

*Official Newsletter of*  
**The New York State Floodplain and  
Stormwater Managers Association**  
**Summer 2008**

**NYSFSA NEWS**

**Message from the Chair:**

A big **thank you** to those members who are taking an active role in Association activities. I encourage the rest of you to follow their example and let our Executive Director, Bill Nechamen, know which committee(s) you'd like to join (518-402-8146). The work of the Association doesn't just happen. It requires volunteer assistance from our members.

Planning for our fall conference is in full swing with an exciting lineup of presentations on a wide range of topics related to the Association's goals of reducing the loss of life and property damage from floods and promoting sound floodplain and stormwater management. Workshops and plenary sessions will cover: state and federal programs, local initiatives, planning topics, legal issues and more. A bus tour will visit areas in the Catskills that have recently experienced devastating and repeated flooding. There will be an opportunity to take the Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) exam. And of course, there is always a lot to be gained from sharing with other members and talking to exhibitors.

The Association sponsored an outstanding workshop on "Innovative Floodplain Strategies for Coastal Areas: Application of Coastal No Adverse Impact Principles." The curriculum was developed and presented by our parent organization, the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM). Participants learned how floodplain management tools can be used to mitigate coastal hazards without adversely impacting others or coastal natural resources.

*The Outreach and Education Committee Plans to sponsor additional workshops in other parts of the state. These efforts may utilize new training modules developed by FEMA and training support from ASFPM, as well as local expertise. If there is a need for particular training topics in your region, please let us know.*

*And of course, this newsletter is another example of what we are accomplishing with the help of our members. We hope you find it both interesting and professionally relevant.*

**Janet Thigpen, CFM**

**2008 Conference  
of the  
New York State Floodplain  
Stormwater Managers  
Association**

**September 22-23, 2008**

**Holiday Inn  
Middletown, New York**

**Program Topics Include:**

- *Post-flood Code Enforcement Responsibilities*
- *Advanced Floodplain Management Training*
- *Site Design for Enhancing Floodplain Functions and Stormwater Management*
- *NFIP Community Rating System*
- *Floodplain and Wetland Management in Habitable Cities*
- *Hydrology of a Catastrophic Flash Flood in Delaware County*

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**Around the Empire State**



*Photograph by James W. Maxwell*

This photograph, taken on April 23, 2008, is of the overflow structure of the Conklingville Dam, which holds back the Great Sacandaga Reservoir in northwest Saratoga County. Heavy snow in February 2008 created spring runoff in the Adirondack Mountains that caused considerable flows in the upper Hudson River. The Great Sacandaga Reservoir was constructed in the late 1920's as an impoundment to retain spring runoff from the Sacandaga Valley, which contributed to the heavy flows in the Hudson River at Hadley, New York. Prior to construction of the Reservoir, downstream communities, especially in the Albany area experienced flooding during years with heavy spring runoff. A flood risk remains in downstream communities because floods can overwhelm even flood control reservoirs, and because the Conklingville Dam only controls part of the Hudson River watershed. However, the reservoir has reduced the frequency and severity of downstream floods.

**Around the Empire State**

*We would like to hear from individual members, organizations and their colleagues about Best Management Practices, both non-structural and structural, that contribute to improved Stormwater and Floodplain Management across the State. Please send a photograph of the BMP along with specific information about how it has improved the quality of life for the communities impacted to Jim Maxwell, Chair of the Newsletter Committee, at [jimax153@optonline.net](mailto:jimax153@optonline.net).*

# **Atmospheric Scientists Monitor Climate Change to Predict Water Supply, Droughts and Floods**

*By John Henz and Scott Zilka*

National and international debates on climate change and global warming have heightened interest in understanding the measurable impacts of climate on water supplies, design standards and public safety. While uncertainties abound, atmospheric scientists are developing reliable tools and processes that allow for a better understanding of climate patterns and trends.

## **Have Some Soup**

A first step in understanding the impact of climate change is accepting that there is an alphabet soup of terminology that atmospheric scientists are prone to use. One of the first ones to get to know involves hydro-climate indices (HCIs). These indices provide a quantitative analysis of anomalous climatic conditions, including factors such as event intensity, duration and spatial boundaries. Analyzing these climatic indices allows scientists a window into the impact of climate patterns on seasonal precipitation and temperature, basin stream-flow, the hurricane season and the number and type of severe weather events.

