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Tompkins County, NY Consultation Coordination Officer Meeting

Summary Report

Tompkins County Public Library, Ithaca, NY

March 8, 2023





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Tompkins County, NY Consultation Coordination Officer (CCO) Meeting | March 8, 2023

Attendance:

- FEMA
 - Thomas Song, Resiliency Specialist
 - Michael P. Foley, Risk Analysis Branch Chief
 - Jason Fenn, Senior Program Specialist
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
 - Brienna Wirley, Environmental Program Specialist – Floodplain Coordinator
 - Karis Manning, Section Chief for the Western Flood Hub
 - Geoffrey Golick, Assistant Engineer - Floodplain Management Section
 - Bailey Sawyer, Environmental Program Specialist – Floodplain Management Section
 - John Russell, Engineer Trainee – Western Flood Hub
 - Dan Fuller, Flood Protection Engineer, Region 7
- Project Support
 - Mark Seidelmann, STARR II Engineer
 - Rachel Mullaney, STARR II Engineer
 - Laura Shepherd, ARC Project Manager
 - Tolga Yilmaz, ARC Region 2 Service Center Lead
 - Madelaine Smith, ARC Region 2 Service Center Engineer & Outreach Lead
 - Crystal Smith, ARC Stakeholder Engagement Lead
 - Dana Kochnower, CERC
 - Lisa Blake, CERC
 - Roisin Foley, CERC
- Tompkins County Communities
 - Town of Caroline
 - Village of Cayuga Heights
 - Town of Danby
 - Town and Village of Dryden
 - Town of Enfield
 - Village of Freeville
 - Town and Village of Groton
 - Town and City of Ithaca
 - Town and Village of Lansing
 - Town of Newfield
 - Village of Trumansburg
 - Town of Ulysses
 - Tompkins County (Soil and Water, Office of Emergency Management, Health Department, Planning Department)
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP)
- T.G. Miller, P.C.
- Urban Core, LLC
- Cornell University



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- NYPA/Canals
- Marathon Engineering

High level notes:

- Introductions were made from NYSDEC, mapping partners, and FEMA.
- Notes from Teams Call-In:
 1. Tom and Team Flood Mitigation/Management will set up a meeting with Canal/NYPA offline in the future to provide any information on Canals Hydrology.

1. Flood Risk Projects Review

- Thomas reviewed the Risk MAP process.
- Thomas presented flood risk projects in Tompkins County.
 - The project timeline and 90-day appeal period were highlighted.
- Please refer to slides for more details.

Q: Community official asked what the 6-month waiting period for is.

A: Thomas responded that communities work on completing administrative requirements after receiving the Letter of Final Determination (LFD); Brienna will go into more detail during the DEC's part of the presentation.

Q: Official asked a question about dredging and brought up a federal flood control channel that has not been dredged in 40 years.

A: Thomas responded that the project uses information available at the time of data collection. He explained that there were other changes that took place in the area over time which could increase the risk in the area.

A: DEC provided the following statement:

DEC maintains the portion of the Cayuga Inlet that was improved by United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a Flood Control Project in the 1960's. USACE has requested maintenance dredging of the inlet.

DEC is exploring all options to complete the first dredging phase. Because of the complexities of this dredging project, DEC has been advised that additional funding must be secured to administer and contract the first dredging phase. Currently, DEC has \$5.8 million on hand, and an estimated, additional \$12 million needs to be secured to maximize the volume dredged in the first dredging phase with the capacity of the (2020) completed, 9.5-acre, Southwest Sediment Management Facility (SMF) that will temporarily store and dewater the dredged material.

Dredging is not the only factor, but many other factors are involved in determining the extent of the floodplain.



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Q: Community official mentioned that Corps has control of levee certification and asked how FEMA relates to corps jurisdiction.

A: Mark responded that available information is used from different sources, community, state, or the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

A: Thomas explained that there is constant contact with Laura from USACE Buffalo District, and he will follow up with email.

Use this link to learn more about FEMA and levees: [What Is A Levee? \(fema.gov\)](https://www.fema.gov/what-is-a-levee). For more context on historical LAMP projects in the city of Ithaca, see the attached the documents.

Q: A community official brought up that the village of Dryden's last map is from the seventies. Community member asked if there is an overlay from the FIRM from the seventies and the current changes.

A: Thomas responded that this will be brought up later in the presentation. The numbers to show how potential map changes will affect properties are available in the presentation. Note, the figures are notional because the 3rd party data used in the analysis is proprietary and FEMA cannot verify its accuracy.

Q: Question asked regarding elevation data in the Town of Danby.

A: Thomas replied that Tompkins County used 2 m digital elevation from New York State 2008 Digital Elevation Models. For more information: [What is Lidar data and where can I download it? | U.S. Geological Survey \(usgs.gov\)](https://www.usgs.gov/what-is-lidar-data-and-where-can-i-download-it/).

