



## FLOOD MAP PRODUCTION PROCESS

### BACKGROUND

In support of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) have been undertaking a massive statewide effort of identifying and mapping Georgia's flood hazards and updating the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Under FEMA's and GA DNR's Map Modernization effort, all counties received new digital flood maps. As FEMA transitioned into its Risk MAP (Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning) program, GA DNR entered into its Georgia Flood M.A.P. program where the focus is on providing updated, detailed analysis at the watershed level as well as re-analyzing the coastal risk in detail. As a result, these new flood maps more accurately reflect the current flood risks in Georgia allowing communities and their citizens to better identify, assess, and reduce their flood risk. Using these new maps and associated tools, communities will be able to enhance their local mitigation plans, improve community outreach, and increase local resilience to floods.

Under this new program, the mapping phases have been revised to encourage stronger outreach to and greater engagement of the community leaders, local stakeholders and the public. The following is a brief outline of Georgia Flood M.A.P. production phases.

### FLOOD MAP PRODUCTION PHASES

#### Discovery

The start of this Phase begins with GA DNR gathering information about local flood risk and flood hazards. This will include collecting information from communities about their flooding history, development plans, daily operations, and storm water and floodplain management activities. GA DNR will also review mitigation plans to understand local mitigation capabilities, hazard risk assessments and current or future community mitigation activities.

As part of this process, GA DNR will hold a Discovery Meeting and invite community officials, including leaders, floodplain administrators, engineers, watershed council representatives, planners, emergency managers, regional, non-profit organizations concerned with flooding or land use and other locally interested stakeholders. At the Discovery Meeting, GA DNR will:

- Review and validate the flood risk data gathered to date,
- Discuss the community's flooding history, development plans, flood mapping needs, and flood risk concerns
- Review storm water, floodplain management, and other community activities that relate to flood risk, and



- Discuss the vision for the watershed's future, as well as the importance of mitigation planning and community outreach
- Introduce new non-regulatory flood risk products and datasets that will be available to help further identify and better communicate the flood risks throughout the watershed, and
- Set project expectations as well as identify roles and responsibilities

Using all information gathered, GA DNR will identify which areas of the watershed require mapping, risk assessment, or mitigation planning assistance and share that information with each community.

### Data Development and Sharing

The objectives of the Data Development and Sharing Phase are to provide communities with engineering data and drafts of Risk MAP products as they are developed (collecting feedback and revising as needed), and to build confidence in those products. Activities that occur during this phase include acquisition of new data if appropriate; development of hydraulic and hydrologic models; developing FIRM database and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) elements if appropriate; developing work maps and producing draft datasets; and developing the Flood Risk database, Flood Risk Map, and Flood Risk Report. GA DNR will plan to deliver draft map and flood risk products to the watershed communities for their review and feedback.

During this phase, GA DNR will hold a Resilience Meeting with the affected communities and counties. The goal of the meeting is to review the watershed's updated flood hazards and flood risk and identify strategies local communities can use to reduce that risk and improve the watershed's resilience to floods.

### Preliminary Flood Map Release:

Once approved by FEMA, the preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report, and a preliminary Summary of Map Amendments (SOMA) are provided to community officials. Typically, a review period of 30 days is provided for an initial review.

Meanwhile, GA DNR will work with the affected communities to arrange one or more Preliminary DFIRM Community Coordination (PDCC) meetings and Flood Risk Open House meetings attended by the public.

The PDCC Meeting is used to present the preliminary FIRM and related data, and provide resources and information to local officials so that they may more effectively relay the risk and risk reduction messages to the public. The Open House is an opportunity for community officials and other stakeholders to convey important information to the public about the mapping process, the changes in flood risk, the effects on building and insurance requirements, the benefits of the flood map updates for the different parties, and the partners in the mapping process, among other things.

### Post-Preliminary Flood Map Release:

When the preliminary flood maps have been issued and the meetings with the community officials and public have been held, the Post-Preliminary phase of the Georgia M.A.P. lifecycle begins. If new or revised Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) are determined, flood hazard boundaries change, or floodway boundaries change for a community, two notices are published in local newspapers. The second notice begins a 90-day Public Comment Period. Any property owner or lessee within an impacted community can file an appeal.

- An appeal, as described above, must be based on technical and/or scientific information.
- A comment is an objection to information shown on the FIRMs other than a BFE, flood hazard boundary, flood zone, or floodway boundary change.

Once all appeals are addressed and the FIRMs are ready to be finalized, a Letter of Final Determination (LFD) is issued by the State of Georgia and FEMA to the affected communities and counties and is published in the Federal Register. Within six months of the LFD date, the affected counties and communities must pass an ordinance adopting the new flood maps (or face suspension from the NFIP). The communities will be reminded of the importance of communicating flood risk to their constituents during this last six-month period as well as after the flood maps become effective.

**Final FIS and FIRM Effective:**

When the six-month period of the LFD expires, the new FIS report and FIRM become effective. Maps are distributed to all impacted communities and many other users by FEMA's Map Service Center. Changes in building requirements and federal requirements for flood insurance become effective. Should better data become available, it may be submitted at any time, and if warranted, the affected area of the flood map will be updated through a Letter of Map Change process.

**For more information regarding the flood map production process, please visit [www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com](http://www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com) or contact your Georgia Floodplain Management Office at:**

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