For example, the droughts gripping the Southeastern and Southwestern United States are the results of two coinciding climate indices trends—a developing La Niña pattern in the tropical Pacific Ocean and a persistent, though weakening, positive phase of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO), with La Niña being the cool part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation pattern. The current La Niña pattern in the tropical Pacific brings colder than average sea surface temperatures and a northward shift in Pacific storm patterns that favor snow/rain in the Pacific Northwest and across the United States/Canadian border region. At the same time, warmer and dryer Santa Ana conditions dominate in the Southwestern United States.

As this storm track developed during late summer 2007, record flooding occurred in Minnesota, Wisconsin and northern Illinois after persistent thunderstorm rainfall. While these Northern states fought to keep flood waters at bay, the same La Niña pattern brought a short and dry summer monsoon season to the Southwestern states. As summer turned to fall, the pattern allowed dry, strong Santa Ana winds to develop, contributing to the already ripe fire-producing conditions in drought-stricken Southern California.

On the other side of the country, the persistent positive phase of the NAO favors a strong inland extension of the Bermuda high (a high pressure area that develops along the Southeastern U.S. coast), a weak sub-tropical storm track in the summer, followed by fewer storm systems across the Eastern states through the winter.

Another result of the climate indices' impacts was a weaker than average hurricane/sub-tropical storm season and a very dry summer along the Gulf Coast and Southeastern United States. The Southeastern drought continued through the fall and is expected to continue into the winter.

Atmospheric scientists with specialized skills are helping municipalities and agencies understand how the summer floods in the Midwest, the drought in the Southeast and the fierce Southern California fires are interrelated parts of a climate pattern. Providing evidence of natural climate variability is perhaps not as enticing as totally blaming wild weather on global warming, but, when backed by solid science, this data can arm clients with valuable tools to allocate resources and priorities.

For Example HDR meteorologists in Denver have developed reliable HCI-based forecast techniques that are being used to predict water supply in major river systems of Montana and Colorado. In Montana, their techniques have been embraced as critical inputs to a successful drought management plan for the Flathead Lake reservoir on the upper Columbia River system.

The Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have evaluated and accepted (in modified form) the techniques developed by these scientists for use in water supply predictions. In Colorado, enhanced HCI

techniques were used to produce basin-specific water supply forecasts for snow water equivalent and volumetric runoff forecasts for the Colorado, Gunnison, Arkansas, South Platte and Rio Grande river systems.

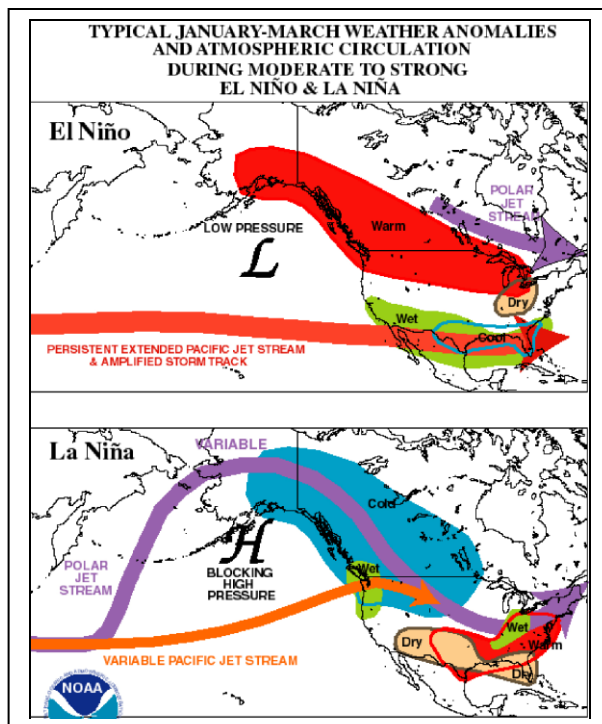
### Real World Impacts

While developing a design storm for Colorado’s South Boulder Creek floodplain delineation study, HDR meteorologists evaluated climate impacts on design criteria. As a result, they found that the quantitative values of the 100-year storm changed more than 20 percent in the past 30 years. They also used Weather Surveillance Radar-88 Doppler data to provide observed spatial and temporal distributions for a 100-year design storm that had previously been synthetically estimated for design. FEMA is now considering accepting these basin-specific design storm techniques for use in design storm development and floodplain delineation studies across the country.

