

## FEMA REGION III BRANDYWINE-CHRISTINA WATERSHED PROJECT UPDATE NO. 3, SUMMER 2016

### Update on FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning for Brandywine-Christina Watershed, Chester County-wide Flood Insurance Rate Maps, and Delaware County Physical Map Revision

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. This bulletin is the third of four project updates on the flood risk study.

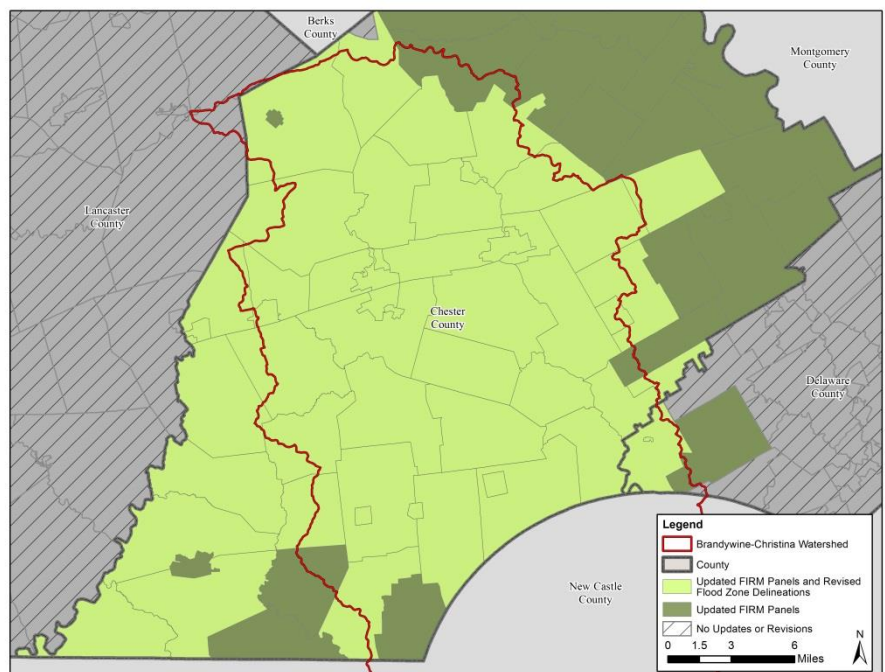
As part of this study, new flood hazard analyses were developed within the Brandywine-Christina Watershed and Octoraro Creek Watershed along the western border of Chester County. The Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are being updated for all communities in Chester County and for several communities in Delaware County (see figure below and listings in the attached Municipal Index). For the Chester County-wide FIRM development, communities with unrevised flooding sources were updated to the new map format. No FIRMs are being updated for Lancaster County. Key updates are as follows:

- FEMA has been receiving and addressing non-technical comments submitted following the Community Coordination and Outreach (CCO) Meetings held in January.
- 90-Day Appeal Period: 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, which started June 1, 2016. The Appeal period is open for those communities with revisions to flood data (e.g., flood boundaries, etc.) on their updated FIRMs. All communities have the opportunity to provide non-technical comments.
- FEMA is developing two sets of non-regulatory Flood Risk Products: a full watershed set specifically for the Brandywine-Christina Watershed and a unified set for Chester County to include the revised areas for Octoraro Creek and tributaries.
- Meetings for the project will be scheduled in coordination with officials from Chester County and Delaware County. These will include the Chester County Ordinance Workshop, the Resilience Meeting for municipalities and an Open House Meeting for property owners.

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.

### Project Status

The study has progressed to the Post-Preliminary processing period following issuance of Preliminary FIRMs. FEMA is working on the regulatory appeals process. FEMA is also developing non-regulatory Flood Risk Products and continues to address community questions about map updates.



Updated FIRM Status in Brandywine-Christina Watershed and Chester County

## Next Project Steps

FEMA will continue to diligently work on Post-Preliminary tasks, non-regulatory Flood Risk products, and community engagement, as follows:

### Community Engagement

FEMA is coordinating the scheduling for the Ordinance Workshop, Resilience Meeting, and Open House Meeting(s).

- FEMA, working with Chester County and Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (PA-DCED), will present an Ordinance Workshop July 22. Location TBD.
- FEMA anticipates conducting the Resilience Meeting in Winter 2016-2017 to review the flood risk products with communities. The non-regulatory Flood Risk Products will be discussed in the Resilience Meeting, which will focus on the flood risk awareness and mitigation side of emergency management.
- The project team is coordinating with Chester and Delaware County liaisons on timing of potential Open House Meetings. Open House meetings will cover the regulatory process for the recently issued Preliminary FIRMs and FIS reports and allow property owners to review the FIRM updates, get flood insurance information, and more. Look for more updates regarding the Resilience Meeting and Open House Meeting(s) in the next bulletin.

### Post-Preliminary Processing: Comments and Appeals

The changes to the flood zones can be easily compared to existing flood zones by accessing an interactive map found online (link included under “Important Resources” on page 5). Non-technical comments are currently being collected. Technical appeals may be submitted to propose changes to the flood hazard delineations or elevations on recently released products, but may only be submitted during the formal 90-day appeal period (June 1, 2016 to August 29, 2016). The 90-day appeals period started through the following notification process:

- Formal notification of the appeal start and appeal process was sent to the communities on May 18, 2016.
- FEMA published the Flood Hazard Determination Notice on or about May 25, 2016, and June 1, 2016, in the following newspapers: *Avon Grove Sun*, *Chester County Press*, *Daily Local News*, *Kennett Paper*, and *The Delaware County Daily Times*.
- The Flood Hazard Determination Notice may be viewed on FEMA’s website starting June 1, 2016, at [www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/bfe](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/bfe).

**Comments:** In order for these maps to be as accurate as possible, it is important to review the maps and provide comments on non-technical changes or inaccuracies for the preliminary FIRMs within your community.

Non-technical comments are defined as objections to a base map feature change or any non-appealable change including:

### Project Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Initiation of Outreach Activities	Winter 2013
First Project Update Newsletter	Fall 2014
Draft Engineering and Mapping Results	Sep. 2015
Flood Risk Review Meeting	Sep. 18, 2015
Delaware Preliminary Issuance	Oct. 29, 2015
Chester Preliminary Issuance	Dec. 9, 2015
Second Project Update Newsletter	Winter 2015
CCO Meeting	Jan. 12, 2016
90-Day Appeal Period Start	Jun. 1, 2016
<b>Third Project Update Newsletter (this bulletin)</b>	<b>Jun. 2016</b>
Ordinance Workshop	Jul. 22, 2016
Fourth and Final Project Update Newsletter	Fall 2016
90-Day Appeal Period Ends	Aug. 29, 2016
Letter of Final Determination (LFD)	Dec. 2016
Resilience Meeting	Winter 2016-17
Open House	Winter 2016-17
Municipalities to revise Ordinances	Dec. 2016- Jun. 2017
FIRM Effective Date	Jun. 2017

- Incorrect or misspelled road/stream names;
- Municipal boundary changes, etc.; and
- Other base map errors, or errors of omission.

**Appeals:** Are technically-backed formal objections to the addition/modification of:

- