



Flood Lines

Summer 2016

Volume IX Issue 2

Variations and the NFIP

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One of the key responsibilities for a community that participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is the consideration of variance requests from the community's floodplain ordinance. It is important especially for the community's Zoning Board of Adjustment to understand the additional floodplain variance criteria and the implications of granting variances in special flood hazard areas.

The following information comes from [FEMA's Floodplain Management Bulletin - Variations and the NFIP](#). If your community needs further assistance or would like training to better understand the floodplain variance criteria, please contact the OEP Floodplain Management Program staff (see contact information on back page).

The minimum floodplain requirements for communities participating in the NFIP are designed to ensure the practice of sound floodplain management. Floodplain regulations differ from zoning regulations because they specifically address human safety and property protection in relation to a known and defined natural hazard.

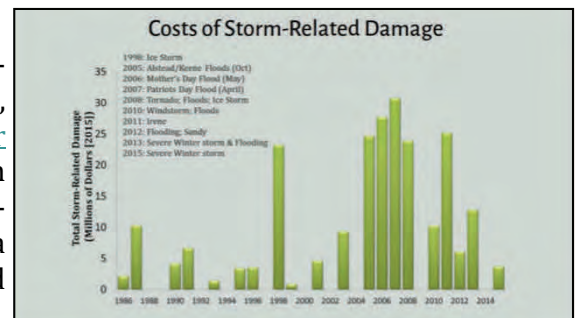
To grant a variance from floodplain ordinances, in addition to meeting the five requirements in RSA 674:33, the community must determine:

- Good and sufficient cause and exceptional hardship exist;
- The variance will not result in additional threats to public safety, extraordinary public expense, or fraud or victimization of the public; and
- The variance is the minimum action necessary to afford relief.

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NH Department of Environmental Services Posts Video About Climate Change

On April 5, 2016, NHDES posted an informative video on YouTube, ["Climate Change - What does it mean for New Hampshire?"](#) The video provides an easy to understand overview of how climate change is affecting the state. Take a look and share it with colleagues and friends.



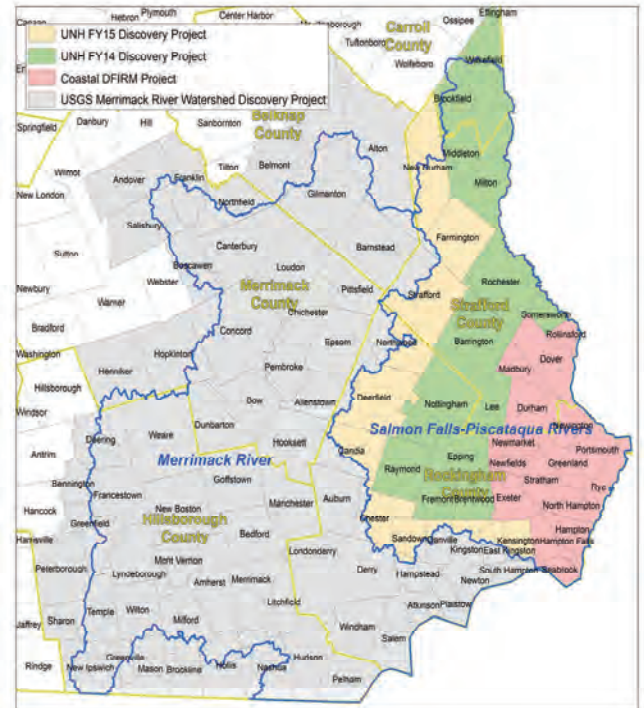
Mapping Update

Salmon Falls-Piscataqua Rivers Risk MAP Discovery Project Phase 2

FEMA has started the initial steps for a [Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning \(Risk MAP\)](#) project for Phase 2 of the Salmon Falls – Piscataqua Rivers watershed. The Phase 2 project area includes 12 New Hampshire communities, which are shown as the Project Communities in yellow on the map to the right. UNH and the Office of Energy and Planning in partnership with FEMA held two [Discovery](#) Meetings on May 6, 2016 in New Durham and Kingston, NH.

The Phase 1 project includes 13 communities, which are shown in green on the map to the right. Discovery meetings for these communities were held on December 3, 2015.

