



## **IDENTIFYING GEORGIA'S COASTAL FLOOD HAZARDS**

### **GEORGIA'S NEW COASTAL COUNTIES MAPPING PROJECT (CCMP)**

In 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) began their most comprehensive effort ever to restudy the Georgia coastal counties' current flood hazard areas. Using the most current data and the latest flood modeling and digital mapping technologies, new flood hazard maps, known officially as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), and associated flood risk products will be created. As a result, updated flood hazard data will be available to help guide building, mitigation, and flood insurance decisions. With the release of these new coastal flood hazard maps, community officials, residents, and business owners in nine coastal counties (Bryan, Camden, Charlton, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, and McIntosh) will have up-to-date, reliable, internet-accessible data about their coastal flood risk. This study will incorporate detailed studies of specific watersheds as well as the effects of coastal surge and waves on the Georgia coastline.

Mapping the Georgia coastal flood hazards is an important step in achieving GA DNR's broader Georgia M.A.P. (Mapping, Assessment, & Planning) vision of helping communities better understand their flood risks and opportunities to reduce those risks. This effort is part of FEMA's nationwide Risk MAP effort which builds on the strengths of its previous Flood Map Modernization program. GA DNR's and FEMA's programs will continue to focus on improving and maintaining flood hazard data and maps and reducing losses to life and property through improved mitigation plans and activities.

### **WHY UPDATE THE MAPS**

The flood maps and data currently reflect information that was available at the time they were developed. The data and methodologies used in producing the existing coastal area flood maps and studies date back to the 1980's.

Consequently, the coastal flood hazard areas currently shown may not reflect the effects of recent development along the coast or changes in shoreline, topography, and vegetation. Likewise, changes may have occurred inland in the coastal counties' watersheds since they were last studied over 10 years ago. Incorporating recent data into the new modeling and mapping technologies will provide more detailed and reliable information about the Georgia's coastal county flood hazards.

### **THE MAPPING PROCESS**

This coastal mapping project is a shared effort among GA DNR, FEMA and its mapping partners, along with input and participation by the Georgia's coastal counties and their communities. This coastal study will go through several phases before preliminary FIRMs are issued by county, first for the studied watershed areas and then the coastal areas.

GA DNR's mapping contractor is currently collecting updated information about coastal area watersheds. GA DNR is looking to leverage any recent engineering and mapping studies, newly acquired data, factors contributing to flooding, levels and types of mitigation currently in place, and any other relevant data that the coastal communities can provide.

In this first phase, this up-to-date community information, along with the most current elevation data, will be integrated into the latest modeling technology to create the most accurate study of key riverine and inland areas' flood risks in coastal Georgia. From this, new preliminary FIRMs will be issued for those identified coastal watersheds.

Meanwhile, as part of a second phase, FEMA's mapping contractor is conducting a state-of-the-art storm surge analysis that covers all tidal tributaries and waterways connected to the coastline. They will incorporate the best available elevation data into the latest surge models that have been successfully used in other recent FEMA coastal studies (e.g., Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina).

FEMA and its mapping partner will then perform the coastal hazard analyses using results of the storm surge study. This analysis will incorporate the devastating effects of waves on top of the surge as it moves inland. These wave model results will then be merged with the latest topography data and adjacent watersheds to create the different flood hazard zone boundaries and Base Flood Elevations, or BFEs, which will be mapped on a new preliminary FIRM.

Once the preliminary FIRMs are issued for each phase by GA DNR's mapping contractors, the affected counties and communities will then go through the standard mapping "lifecycle," which allows for public comment and review of the maps by community officials, stakeholders, and property owners.

### NEW FLOOD RISK DATA MEANS SAFER COASTAL COMMUNITIES

By showing the extent of which areas in the coastal counties are at risk for flooding and their level of risk, the new flood maps and flood risk products will help guide a community's financial, planning, investment, building, development, and renovation decisions:

- Residents and business owners will know their current flood risk and be able to make better decisions about insuring and protecting their property against coastal flooding.
- Real estate professionals will be better able to inform clients of the risk factors that may affect the property they are buying or selling, and any flood insurance requirements.
- Insurance professionals will know their clients' current flood risk and can provide more informed recommendations regarding flood insurance coverage options.
- Local officials, planners, builders and developers will use the updated flood hazard information to determine where and how new structures and developments should be built and what areas to avoid to reduce the risk of flood damage.

### WHERE TO LEARN MORE

Throughout the project, GA DNR will be keeping the coastal counties and communities informed of the study's progress and will be available to address questions and concerns. Discussions and meetings will be held with community stakeholders to update them on the project's progress and to receive input about the project. As GA DNR gets closer to issuing the preliminary FIRMs for each phase, stakeholder meetings will be held to review the new floodplain boundaries.

Once the preliminary maps are issued, GA DNR will hold community coordination meetings with coastal community officials. GA DNR will then hold separate Flood Risk Open House meetings in selected communities where residents and businesses owners will be invited to view the new maps, meet with GA DNR, FEMA and local experts, and learn about the benefits, potential effects, and options they have to reduce their flood risk.

Additional details and future meeting schedules for the coastal study can be found at [www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com](http://www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com). For more information, contact:

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