

Official Newsletter of
**The New York State Floodplain and
Stormwater Managers Association**
Winter 2009 / 2010

NYSFSMA NEWS

Message from the Chair:

I am proud to serve as Chair during the Association's 10th anniversary year. Thank you to everyone who attended the 2009 NYSFSMA annual conference in Latham this past autumn and to everyone that worked to make the conference happen. The bus trip was interesting and informative as we discussed ice jams on the Mohawk near the Stockade in Schenectady, visited a lock on the Mohawk that was heavily damaged by flooding in 2006, and learned about the levee that helps protect South Amsterdam. Speaking of our annual conference, the Board of Directors recently decided that our next annual conference will be held in the spring of 2011. It was determined that a spring meeting may attract more attendees and there could be fewer conflicts with other events. To make the change in 2010 so soon after our last conference was deemed unfeasible, so we will forgo our normal annual conference in 2010 and substitute with a spring and fall training event. Our spring training will be in Delaware County and the fall training will be held in western New York. Stay tuned for more information.

I would like to thank our outgoing NYSFSMA Board Chair, Janet Thigpen for her tireless work for the Association. Janet has already helped out enormously in late 2009 in her new position as Past Chair and I rely heavily on her knowledge of flood issues. Thanks also to outgoing Vice Chair, Mike Dopko, and outgoing Treasurer, Dan Warren as serving on the Board takes a large time commitment and I know both will continue to help the Association grow. I would like to give a special thank you to outgoing Secretary, Russell Houck

who served as secretary for 6 years while serving as the unofficial chair for the conference committee. Russ continues to serve on the Board as a regional director and I appreciate his commitment. Finally, thanks to Bill Nechamen as he continues to be the primary player in the operation of the Association.

For 2010, the Association will continue to enhance the stormwater side of the organization and the Board would also like to see our committees grow. I became involved with the Association at its beginning in 2000 and the organization and operation of committees continues to be one of our biggest challenges. Achieving the goal of fully functioning committees will help ease the work burden on the few and help everyone focus less on organizational issues and more on the flood and stormwater issues that we are all concerned about. Please consider lending a hand in your area of expertise to move us forward and make the Association better.

Please contact me if you have ideas or suggestions for your Association.

Shane Nickle, AICP
NYSFSMA Chair

IMPORTANT

See the calendar on Page 5 for information on the Spring Floodplain and Stormwater Workshop in Oneonta, New York which includes a CFM Review Course and CFM Exam

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<http://ny.floods.org>

NYSFSMA Response to August Flooding in Western New York

Following the August 9, 2009 flooding in Western New York, NYSFSMA submitted the following letters to local papers for publication. Although severe flooding damaged the Villages of Gowanda and Silver Creek and other areas of Western New York, neither letter was ever printed.

Recent news reports indicate that the owners of a manufactured home park, totally destroyed by flooding, are already working to repopulate the park. Although the site is located adjacent to a stream that also flooded minimally in the August 1, 1986 flood, and this flood may have been greater than the 1% probability flood, it is not located in an identified flood risk zone. Village officials cannot require elevation or other FEMA standards except those non-flood related standards found in the state building code. Although the village's hands are tied regarding imposing flood elevation criteria, that does not mean the village cannot inform people of the flood history and strongly advise that units be elevated and flood insurance be purchased. New replacement manufactured homes are being offered to returning residents at a cost slightly over the \$30,000 they each received from FEMA, and television news casts have interviewed returning residents who do not believe the site will ever flood again. Very few residents in the original manufactured home park carried flood insurance, which won't be required on the new units either.

Dear Editor:

Last week's flooding probably seemed like a freak event: the rain just kept falling; the streams kept rising; and the problems kept compounding. But this wasn't an isolated incident. Every year, flooding occurs somewhere in New York State, often many times and in many places.

When the waters recede, the survivors take a deep breath and set to work putting their lives back together. If you are in that situation, I wish you the very best in this daunting task. But as you clean up and rebuild, I would encourage you to think about how you can build smarter. Just because this kind of flooding hadn't occurred in recent memory is no guarantee that it won't occur again in the future.

Try to find ways to leave room for the stream and its floodwaters. Periodic high flows are a natural part of any stream system. When a stream overflows its banks and spreads out on the floodplain, the water slows down and its energy is dissipated. When these naturally beneficial floodplain functions are lost, high flows are funneled to downstream areas, increasing the volume and velocity of the flood.

If existing development can't be abandoned to make room for floodwaters, consider ways to make it more resilient to damage. Water should be able to enter and exit enclosed areas so that water pressure on exterior walls doesn't collapse the foundation. Buildings, fuel tanks, and other items should be securely anchored. Relocate utilities, appliances, and other vulnerable items to higher parts of the building. Use building materials that are resistant to flood damage. Buy flood insurance.