One Discovery Report will be completed for both Phase 1 and 2 and will summarize the Discovery meetings, stakeholder coordination and data collection.



Source: UNH

Update on Other FEMA Risk MAP Discovery Projects in New Hampshire

- USGS recently completed a Discovery project in the Merrimack River Basin. The Discovery Report for this project will be issued soon.
- USGS recently began a Discovery project in the Nashua River watershed. Discovery meetings were held on April 27, 2016 in Leominster, MA.
- UNH will be starting a Discovery project in the Connecticut River watershed in the summer of 2016.

For updates on NH mapping activities please visit NHOEP's [Current NH Mapping Activities webpage](#).

Coastal NH Floodplain Mapping Project Update

Rockingham County

The maps for the communities in the Rockingham County project area are currently on hold due to FEMA working to resolve an appeal. The effective date for the maps in the Rockingham County portion of the project is currently unknown.

Strafford County

Flood risk products for the four communities (Dover, Durham, Madbury, and Rollinsford) in Strafford County, which received new effective maps on 9/30/15, were released in April 2016 and posted to the [FEMA Map Service Center](#). Flood Risk products are supplementary resources for communicating flood risk to communities and may not entirely align with the regulatory flood maps. The Flood Risk products that are available for these communities include a Flood Risk Map and Flood Risk Report. Stay tuned for a workshop this summer about these Flood Risk products.

NFIP Update

FEMA 2015 Elevation Certificate Update

The FEMA 2015 [Elevation Certificate \(EC\)](#) is now available as a fillable and savable PDF form. Fillable PDFs allow surveyors to sign ECs without printing them. Both the 2012 and 2015 ECs will be accepted until December 31, 2016. After December 31, 2016, only the 2015 EC will be accepted.

For communities that participate in the Community Rating System (CRS), the 2015 EC should be used from now on. CRS communities are encouraged to submit these fully-digital ECs for their annual recertification, which will increase the efficiency of the EC review process.



Variations and the NFIP

Continued from page 1

In some cases, a variance granted for floodplain management purposes can result in a project that does not meet the minimum standards of the NFIP. Because a variance can lead to an increased risk to life and property, variances from flood elevation requirements or other floodplain management requirements should be granted **only rarely**.

A community should consider four important issues **before** granting a variance:

- 1) the community's liability,
- 2) the cumulative impacts on the floodplain of granting multiple similar variances,
- 3) the variance decision will last for the life of the structure, and
- 4) whether granting a variance will jeopardize the community's participation in the NFIP.



Good and Sufficient Cause

A "good and sufficient" cause for a variance occurs when a parcel of land possesses physical characteristics so unusual that complying with NFIP regulations in a local ordinance would create an exceptional hardship related to the property, the surrounding property owners, or the community in general. In addition, the unusual physical characteristics must be unique to that property and not be shared by adjacent parcels or be typical of other lots in the community.

A rendering of a "good and sufficient" cause should never be based on the design character of the planned construction or Substantial Improvements to the structure, the personal difficulties of the owner or inhabitants, or local provisions that regulate standards other than health and public safety standards (e.g., aesthetic restrictions of subdivision homeowner associations). The variance should not be based on the convenience that it would afford the applicant. Inconvenience, aesthetic considerations, physical handicaps, personal preferences, the disapproval of one's neighbors, or homeowners association restrictions do not qualify as "good and sufficient" causes.

In addition, the financial hardship of the property owner is never a "good and sufficient" cause for granting a variance. Granting a variance for construction in a flood hazard area based on financial hardship only increases the probability that the owner will suffer high health and safety risks as well as monetary adversity when the structure is damaged during a flood. In addition, the structure will be subject to higher insurance premiums.

This guidance will assist local government officials in reviewing requests for variances and determining if a request meets the minimum requirements of the NFIP.

The NFIP variance procedures are designed to help local governments protect their citizens and property from flood damages. Allowing variances to the local floodplain management standards may significantly increase the property's flood insurance rate and decrease the community's resilience. Therefore, by implementing the NFIP variance procedures, a community will ensure that alternative actions are taken that protect and encourage safe development in the floodplain.