Q: Community official brought up county GIS, digitized by county.

A: Thomas asked if they could provide the link in a follow up email and committed to working with the county GIS team to get useful information out to the public.

The County GIS site can be found here:

<https://tompkinscounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/InformationLookup/index.html?appid=73d456e4dc464d45acfe4a4be1f74da5>

Q: Question was asked if map model can be shared.

A: Thomas replied that to access, can be found from the engineering library at a nominal cost. For more information see: [Flood Insurance Study \(FIS\) Data Request Form \(fema.gov\)](https://www.fema.gov/flood-insurance-study-fis-data-request-form).

A: Mark responded that in HEC-RAS Army Corps software it is free. The software was used in FEMA's analysis.

Q: Someone asked about the logic of the models to help explain why things might have changed over time. High risk vs not high risk.

A: Thomas responded that as a network of streams come in, water goes to lowest point. Can't say it will never happen. Probability/when. Where it can rain, it can flood. A lot of info used nationally. 40% of claims come outside SFHA.

Q: Question asked regarding the physical changes and impacts.

A: Thomas provided an overview of hydrology and hydraulic modeling that was used in the project.

They include historical rain data, gauge data, and other information that captures the characteristics of



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the area to determine the 1% annual chance floodplain. For more details on the hydrology and hydraulics analysis used, please refer to past meetings that covered both here: [FY18 FEMA Flood Insurance Studies in New York State \(arcgis.com\)](#).

Q: Are there benchmarks within the county for surveyors to use?

A: Benchmarks and other elevation information sources are not within FEMA's scope of work. Issues with locating the sources are a matter for USGS (U.S. Geological Survey). More information can be found here: [How can I find survey benchmark and triangulation station information? | U.S. Geological Survey \(usgs.gov\)](#).

2. Next steps / services support

- DEC presented information on next steps, including NFIP standards and ordinance process.

Q: Question asked to give anticipated date for the 6 months

A: Brienna responded that the timeframe is unknown. Typically, it is around 12-18 months from the preliminary date until the maps become effective. This could be extended if there are comments and appeals that need to be resolved.

Q: Question on how it can be implemented into projects in the works. ex: building project with no permit yet

A: Brienna provided a recommendation. The preliminary maps are available, and the community should use these maps as best available data. It would be in the property owner's best interest to build to the higher standard.

Q: Question was asked if community already belongs to program, do they reapply or confirm new reg.

A: Brienna responded that they are not required to join again, but go through an ordinance adoption process again.

Q: Question asked if comm belong to program, but knowingly complicit ignoring, what are penalties.

A: Brienna responded that there are compliance visits that look for violations and look for communities to comply. FEMA has options for enforcement. A community could be put on probation or suspended from the NFIP if they are not administering the program according to the regulations.

Q: Questioned asked if a community is suspended will the existing policies be suspended and will the property owners be notified?

A: Brienna responded Yes, before a community is suspended, they would be placed on probation. They would be given a 90-day written notice of probation which would be sent to each flood insurance policyholder in the community as well. It would notify the policyholder that a \$50 surcharge would be placed on their policy due to their community's actions.

3. Flood insurance Review



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- Thomas reviewed flood insurance, letters of map change and elevation certifications.

Q: Question about calculation. If calculation works perfect for homeowners, where do renters' calculations fall?

A: Thomas responded that renters can be covered by contents coverage, up to 100,000 dollars. This type of coverage is not included in building coverage and needs to be purchased separately. An explanation can be found in the presentation.

Q: A question was asked regarding flood insurance for those who own rental properties

A: Thomas responded the same mandatory flood insurance purchase requirement applies to rental property. If a mortgage exists and the property is in the Special Flood Hazard Area, they would be required to purchase a flood policy by the lender. If the landlord has no mortgage, then they are not required to carry flood insurance. If they get flooded, they will have to pay out of pocket.

Q: Question regarding homes that are worth more than \$250,000. Is it possible to increase coverage?

A: Thomas responded that they could go to a private insurer to get additional coverage or buy a policy that has a higher limit. Thomas suggested to talk to lender see what they are willing to allow since not all private insurers are the same.

Q: Question was asked if \$250,000 coverage limit only applies to single family homes.

A: Thomas responded that it is up to four family homes. Condos and co-ops are treated differently. Coops are grouped with buildings that have 5 or more dwellings. The limit for this category of buildings is up to \$500K for building and \$100K for content. For more information on condos, please see: [Summary of Coverage - Residential Condominium Buildings \(floodsmart.gov\)](#)

Q: Question was asked about lenders that force place coverage.

A: Thomas responded that written in official documents, the federal requirement is the lesser of three aspects: the loan amount, cost to rebuild or the \$250K NFIP coverage limit. FEMA doesn't regulate lenders and cannot intervene in cases when they want to ask for more than federal minimums.