Another impact of climate on design was detected during calculations of probable maximum precipitation (PMP) for a Colorado dam safety project. To counter the use of outdated and general hydro-meteorological report procedures, HDR meteorologists developed an objective GIS-based extreme precipitation analysis tool (EPAT) to provide a basin-specific PMP calculation for the Colorado Division of Water Resources. The EPAT is now a Colorado standard of practice that incorporates an updated storm library and state-of-practice analysis techniques that reflect climate change.

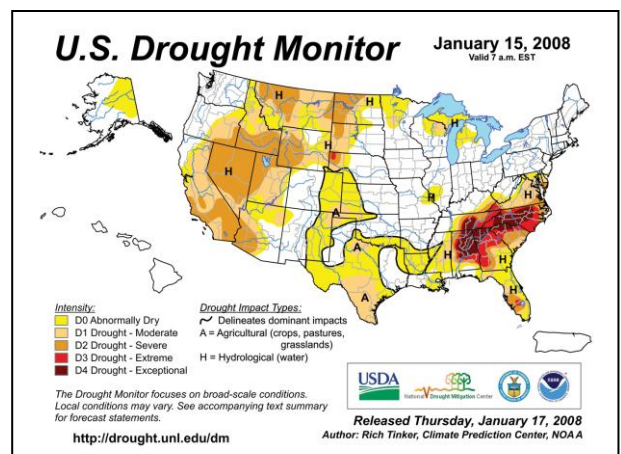
While uncertainties will always abound in climate and meteorology, scientists are developing reliable tools and processes that are a valuable asset for decision support. Besides, as American journalist Kim Hubbard pointed out, “Don’t knock the weather; nine-tenths of the people couldn’t start a conversation if it didn’t change once in a while.”

Use of the HCIs to anticipate recent heavy rains and snows in the Pacific Northwest and California, and heavy snows in the Colorado mountains, have been very successful. Alternately, the HCIs suggest that current rains in the southeastern United States are not necessarily the beginning of the end of the drought that has impacted that region. Needless to say, the climate has given us plenty to talk about in the months ahead.



Weather data from a variety of sources is used to develop unique prediction and modeling tools.

This article is adapted from an article that previously appeared in *Innovations*, an environmental newsletter produced by HDR. John Henz, a Certified Consulting Meteorologist, is a Senior Project Manager with HDR’s Atmospheric Sciences group in Denver. John can be reached at [john.henz@hdrinc.com](mailto:john.henz@hdrinc.com). Scott Zilka is an Air Quality Specialist in HDR’s Minneapolis office. Scott can be reached at [scott.zilka@hdrinc.com](mailto:scott.zilka@hdrinc.com). For more information on climate databases developed by HDR’s atmospheric science group, visit [www.HDRWeather.com](http://www.HDRWeather.com).



## NYFSMA to Offer Summer CFM Training

By Jennifer Marcy, CFM

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) has established a national program for professional certification of floodplain managers. The program recognizes continuing education and professional development that enhance the knowledge and performance of local, state, federal, and private-sector floodplain managers.

The Certified Floodplain Manager Program has been in existence since 1999. Some states have their own state-specific CFM programs, but the National program is managed by the ASFPM Executive Office in Madison, Wisconsin. Since New York does not have a state-specific exam, anyone in New York State wishing to become a CFM must take the National exam. The ASFPM, through the Certification Board of Regents, sets minimum national exam standards. ASFPM administers the program, provides and expands training opportunities, often in association with State chapters, and accredits and monitors State CFM programs.

The CFM program is designed to benefit citizens living in or near floodplains, as well as flood insurance policy holders and emergency responders, by providing trained experts in floodplain management to guide local and private decisions. CFMs working for or on behalf of communities help to reduce community liability, promote safer development, increase and improve local capabilities, reduce property damage, improve water quality, promote wiser land-use, and obtain citizen support or “buy-in.” Flood insurance premiums are often reduced due to wiser development decisions and knowledgeable communities that participate in FEMA’s Community Rating System (CRS). The CRS provides discounted flood insurance rates for residents of communities that undertake floodplain management related activities that go beyond FEMA’s minimum standards.

