLANTIC
Introduction

Region 6 includes the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. These states saw a large number of disasters in recent years and are continuing to recover. Various initiatives are being undertaken in each state that will lessen the damages from future disasters.

Key Accomplishments

Louisiana – Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code Council recommended the state adopt 1 foot of freeboard in the state building code, effective August 2023. Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) undertook the process to update the Floodplain Management Desk Reference Handbook to provide a more current document for local floodplain administrators. Louisiana held a FEMA L-273 class that was attended at max capacity and provided much needed training to floodplain administrators across the state. The state is also preparing a substantial damage prediction tool to help guide communities in the efficient allocation of resources after an event to perform substantial damage estimates for properties estimated to be below the base flood elevations. This tool was developed to assist communities in taking a more active role in substantial damage evaluations as part of DRRA Section 1206. Louisiana is on track to have nearly complete statewide 2D Base Level Engineering (BLE) coverage by the end of 2023.

Texas – Texas Quick Guide updates are underway. The state is also consolidating model flood damage ordinances from seven stairsteps down to three. The goal is to have one ordinance that is applicable for unmapped communities, riverine, and coastal communities, respectively. The state is incorporating additional language to cover Base Level Engineering and providing modular updates to cover different higher standards. The first ever draft State Flood Plan for Texas was reached an initial milestone. In coordination with FEMA Region 6, Texas is on track to complete statewide BLE coverage by the end of 2024.

Oklahoma – The State Flood Plan Phase 2 will begin in the next year that will hopefully begin funding projects. The state is continuing work to generate projects for funding and expects to reach substantial completion on the state flood plan by the end of 2023. FEMA L-273 class was held in February in Broken Arrow and was near max capacity. The state helped support the local community with substantial damage assessments in support of the Disaster Response Team.

Arkansas – Arkansas continues to focus on outreach to is smaller communities. Through a partnership with FEMA, the Arkansas Natural Resources Division offers a series of trainings to local floodplain administrator with a focus on leveraging Base Level Engineering as a higher standard.

Challenges

Louisiana’s greatest challenges right now are related to insurance. Risk Rating 2.0 has resulted in much concern over insurance premiums. There is a need to better understanding the benefits of mitigation as it relates to reduction in insurance premiums. In addition, the state is seeing a
reduction in insurance providers in the state. The legislature held a special session in early 2023 to discuss this challenge.

Texas – One of the state’s greatest challenges has been the availability of flood hazard data for more rural communities. Texas Water Development Board’s investment in BLE aims to close that gap by providing full coverage of the entire state. The BLE data is also being incorporated into the State Flood Planning effort to help communities identify risk and become more resilient through mitigation.

New Mexico – The state has been hit by significant wildfires over the last several years. One of the challenges resulting from these events is understanding the increase in flooding resulting from the wildfire burn scars.

Priorities

Many initiatives will compete for priorities in the coming year as there is much work to do across the region. Priorities for this year will include:

- Continue to engage with state staff to guide the priorities for ASFPM
- Collaboration across the region to support state staff with best practices and assist those in new roles
- Support a collaboration between state partners as they navigate state flood planning.

Recommended Actions

ASFPM has a number of initiatives that can help support the priorities and address challenges in Region 6:

- Risk Rating 2.0 transparency and connection to mitigation
- Mentorship program for new state level staff to connect with a network of resources
- Collaboration through regional meetings in connection with our federal partners