A: Jason brought up homes associated with Lloyds of London. Forced placed an insurance policy as a proxy. Private insurance can go higher than fed-backed mortgages. Lenders do more conservative considerations. Need letter from FEMA, no specifics. Regarding the letter of map amendment, where the map is not in mandatory insurance area, use FEMA map as engineering support as OAS, out as shown requirements.

Q: Question was asked if private flood insurance covers different things than an NFIP policy.

A: Thomas responded that it is up to the insurer. Some private insurers will cover items that an NFIP policy would not. Property owners need to speak with their lenders to determine if a private insurer's policy satisfy the coverage requirement.

Q: Community member wanted to know more about bulk elevation certificate purchases, suggestion that local government would facilitate.

A: Thomas responded that surveyors charge by the hour. Some of their time is used to get specific information for a specific area. That information can be applied for multiple homes saving time and costs.



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Q: Question was asked about appropriate elevation reference points around the county.

A: Thomas referenced the USGS benchmarks, repeating the answer provided earlier on the same topic. How can I find survey benchmark and triangulation station information? | U.S. Geological Survey (usgs.gov).

Q: Community official brought up that they recently learned that historical elevations over time have been off by fraction of foot but saddening to hear that historical data has been off.

A: No comment from FEMA.

Q: Question was asked regarding the process of a Conditional Letter Of Map Revision (CLOMR) in the case prior to a building project being mapped out of SFHA.

A: Thomas responded for any communities undertaking work, can apply for a CLOMR. The applicant will have to submit the proper technical information and if approved, would need to follow up with more documentation after the project is completed. Maps are not changed until the work is done. When the USACE is involved, they are familiar with CLOMRs and will either have the necessary data or know what is required. For more information: [Letters of Map Revision and Conditional Letters of Map Revision | FEMA.gov](#).

Q: Question regarding getting federal funding for projects

A: Thomas responded FEMA grant programs are administered by NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Mitigation team. FEMA does not get involve in project selection.

A: Brienna explained projects must show no adverse impact rule that ensures the action of any community or property owner, does not adversely impact the property of others.

Q: Question asked if 845 properties are newly added to SFHA in Ithaca, is it worth exploring CRS?

A: Yes, absolutely! [Community Rating System | FEMA.gov](#)

Note: To be eligible for CRS the community must first be in good standing with the NFIP, no outstanding violations. If interested in pursuing CRS we would recommend attending the CRS Users Group at the upcoming NYSFSMA conference and coordinating with NYSDEC.

Q: Question asked during post presentation about datums for the lakes – Mark will follow-up.

Q: Community official pointed out some BFE vs. ground elevation discrepancies in Ithaca – Tolga will follow-up with Mark

4. Prep for open house

Suggestions

- Ithaca High School
 - Pros: free parking + large space
 - Cons: time, students might not be done by 2 pm.
- Ithaca College



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- Pros: space with Wi-Fi, has parking
- Cons: consider people out of town
- Ithaca Mall in Lansing
 - Pros: mall with empty space, close to some rural communities
 - Cons: need Wi-Fi away from Ithaca city, and other rural communities.
- Hotel Ithaca
 - Pros: maybe has Wi-Fi
 - Cons: not free.
- Tompkins county library
 - Pros: free, Wi-Fi
 - Cons: out by 7:45, parking limitations.

Community Information Sheet Collection (count of forms collected)

- Town of Lansing
 1. Ed LaVigne, Town Supervisor
 2. John Zepko, Director of Planning
- Groton Town
 1. Don Scheffler, Supervisor
 2. W Rick Fritz, C.E.O.
- Town of Ithaca
 1. Rod Howe, Supervisor
 2. Marty Moseley, Director of Code Enforcement
- Town of Enfield
 1. Stephanie Redmond, Supervisor
 2. Daniel Wacker, Planning Board Chair
- City of Ithaca
 1. Laura Lewis, Mayor
 2. Lisa Nicholas, Director of Planning and Development
- Town of Dryden
 1. Jason Leifer, Town of Supervisor
 2. David Sprout/Shelley Knickerbocker, CEOs,
- Village of Dryden
 1. Michael Murphy, Mayor
 2. Dave Sprout, Code Enforcement
- Town of Newfield
 1. Michael Allinger, Supervisor
 2. Alan Teeter, Code Enforcement
- Town of Ulysses
 1. Katelin Olson, Supervisor
 2. Niels Tygesen, Planner
- Town of Caroline



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1. Mark Witmer, Supervisor
 2. Clifford Bebson, Code Enforcement Officer
- Town of Danby
 1. Joel Gagron, Supervisor
 2. Steve Cortright, Code Officer
 - Village of Freeville
 1. Miles McCarty, Mayor
 2. Heather Murray, Clerk/Treasurer
 - **Missing:**
 1. Village of Cayuga Heights
 2. Village of Groton
 3. Village of Lansing
 4. Village of Trumansburg



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Additional Photos





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