

FEMA REGION III BRANDYWINE-CHRISTINA WATERSHED PROJECT UPDATE NO. 2, WINTER 2015

Update on FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning for the Brandywine-Christina Watershed

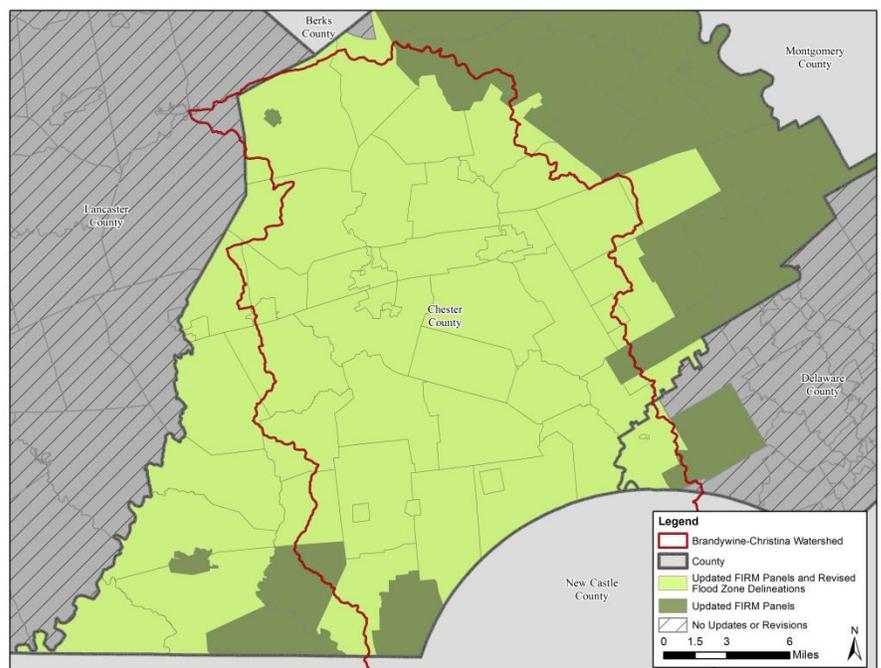
This bulletin is an update on the flood risk study of the Brandywine-Christina Watershed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III office. As part of this study, Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are being updated for all communities in Chester County and for several communities in Delaware County, as shown in the map below. No FIRMs are being updated for Lancaster County.

- The next FEMA meeting will be the Consultation Coordination Officers (CCO) Meeting, held separately for each county. Chester County municipalities will meet on January 12, 2016; Delaware County municipalities will have a separate meeting on the same date. Each meeting will cover the regulatory process for the recently issued Preliminary FIRMs and Flood Insurance Study (FIS). Lancaster County will not require a CCO Meeting, as the watershed study did not result in updates to their effective FIRM/FIS.
- FEMA incorporated comments submitted following the Flood Risk Review Meeting (held September 18), as applicable, to the draft products, and recently sent all Chester County municipalities and applicable Delaware County municipalities hard copies of the Preliminary FIRMs and FIS reports (dated 12/9/2015 for Chester County; 10/29/2015 for Delaware County). These are also available online from FEMA's Map Service Center (see Page 3 for link).
- Technical appeals to propose changes to the flood hazard delineations or elevations on recently released products may only be submitted during the formal 90-day appeal period that will begin around the end of February/early March in 2016.

A key study objective for FEMA is to connect with communities in the watershed to increase awareness of flood risk, and the flood mapping process. The goal is to promote action to reduce the loss of life and property, and make communities more resilient to future flood events. This project update is the second of four.

Brandywine-Christina Watershed Project Update

The Brandywine-Christina Watershed study has progressed to the issuance of Preliminary FIRMs. Communities provided comments during and following the Flood Risk Review (Meeting held September 18th). The study team reviewed all comments and incorporated them, as applicable, into the Preliminary FIRMs. Communities provided a variety of data at the meeting, including additional survey data and channel remediation information. The study team also addressed questions about changes to the flood hazards throughout the watershed.



Updated FIRM Status in Brandywine-Christina Watershed and Chester County

Next Project Steps

As shown in the latest Project Timeline below, CCO Meetings will take place in the near future to discuss the regulatory processing steps for the recently issued Preliminary FIS and FIRMs. Following the CCO Meetings, FEMA will host Open Houses, where public stakeholders can ask questions regarding the Preliminary FIRM/FIS, flood insurance, or other issues related to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Upcoming steps on the regulatory process to make the Preliminary FIRM/FIS final will include a formal 90-day appeal period and the issuance of Letters of Final Determination, after which the maps will become final.

