

Risk Map 101

Installment I

In response to the request for a Risk Map 101 Course I will put together a series of e-mails that outline goals of the Program as seen from FEMA HQ. I will try to relate it to Maine and what I think it 'should' mean for Maine as opposed to what it is likely to mean if we fail to be assertive in our participation in the program. FEMA Procedure Memo 59 contains Guidance for Implementation of Watershed based studies. If you want a copy it can be downloaded from here <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4287> it is 12 pages long and details goals and methods to be used in meeting "FEMA's vision for the Risk MAP Program"

FEMA's offer to convert York and Cumberland communities represents a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to work together as a unit for everyone's benefit; the opportunity is to be the beneficiary of a very well done watershed based study that updates all 571 community map panels to 21st century quality at FEMA's expense. In the last forty years of mapping activities this has never been done and this is the reason why over 160 Maine communities have maps based on forty year old data only.

The bold type is a direct lift from PM 59 the italicized comments are mine. The comments will focus mostly on opportunities here for Cumberland and York Counties to take advantage of FEMA's offer to convert the communities to Risk MAP at no charge.

Procedure Memorandum 59

Building on the success of the Flood Map Modernization (Map Mod) effort, FEMA has begun to collaborate with Federal, State, local, and Tribal stakeholders to achieve the Risk MAP goals summarized below.

1. Flood Hazard Data. Address gaps in flood hazard data to form a solid foundation for risk assessment, floodplain management, and actuarial soundness of the NFIP.

- *Mapping products for Cumberland and York developed as part of the Map MOD program did new coastal studies for 7 Cumberland communities and 6 York communities. In addition several streams in Berwick were restudied and new base flood elevations established. With the exception of Berwick all inland communities and the inland areas of coastal communities did not have any new engineering data to support established base flood elevations(BFE's) or to establish new BFE's for the unnumbered A zones. Cumberland County has 258 miles with detailed studies and 339 miles of inadequate A zone delineations York county has 445 miles of inadequate A zone s and just 261 miles with detailed studies. Without new engineering to fix errors in existing preliminary maps and the rest of the flood zones conversion to Risk MAP will bring very few if any benefits*

to any of the communities. The two counties have an engineering GAP of nearly 800 miles of floodplains.

2. Public Awareness/Outreach. Ensure that a measurable increase of the public's awareness and understanding of risk results in a measurable reduction of current and future vulnerability.

- How can communities understand and be aware of risk when all communities have some version of floodplains mapped in gross error as shown in the examples attached? At a minimum floodplains should relate to elevation contour lines and have basic scientific engineering to support the delineations.

3. Hazard Mitigation Planning. Lead and support States, local communities, and Tribal entities to effectively engage in risk-based mitigation planning, resulting in sustainable actions that reduce or eliminate risks to life and property from natural hazards.

- Maine has done an admirable job of establishing Hazard Mitigation planning in all counties and leadership from FEMA is needed to develop a credible mapping program that will support and positively affect ongoing planning efforts already being accomplished.

4. Enhanced Digital Platform. Provide an enhanced digital platform that improves management of Risk MAP, administers information produced by Risk MAP, and improves communication and sharing of risk data and related products to all levels of government and the public.

- This is needed and will help all of Maine's partners in risk management provided the base level data outlining risk is accurate. If we populate the digital platform with maps illustrated above Maine's citizens will have little reason to believe any communications, risk data and related products distributed to them.

5. Alignment and Synergies. Align Risk Analysis programs and develop synergies to enhance decision-making capabilities through effective risk communication and management.

- I have to admit that so far I don't understand what FEMA means by this. What it could mean is that with concerted effort and cooperation from FEMA we could work with other agencies and constituencies that have a vested interest in good watershed management to leverage other resources and create an overall watershed management plan that is beneficial to a whole range of watershed management interests including but not limited to:
 - Maine Natural Resource Agencies
 - Environmental protection
 - IF&W
 - DMR
 - MGS
 - Agriculture
 - Maine DOT
 - Watershed Commissions

Tomorrow's Issue: Guiding Principles and Assumptions