Preventing flood damage also involves paying attention to the watershed that drains into a stream. When farm land and forests are converted to roof tops and parking lots, less water soaks in and more rain runs off into streams and rivers. When soggy spots are graded to improve drainage, they no longer store the water and runoff increases. Smart design and stormwater management practices can prevent the increased flood hazards that could otherwise result from more water reaching the streams faster.

Because flooding is a recurring event, now is the time to start thinking about the next flood and taking whatever steps are possible to reduce your vulnerability to flood damage.

Janet Thigpen, CFM, Chair
New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association

Dear Editor:

Hindsight is showing that residents affected by the recent floods in Gowanda and Silver Creek should have had flood insurance coverage on their buildings and additional contents flood coverage on their belongings, especially those that experienced first floor flooding. When mortgages on structures in high flood hazard zones are held by federally regulated lending institutions, flood insurance is a mandatory part of the package. But what about those folks who were flooded, but live in areas not identified as flood prone on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps? Why were those areas flooded, and what can be done to reduce damages before the next time? If the history of flooding in Silver Creek and Gowanda holds true (both flooded August 1, 1986), there will be a next time. The history of flash-flooded communities also includes Ashville, Panama and Fredonia in Chautauqua County, Attica and Arcade in Wyoming County, and many others in western New York, where the true flood risk is not necessarily reflected on a map.

Silver Creek flooded in areas beyond the '1% probability of occurring in any year' flood zone, the so-called 100-year flood hazard area. FEMA creates flood hazard area maps using the statistical standard of the 1% probability flood, and also identifies the 0.2% probability flood, or 500 year event. But the mapping programs do not include debris blockage or ice jams, and only show what would happen under perfect 'free flow' conditions. Obviously that was not the case in these hard-hit communities. In Silver Creek, the (totally destroyed) manufactured home park was not shown as flood prone on the flood hazard map, although it is bordered by the creek on two sides, and had some flooding in 1986. Did this flood exceed FEMA's mapping standards, or are FEMA's maps out of date? Obviously the flood risk was there.

The expansion of mapped flood hazard areas within a village or town is often protested by the residents and local officials as an economic burden. Instead, communities should be considering the true flood risk, and encourage residents to elevate and flood proof their properties, and to purchase flood insurance. People are resistant to the concept of filling in their basements, raising the elevation of the house, moving utilities to an upper floor and reducing their flood risk. But if they do, the cost of a flood insurance policy drops substantially and the task of mucking out a mud-filled basement would not be an issue after the next flood. People who are burdened financially by flood insurance should consider what the costs will be when they flood.

Janet Thigpen, CFM
Chair, New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association

Borrow Our Stormwater Floodplain Simulation System and Teach Youth About Watershed Management

NYSFSMA recently purchased a stormwater and floodplain model for members to borrow for use with scout groups, school classrooms, public exhibits, and in other settings. The WARD'S Stormwater - Floodplain Simulation System is a large-scale and visually striking model that features a large clear acrylic tank (48" x 20" x 18") and a colorful resin landform insert, with three different headwater trays and two rainmaker trays to simulate several real world environmental scenarios that students can recreate and modify.



Developed for education and outreach in cooperation with the Michigan Stormwater-Floodplain Association, this new model offers a real opportunity to educate children and adults alike about the dangers and impact of unplanned development and human activity in the floodplain.

Through the use of this model, students can explore the value of wetlands and retention ponds in flood management. They can construct their own levees and witness how stream flow is affected and can impact downstream communities during times of high runoff. They can simulate ice damming and other seasonal risks in the floodplain. They can measure runoff volume and construct their own hydrograph of stream flow over time. Most importantly, they will work as a team to find and test solutions to a variety of floodplain problems simulated by the model. An in-depth curriculum guide is available to introduce students to new concepts such as no adverse impact, turn around - don't drown, runoff footprint, green gardens, green roofs, and porous pavement, all important tools in the management of our critical watershed resources. Curriculum is geared toward middle school and high school students, with adaptations for younger grades. Adults will love it too!



NYSFSMA is partnering with the Department of Environmental Conservation to house the model for use by our members. If you are interested in borrowing the model, please contact Bill Nechamen (wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us or 518-402-8146). Bill will work with you to arrange for transport of the model, however sufficient lead time would be required.

A video of the model and other information is on the WARD'S website at <http://wardsci.com/product.asp?pn=IG0046234&bhcd2=1259772188>.

