



COASTAL COUNTIES MAPPING PROJECT (CCMP) MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

COASTAL GEORGIA'S FLOOD RISKS HAVE CHANGED

- Flood hazard maps, also known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), are important tools in the effort to protect lives and properties in coastal Georgia. These maps are designed to inform communities of their flood risk and used in helping make decisions to reduce that risk. The maps currently in use need to be updated.
- The last detailed study of the coastal flood risk was over 25 years ago. Likewise, detailed watershed studies for the coastal counties were last performed over 10 years ago.
- Since then, drainage patterns have changed, new land development has occurred, and mapping and modeling technology has improved.
- The likelihood of inland and coastal flooding in certain areas has changed. And flooding does not just occur in high-risk areas. More than 35% of all flood claims in Georgia have been paid on properties located in moderate-to-low risk areas (*FEMA Claims Report for Georgia by Occupancy/Zone-July 2011*).
- The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), nine coastal counties (Bryan, Camden, Charlton, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, and McIntosh), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have jointly launched the Georgia Coastal Counties Mapping Project (CCMP). The CCMP is a multi-year effort to re-examine the coastal flood risks and develop updated, detailed, digital flood hazard maps.
- As a result of this project, residents and business owners in the studied areas will have up-to-date, reliable, Internet-accessible information about their flood risk on a property-by-property basis.

THE MAPPING PROCESS

- New flood maps will not happen overnight. GA DNR will be managing two mapping studies as it gathers the most current data, creates new preliminary maps, shares and receives feedback from the public and stakeholders, and revises them where necessary before issuing new flood hazard maps.
- Study #1: GA DNR will first be analyzing the inland flood risks of key watersheds in the coastal counties using the latest engineering and flooding information from local communities and its contractor. Based on the results, new preliminary flood maps will be issued for inland areas of the coastal counties.
- Study #2: FEMA is conducting state-of-the art storm surge analysis that covers all tidal tributaries and waterways connected to the coastline. This will be followed by a coastal hazard analysis by GA DNR which incorporates 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 (BFEs) that will be mapped on a new preliminary FIRM.
- Once the preliminary FIRMs are issued for each study by GA DNR, the affected counties and municipalities will go through the standard mapping "lifecycle," which allows for public review and comment of the maps by community officials, stakeholders, and property owners.

- Residents and business owners in many parts of coastal Georgia may find that their flood risk is higher, or lower, than they thought. All property owners are encouraged to attend these public meetings to learn how more about the mapping process, how the risks have changed, how they may have been affected and the options they have. This information will also be available on www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com when the preliminary FIRMs and final FIRMs are issued.
- The watershed-based preliminary FIRMs from Study #1 are targeted to be released in Fall 2012. The release of the coastal preliminary FIRMs from Study #2 is currently planned for 2014.

THE RESULT: MORE ACCURATE MAPS AND A SAFER PUBLIC

Although the CCMP process of developing the new FIRMS will be complex and take several years, the result will be worth the effort. The new FIRMs will more accurately show the flood risks of the studied watersheds and coastal communities. Areas with a high, moderate, and low risk for flooding will be identified.

- Accurate, up-to-date maps in an easy-to-use digital format and map products will help the public and community officials better understand their flood risk.
- Community officials, planners, builders, and developers will be able to use the maps to make decisions on how and where to build more safely.
- Home and business owners, as well as renters, will have the information they need to decide how best to reduce their personal and financial risk from the devastation caused by flooding.
- Coastal Georgia communities will benefit over time by each having a much safer, more resilient community to work and live in.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Living in coastal Georgia with its associated flood risks is a shared responsibility. As such, GA DNR looks to engage not only community officials but also encourages both local and regional stakeholders, as well as the public to become engaged in this process. It is important that all affected parties understand the mapping process, the potential changes in identified flood risks that may occur, the effects these changes may have, and the options that are available to reduce their flood risk.

For additional details and future meeting schedules for the CCMP, visit www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com. For more information, about FEMA's Risk MAP program, visit www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/rm_main.shtm.

For more information, contact:

Collis Brown, CFM
Georgia Floodplain Management Coordinator
Georgia Dept of Natural Resources
Environmental Protection Division
4220 International Parkway, Suite 101
Atlanta, Georgia 30354
404-362-2606 (O)
Collis_Brown@mail.dnr.state.ga.us