Region 5
Annual Status Report

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Introduction

An email was sent to all of the State NFIP Coordinators and State Hazard Mitigation Officers in FEMA Region V requesting input into this report. The email contained a series of questions intended to help spur thoughts and feedback for this report. The questions covered the following topics: 1) Key Accomplishments, 2) Challenges, 3) Priorities, and 4) Recommended Actions. The email responses received are summarized below.

The FEMA Region V states include: Illinois (2), Indiana (1), Michigan (1), Minnesota (1), Ohio (0), and Wisconsin (0). The number in parenthesis after the state name is the number of Major Disaster Declarations for flooding in that state since January 2023.

Key Accomplishments

Illinois

The Illinois CAP-SSSE program has greatly increased our training options for communities. We expanded our training to include monthly webinars that focus on floodplain management topics where our communities need more details and examples to understand their obligations. Topics have included: how to use and review an elevation certificate, violations and variances, web-based resources, SI/SD assessment and enforcement, permits, and an all-day NFIP 101. We work with ASFPM to offer CEC for certified floodplain managers for these trainings and have had good participation in our trainings. Additionally, Illinois is working to pass legislation to implement our State managed properties requirements. We will be working on rules to implement those requirements too.

There is new staff starting in the Hazard Mitigation Section. Current focus of the hazard mitigation staff is submitting applications for HMGP 4676 (St. Clair County Flooding). Also in April, staff submitted an application for $20,000,000 in FMA Swift Current funds. The Mitigation section is accepting notices of intent for HMGP funds made available under DR-4728 and DR-4749.

Michigan

- Michigan was selected for an award from the first year (FY23) of the Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund (STRLF) program.
- One staff position to the Hazard Mitigation Unit (now a total of 6 positions).
- Enhanced staffing stability by converting three 2-year limited term positions to permanent full-time positions.
- Completed the update of the state’s hazard mitigation plan (April 2024 approval).
Minnesota

Kristy Dellwo started as the new SHMO this year. The first task was to update the State Hazard Mitigation Plan. Minnesota worked with the University of Minnesota to develop a companion website for the plan.

Minnesota was also awarded SWIFT Current funding for DR-4722.

Ohio

After years of operating with reduced staff resources, the State of Ohio’s Floodplain Management Program has increased staffing to include three Floodplain Management Staff, one Engineer, and one Manager. This has significantly improved Ohio’s ability to better serve communities, agencies, and citizens through increased capacity and range of services, including engineering support, technical assistance, evaluation of community floodplain management programs, education, outreach, and overall engagement. All staff have achieved Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) accreditation through the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM).

The Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch recently coordinated the update of the State of Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan was approved by FEMA as an enhanced plan on May 13, 2024. Major updates to the plan include the addition of National Risk Index data and documentation of the state’s equity efforts.

The State of Ohio also had its first competitive BRIC grant awarded in March. A $54.6 Million grant is to the Mahoning Valley Sanitary District for the rehabilitation of the Mineral Ridge Dam that supplies drinking water to Youngstown and several surrounding communities.

Boardman Township in Mahoning County (Youngstown) also had a $47.2 Million FMA grant selected for further in 2023. This project includes culvert upgrades, acquisition of 2 residential apartment buildings, and green infrastructure to control runoff and reduce flooding.

Challenges

Illinois

The FEMA CAP-SSSE grant continues to get more complicated, yet state staffing and federal funding have not increased. Expected changes in the Federal FY25 NOFO will be difficult to address without a significant staff increase.

Coordination with state-agencies for the floodplain permitting on state-owned properties and the coordination of all state grant and loan programs for floodplain compliance.

Maintaining participation in the Community Rating System. Three communities recently stopped their participation.

The Illinois mitigation staff is keeping busy with the amount of grant funding opportunities available. They are also working on finalizing training and onboarding.
Michigan

- Launching the new revolving fund program has taken a significant amount of time. This is a new program to emergency management at the state and federal government so there are many details to work out and systems to put in place.
- Lengthy FEMA HMA grant review and approval processes. With unprecedented funding over the last several years, project submissions for HMA are for bigger more complicated grants. The level of detailed reviews and multiple revision requirements placed on grants by FEMA has caused approvals to be very slow.
- FEMA’s slow obligation of recipient management costs for non-disaster HMA programs. Fifteen months after FY22 BRIC applications were due to FEMA, Michigan has yet to be able to access recipient management costs associated with the program. The state began expending staff time on the FY22 program more than 18 months prior to having access to those funds.
- FEMA application systems continue to present challenges to state. FEMA GO is cumbersome and lacks functionality. State access to NEMIS is constantly tenuous. ND Grants, which FEMA chose to use for the revolving loan program, so far has been unable to transmit required award acceptance documents.

Minnesota

Lots of new staff not only on the MN mitigation team, but at MN HSEM as a whole.

Ohio

Even with increased staffing, a continually increasing workload remains the most significant challenge for the Floodplain Management Program. Ohio’s priorities are focused on completing the federal Assessment of Floodplain Management Programs for State-Owned & State-Managed Properties, working to increase the Community Compliance Improvement (CCI) Measure, incorporating the new community audit procedures, continued training of new staff, and ongoing community engagement.

Ohio EMA has $10 Million plus in state management cost funds, but continues to struggle to hire staff for mitigation positions. State hiring processes are antiquated and slow.

Ohio continues to promote the creation of a state funded hazard mitigation grant program and was dangerously close last budget cycle to success. Ohio EMA plans to promote the idea again during this year’s budget development process.
Priorities

Illinois

Hiring floodplain management staff for the CAP-SSSE program is a top priority. We will need to increase our audits of communities to keep up with FEMA expectations and that, in addition to management and permitting of State-owned properties, will strain our current staff resources.

- Obligating funds under current disasters/projects.
- Working on project/application closeouts.
- Training of new hires.
- Working with other State agencies on outreach.

Michigan

- Gaining approval for more than $73 million in submitted but still pending HMGP and BRIC applications.
- Developing project applications for Michigan’s newest disaster (4757-DR) with approximately $16 million available (based on 30-day estimate).
- Launching the STRLF program.

Minnesota

- Hire two more hazard mitigation staff
- Fund acquisition of HMA application and grant management software for BRIC/FMA (Civix)

Ohio

Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch priorities for the coming year are to: 1) work with Building Code partners to educate the public on the importance of effective enforcement, 2) contribute to agency EMAP Re-accreditation, and 3) apply for all funds made available as part of recent disaster declaration(s).

Recommended Actions

Support additional funding to the states through the CAP-SSE grant. The complexity of this program has increased while funding has not. Staff continue to need access to training opportunities so we can provide the support our communities need.

Continue to encourage FEMA to take meaningful action to reduce HMA program complexity.