Recently Completed Stormwater Management Project



Carpenter's Pond sits on the Sheldrake River north of Sheldrake Lake (Larchmont Reservoir) in the City of New Rochelle. It is surrounded by city parkland. Over the years, as the headwaters of the Sheldrake River drained into the pond, sediment and leaves settled out of the calmer river waters behind the dam. Sediment and leaves filled much of the pond, providing room in some areas for just the river channel. Finally, invasive plants began to dominate the deposits of sediment and leaves. Japanese Knotweed was dominant among these plants. In addition to losing its functional value, the pond had become an eyesore.

The project involved the replacement of a corroded valve in the existing dam. The new valve will enable city staff to partially drain the pond prior to storms, thereby increasing the pond's flood water storage capacity. Excavation to a depth of approximately four feet provides room for this storage, with the sediment being relocated and deposited atop an existing peninsula jutting into the pond. A large sediment basin at the point where the river enters the pond provides long-term sediment trapping capabilities before the sediment is allowed to settle out in the pond itself. Maintenance vehicles will be able to reach the basin via a new, rock-lined access way. Funding was provided by the NYS Department of State, County of Westchester, City of New Rochelle and Town of Mamaroneck.



Calendar of Upcoming Events, Conferences Training Opportunities

Date	Event	Sponsor	Information
May 4-5, 2010	Spring Floodplain and Stormwater Workshop	NYSFSMA and Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District	Oneonta, NY For Information Contact Jen Marcy, jkmarcy@pbsi.com Registration Information Contact Bill Nechamen at 518-402-8146 or wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us
May 16-21, 2010	ASFPM National Conference: Building Blocks of Floodplain Management	Association of State Floodplain Managers	Oklahoma City, OK Information at www.floods.org
August 1-5, 2010	Stormcon North American Surface Water Quality Conference	Forester Events	San Antonio, Texas www.stormcon.com
October 30 – November 4, 2010	Annual Conference	International Association Of Emergency Managers	San Antonio, Texas www.iaem.com
November 4, 2010	Stormwater Symposium	Chemung County Stormwater Coalition	Elmira, New York Contact Diane Fiorentino 607-796-2216

Floodplain Mapping in New York State

**Bill Nechamen, Chief, Floodplain Management Section
NYSDEC**

There is a good chance that you live in a community that received preliminary Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) in the past year. In fact, Putnam, Dutchess, Sullivan, Delaware, Otsego, Chenango, Onondaga, Schenectady, Cortland and Niagara Counties all have preliminary DFIRMs that are currently under review or on their way to final adoption. This is in addition to New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Orange, Greene, Schoharie, Clinton, Cayuga, Monroe and portions of Erie and Ulster Counties that have completed and adopted maps. Also in production is mapping for all or parts of Albany, Rensselaer, Montgomery, Oneida, Oswego, Jefferson, Broome, Chemung and the remainder of Erie Counties. The new DFIRMs are compatible with Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, and use digital ortho-imagery for base maps. This allows users to actually see roads and buildings right on the map.

Once all of the maps mentioned become final, approximately 89% of the state's population will be covered by modernized, GIS compatible flood maps. However about 50% of the land area of the state still has the old paper maps. A great deal of new flood mapping remains to be done. Even in areas that received new DFIRMs, many streams, lakes and shorelines did not receive updated studies, and instead merely had their prior flood elevations plotted on the new maps, with new more accurate topography.

New flood maps always raise issues. In many areas, mapped floodplains have expanded or flood elevations have increased due to new studies or reliance on newer, more accurate topography. In some areas, levees have been found to provide insufficient elevation above the Base Flood Elevation (elevation of the flood that has a one percent chance of occurring each year). Even where levees do provide sufficient elevations, FEMA mapping standards require the levee owner, which is often the state or local government, to provide certification that the levee meets a detailed list of standards. The certification process is extremely expensive, and is typically beyond the means of the local community, or even the state.

People who find themselves "in the floodplain" are required by most mortgage holders to purchase flood insurance as a condition of the mortgage. That leads many people and communities to fear the flood insurance more than the actual flood. The cost of flood insurance can be reduced for many property owners by purchasing a policy before the map is legally adopted. This is usually about a year after a preliminary map is released. Lower flood insurance rates may then be grandfathered. See www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=2497 for more information about grandfathering.

People in Broome and in the portions of Erie County that do not yet have revised flood maps should be alert for meeting notices. When a new preliminary map is released, FEMA and NYSDEC work together to provide information meetings for community officials, as well as public open houses where anybody can come in and talk to a program expert about the maps and their own property situation. Please view <http://www.rampp-team.com/ny.htm> for information about flood mapping progress in New York, as well as links to preliminary maps.

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: Shane Nickle, Chair, 518-234-2751 shanenickle@co.schoharie.ny.us
Bill Nechamen, Executive Director, 518-402-8146, wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us