In the News

Funding Opportunity—Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Coastal Program is excited to announce the availability of targeted funds for projects that enhance coastal resilience to current and future hazards. The purpose of the “Design Solutions for Coastal Resilience” funding opportunity is to support projects that improve the ability of a community or system to proactively prepare for and “bounce back” from hazardous events such as hurricanes, coastal storms, and long-term sea-level rise and associated flooding. There are two types of eligible projects: Creative Communications and Design & Construction.

Proposals must take place in one or more of the state’s 17 coastal zone communities. Eligible applicants include municipalities, state agencies, regional planning commissions, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

A total amount of approximately \$300,000 is available. Applicants must request a minimum of \$40,000 and no more than \$100,000 in grant funds per project. A two-to-one federal to non-federal match through cash or in-kind services is required, meaning that if \$40,000 in grant funds are requested the applicant must provide \$20,000 in non-federal cash or in-kind match. The funds are made available to the NHDES Coastal Program through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management, under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

Proposals must be emailed to kirsten.howard@des.nh.gov by **4:00 pm EDT on Thursday, July 21, 2016**.

For more information on eligibility and submittal requirements, view the [full request for proposals](#).

For further assistance, please contact Coastal Resilience Specialist, Kirsten Howard, at (603) 559-0020 or kirsten.howard@des.nh.gov.

NH Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission Draft Report—Public Review & Comment

The NH Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission full draft report and recommendations, [Preparing New Hampshire for Projected Storm Surge, Sea-Level Rise, and Extreme Precipitation](#), are now available for public review and comment. Copies of the report are also available for review at public libraries and town and city halls located in the following coastal zone municipalities: Dover, Durham, Exeter, Greenland, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Madbury, New Castle, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Portsmouth, Rollinsford, Rye, Seabrook, and Stratham. The Public Comment Period began on March 18, 2016 and ends at **4:00 p.m. EST on June 30, 2016**. There are several ways to submit comments. Email comments to crhc-comments@rpc-nh.org or mail comments to: Attn: Julie LaBranche, Rockingham Planning Commission, 156 Water Street, Exeter, NH 03833.

NH’s Armor: What Does the State’s Shoreline Actually Look Like—Introducing the NH Inventory of Tidal Shoreline Protection Structures

During the December 2014 NH Shoreline Management Conference, several needs were identified including a comprehensive, spatial inventory of engineered shoreline protection structures along the state’s tidal shoreline. In the summer of 2015, Hannah Blondin, Coastal Habitat Specialist at NHDES Coastal Program walked the shoreline. As a result, the state now has a new spatial dataset that documents the tidal shoreline protection structures. It is now available for downloading and viewing on the [NH Coastal Viewer and GRANIT](#).

To learn more about the story of this project and to read the report, please go to the [NH Coastal Adaption Workgroup web site](#).

Training & Events

NFIP Free Online Training Webinars

Numerous free, online NFIP-related trainings are available through FEMA's contractor, STARR. Many of the courses are eligible for Continuing Education Credits (CECs) for Certified Floodplain Managers (CFM). For upcoming webinars, please go to the [NFIP Training web site](#) and click the "Upcoming" tab. Be sure to check the website periodically as new webinars are always being added. Registration for the webinars can also be done on this website. When asked during registration what FEMA Region you are in, please reply 1.

Upcoming:

- July 12, 2016 - Introduction to CRS - 1:00 PM
- July 13, 2016 - The Role of the Community CRS Coordinator - 1:00 PM
- July 14, 2016 - Letters of Map Change - 1:00 PM
- July 28, 2016 - Tools for Determining Base Flood Elevation - 1:00 PM



Combining Climate Adaptation and Hazard Mitigation Plans

July 7, 2016 - 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM

1 Core CEC for CFMs

Free Webinar

The [Planning Information Exchange \(PIE\)](#) steering committee is pleased to announce the Combining Climate Adaptation and Hazard Mitigation Plans webinar.

Please join two professionals, a planner and emergency manager, as they discuss how and why Baltimore and Monterey County, California, decided to merge climate adaptation and hazard mitigation plans. The discussion will be centered on the basic premise of Baltimore's effort to merge its climate adaptation plan with the update of its hazard mitigation plan, issues Baltimore has experienced or will experience (e.g., increased nuisance flooding), the nature and scope of the Monterey County plan, challenges Monterey County has faced in its multijurisdictional approach, and much more.

The webinar is **FREE** but [registration](#) is required.

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