The successful CFM candidate enjoys professional and public recognition, confidence in his or her professional knowledge, potential job advancements, motivation for continued education in order to maintain the CFM, and personal satisfaction. There are currently 37 CFMs in New York State and that number has increased annually. The New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association offers the exam annually at its fall conference and is currently working with ASFPM to provide expanding training and exam opportunities.

The exam is not easy, nor was it intended to be. About 75 percent of all exam takers pass on the first attempt. Nationally there are over 4,200 CFMs, so New York has a ways to go. NYSFSMA is working to increase that number.

If you would like to become a CFM, you need to submit a completed application through ASFPM. Go to [www.floods.org](http://www.floods.org) and click on the “certification” menu. You may first want to review the FEMA – 480 NFIP study guide, also available under “exam info” in the ASFPM certification menu. The exam fee is \$100 for ASFPM members and \$340 for non-members. Certification is good for two years. In that time, a CFM must complete 16 Continuing Education Credits.

The exam has 120 questions. Many are multiple choice or true/false. A score of 70% is required to pass. Exam content is as follows:

- 25% - Flood Studies & Maps
- 25% - Regulatory Standards
- 20% - Ordinance Administration
- 10% - General Floodplain Management Concepts
- 10% - Flood Insurance
- 5% - Hazard Mitigation
- 5% - Natural and Beneficial Functions of Floodplains

An all-day Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) training course, *The NFIP: An Overview*, will be held this summer in the Western New York area, followed by an opportunity to take the exam. More information about this training will be communicated. This course is a good refresher course even for current CFMs, who can claim six pre-approved Continuing Education Credits from ASFPM for attendance. For attendees who are not yet CFMs, this is a

great refresher course but will not take the place of intensive study. Prior to this training, we recommend that you read the FEMA 480 Manual, available for download at [http://www.floods.org/Certification/FEMA\\_480.asp](http://www.floods.org/Certification/FEMA_480.asp). This manual is lengthy - so please give yourself some time to prepare!

For more information the CFM Program, contact Anita Larson, CFM Coordinator at (608) 274-0123 or via email at [cfm@floods.org](mailto:cfm@floods.org).

## **NFIP Reform Legislation**

*By Janet Thigpen, CFM*

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) reform legislation has finally passed both the House (H.R. 3121) and Senate (S. 2284) and is ready for work by a House-Senate Conference Committee to resolve differences between the two versions. Key issues to be resolved include “wind and flood” coverage (in House bill but not Senate bill) and a provision to forgive the NFIP debt of \$17.3 billion (in Senate bill but not House bill).

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) has expressed great concern about addition of the “wind and flood” optional, actuarial policy to the NFIP. They are concerned that such an unknown, potentially very large, new exposure could threaten the viability of the NFIP itself. ASFPM testimony on this and other federal legislative issues is posted on their website (<http://www.floods.org/NewUrgent/Legislation.asp>).

## **Buy Out Funds for Flood Prone Properties**

*By William Nechamen, CFM*

The new State Budget includes \$15.25 million to be used for buy outs of flood prone properties in counties affected by recent flooding, including Sullivan, Ulster, Orange, Broome, Chenango, Herkimer, Montgomery, Otsego, Schoharie and Tioga Counties. The program will be implemented by the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). Funds would be available to purchase one and two family homes that damaged by floods since April 1, 2004, are the primary residence of the owner, and family income must be 150% Area Mean Income, as defined by HUD. Homes would be condemned and the land would be used for open space, recreation, wetlands or flood mitigation purposes. NYS DEC and the State Emergency Office have met with DHCR to assist with guidance on buyouts and on floodplain issues.

## **Phase II Stormwater Program Begins Second Permitting Period**

*By James W. Maxwell*

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has issued new SPDES General Permits for Stormwater Discharges from MS4's (Permit No. GP-0-08-002) and Construction Activity (Permit No. -0-08-001), effective May 1, 2008 and expiring on April 30, 2010.

These documents are available on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/43150.html> for the MS4 Permit and <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/43133.html> for the Construction Activity Permit. Municipal entities as well as consulting firms and others assisting with implementing stormwater management programs should review the new permit information carefully as a number of changes have taken place as well as program enhancements in targeted watershed areas.

During the two-year term of these general permits, DEC will be reviewing permit requirements with interested parties.

## Grandfathering Rules for Flood Insurance Rates

*Used by permission from the Maryland Association of Floodplain and Stormwater Managers*

The National Flood Insurance Program has little known provisions that allow policyholders to maintain lower flood insurance rates after a new map changes their floodplain designation.