While the processing of the regulatory FIRMs continues, the study team will be developing other Flood Risk Products for the Brandywine-Christina Watershed as a whole and also for Chester County. These non-regulatory Flood Risk Products can be used to assist community officials in an array of floodplain management activities, including risk communication, mitigation, and benefit-cost analysis for grant applications. These products will be discussed in the future Resilience Meeting, which will focus on the flood risk awareness and mitigation side of emergency management.

What You Can Do Now

Encourage your citizens to purchase flood insurance now. If a revised FIRM shows a property newly in a special flood hazard area (SFHA), flood insurance rates will likely change. However, there are ways to save money with the NFIP Grandfather Rule. For more information, visit www.floodsmart.gov/grandfathering.

Consider joining or increasing your rating in the Community Rating System (CRS) to gain discounts on flood insurance premiums for your citizens in the SFHAs as you implement higher floodplain management standards in your community. For more information, visit www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system.

Contact FEMA if you need assistance with mitigation projects. For more information on grants that may be available, please visit <http://www.fema.gov/grants>. For more information on hazard mitigation assistance, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance>.

The following is a summary of study activities and community roles:

- **Floodplain Analysis and Mapping.** FEMA and the Risk Assessment, Mapping, and Planning Partners (RAMPP) have released preliminary FIRMs in this watershed.
- **Community Coordination.** FEMA and RAMPP will continue to schedule meetings with the communities as the study progresses to review flood hazard analyses results, and discuss potential mitigation actions.
 1. **CCO Meeting:** The next meeting to expect is the CCO Meeting. At this meeting, FEMA and the contractor team will discuss the Preliminary FIRMs and inform you of next steps in the Risk MAP Study process.

Project Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Initiation of Outreach Activities	Winter 2013
First Project Update Newsletter	Fall 2014
Draft Engineering and Mapping Results	September 2015
Flood Risk Review Meeting	September 18, 2015
Delaware Preliminary Issuance	October 29, 2015
Chester Preliminary Issuance	December 9, 2015
Second Project Update Newsletter (this bulletin)	Winter 2015
CCO Meetings	January 12, 2016
Open House	Spring 2016
Third Project Update Newsletter	Spring 2016
Resilience Meeting	Spring 2016
Fourth and Final Project Update Newsletter	Fall 2016
Letter of Final Determination (LFD)	Fall 2016
Municipalities to Revise Ordinance	6 mo. after LFD
FIRM Effective Date	Spring 2017

2. **Community Action Items:** After the CCO Meeting, the next step will be the community Open House for public stakeholders, the Resilience Meeting for community officials, and the Letter of Final Determination (LFD) - see timeline box for more information. Once the LFD is issued, the communities will have six months to adopt the new FIRMs into their flood ordinance. While updating the latest information on the FIRMs, communities should take this opportunity to review their ordinance, implement higher standards, and ensure all other flood damage prevention actions comply with the Code of Federal Regulations 60.3 to ensure the community remains in good standing with the NFIP.
 3. **FIRMs Effective:** At the effective date, the new FIRMs and Flood Insurance Study become the regulatory source of information for communities to use for floodplain management purposes. Mitigation coordination can continue with FEMA even after the study update is closed.
- **Community Support.** FEMA welcomes input regarding the Preliminary FIS/FIRM and potential mitigation actions from the stakeholders in the Watershed, including local and county governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations, as well as Federal, and State agencies. If you have any input on the study, please send the data to Mike Seering, Contracting Study Manager using the contact information below.

Important Resources

- Preliminary FISs/FIRMs are available for Chester and Delaware Counties at FEMA’s Map Service Center at <https://msc.fema.gov/>.
- Changes Since Last FIRM data is available for Chester and Delaware Counties on an interactive map, here:
 - <http://maps.riskmap3.com/pa/ChesterCo/>
 - <http://maps.riskmap3.com/pa/DelawareCo/>
- Effective FIRMs, FISs, and digital FIRM Databases are available at FEMA’s Map Service Center at <https://msc.fema.gov/>.
- Discovery materials and other study information are available at <http://www.riskmap3.com/node/4460>
- FEMA Fact Sheets, including Risk MAP Products, are available at <http://www.riskmap3.com/node/4612>.

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