Since many communities will be undergoing flood map restudies as part of Map Modernization, citizens who were previously not in the mapped floodplain, or in a less restrictive zone, may be placed in a flood zone or assigned a higher Base Flood Elevation (BFE) by the new maps, as the flooding risk is better defined. As a service to their citizens, each community should notify those affected individuals and advise them of how grandfathering may benefit them.

Basically, what grandfathering allows is that if a flood insurance policy is obtained prior to the effective date of the map change, the policyholder is eligible to maintain the prior zone and BFE as the basis for rating the flood insurance policy. This remains the case as long as continuous coverage is maintained, and can be assigned to a new owner at the option of the policyholder. If a preferred risk policy (Zones B, C, or X) is involved, it can be rewritten as a standard policy using Zones B, C, or X when it renews.

Since communities will have about nine months after the new maps are released before they become effective (date they are officially adopted by the community), they should use the time to generate a list of affected individuals and advise them to take action before the effective date of the new maps.

### Calendar of Upcoming Events, Conferences and Training Opportunities

| Date                | Event  | Sponsor  | Information   |
|---------------------|--|--|---|
| June 5              | <b>Certified Professional Erosion and Sediment Control Review</b>                      | <b>Erie County SWCD<br/>Buffalo, N.Y.</b>                            | Don Stribick<br>716-652-8480<br><a href="http://don.stribick@ny.nacdnet.net">http://don.stribick@ny.nacdnet.net</a> |
| July 10             | <b>CPESC Exam</b>  | <b>Same as Above</b>   | Same as Above   |
| August 3-7          | <b>North American Surface Water Quality Conference (Stormcon)<br/>Orlando, Florida</b> | <b>Forester Communications</b>                                       | <a href="http://www.stormcon.com">http://www.stormcon.com</a>   |
| August 17-20        | <b>Annual Conference<br/>New Orleans, Louisiana</b>                                    | <b>American Public Works Association</b>                             | <a href="http://www.apwa.net">http://www.apwa.net</a>   |
| September 22 and 23 | <b>Annual Meeting and Conference<br/>Middletown, N.Y.</b>                              | <b>New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association</b> | William Nechamen<br>(518) 402-8146<br><a href="mailto:wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us">wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us</a>  |
| November 15-20      | <b>Annual Meeting and Conference</b>   | <b>International Association of Emergency Managers</b>               | <a href="http://www.iaem.com">http://www.iaem.com</a>   |

## **Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control**

*Prepared by EnviroCert International, Inc.*

Many units of government have passed laws, ordinances and regulations that attempt to minimize the misuse of land and water resources. Controlling soil erosion and the resulting sedimentation has created a need for the services of professionals trained in proper erosion and sediment control and water quality methods. Such professionals must increasingly be able to show evidence of their qualifications and competence.

The *Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control, (CPESC)* is an established international certification process that recognizes individuals who have proven their ability in the field of erosion and sediment control. In order to attain this certification, the applicant must:

1. Pass a peer review process to evaluate his/her education, work experience and on the job experiences.
2. They must have a minimum of 3 years of professional level experience in the erosion and sediment control field plus a B.S. or higher degree in a related field. Or the applicant with no college degree can qualify with 7 years of professional job experience in the field.
3. Successful applicants may then sit for the CPESC exam. This 6 hour exam is designed to rigorously evaluate a person's knowledge and ability to apply erosion and sediment control concepts.
4. Upon passing the exam, the CPESC must complete 60 hours of professional development units over a 3 year period to maintain their certification.
5. Comply with a strict code of ethics.
6. An "In Training" designation is offered to those who do not currently meet the above criteria. Further information about IT is available on our web site.

The CPESC certification process was developed in close association with the *International Erosion Control Association* and the *Soil and Water Conservation Society*.

The CPESC process is designed to compliment other professional certifications and state licenses. It is not the intent of the program to compete with professional engineers, architects or other design professions. It is to compliment the team approach to solving and developing sound resource management plans.

The field of erosion and sediment control has evolved into an extremely technical field that demands knowledge, experience and competence. Knowledge of soil properties, erosive stormwater runoff, erosion rates, vegetative establishment, sediment capture, sediment detention and available erosion and sediment control products is essential. The CPESC must have a working knowledge of current NPDES regulations along with state, province and local ordinances that would apply to a specific site.

The CPESC, working in cooperation with municipalities, engineers, developers, contractors and other design professionals have and will continue to provide professional expertise in addressing soil erosion and sediment control measures.

More information can be obtained from the CPESC web site:

<http://www.cpesc.org/>

## **Proposed Revisions to the NYS Dam Safety Regulations**

*By Janet Thigpen, CFM*

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is in the process of amending the State's safety regulations, which protect the public from dam failure. Information about the proposed changes is posted at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/39559.html>.

Numerous concerns about proposed regulations were expressed during the public comment period (which ended on May 17). Many of these comments related to the potentially significant costs of the proposed regulations for dam owners. It was suggested that many environmental and flood control benefits might be lost if structures are breached to avoid costly regulatory requirements.

The New York Association of Conservation Districts compiled extensive comments intended to clarify and strengthen the regulatory language, while also reducing the economic impact of dam regulations on land owners. Their comments are available at [http://www.nyacd.org/funding\\_regulation.htm](http://www.nyacd.org/funding_regulation.htm).

## Scout Warns His Neighbors: Turn Around Don't Drown

By Janet Thigpen, CFM



Nearly half of all flood fatalities occur when people drive into floodwaters. They cannot tell how deep the water is or the condition of the road under the water.

Most vehicles can be swept away by less than two feet of water. This photo was taken in the Town of Campbell, where Boy Scout Michael Hitchcock undertook a project to warn motorists about the risk of driving on flooded roads.

Eagle Scout candidate Mike Hitchcock was interviewed after presenting the Town of Campbell and Steuben County with 39 signs warning motorists of the risks of driving on flooded roads. Two flip down signs will be permanently located in flood-prone areas and portable signs will be deployed where needed during floods. These signs may save lives.



### **NEVER walk or drive on flooded roads. STOP! Turn Around Don't Drown.**

- o The roadbed may be washed out.
- o You can lose control of your vehicle in only a few inches of water.
- o Your car may float – vehicles can be swept away by less than 2 feet of water.
- o As little as 6 inches of swiftly moving water can knock you off your feet.
- o Do not drive or walk around a barricade. Turn around and go another way!

**Eighty percent of flood deaths occur when people drive or walk into floodwater.**

**New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association  
Membership Application (http://ny.floods.org)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Company/Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State/Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**County:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check or voucher out to: **New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association**  
Mail to: **PO Box 1673, Albany, New York 12201-1673**

**Type of Membership:** (attach additional names and contact information where appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Individual – \$30**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Student – \$15**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Organizational – \$50**

Public, academic or not-for-profit group.  
Membership includes up to 10 individuals and one vote.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Professional – \$100**

For-profit enterprise. Membership includes up to 10 individuals and one vote.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Associate Member – \$250**

Business or individual engaged in products, materials or related services. Non-voting classification. Entitles members to mailings and other considerations.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Sponsoring Member – \$500**

Business or individual engaged in products, materials or related services. Membership includes up to 10 individuals with full voting rights. Sponsoring members will get appropriate recognition within the organization.

The **New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association** is a professional association dedicated to promoting effective floodplain and stormwater management as a means of reducing flood damage and protecting, restoring and enhancing water quality.

**What the Association Does:**

- Foster public awareness of sound floodplain and stormwater management
- Promote the professional status of those involved in floodplain and stormwater management
- Provide educational opportunities and a way to share general and technical information
- Keep people apprised of and involved with state and federal activities related to floodplain and stormwater management
- Promote coordination and cooperation between the various organizations active in floodplain and stormwater management

**Get Involved:** (check committees of interest)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Public Policy Committee**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Conference Planning Committee**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Newsletter Committee**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Website Committee**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Outreach & Education Committee**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Other** (please specify)

**Who Should Join?** Everyone involved in floodplain management, stormwater management, and/or flood mitigation activities. Includes: local officials, code enforcement and building officials, not-for-profits, students, faculty, insurance agents, lenders, realtors, businesses, planners, consultants, engineers, surveyors, architects, state and federal officials, etc.

**For more information, contact:** Janet Thigpen, Chair, 607-737-5271, [JThigpen@co.chemung.ny.us](mailto:JThigpen@co.chemung.ny.us)  
Bill Nechamen, Executive Director, 518-402-8146, [wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us)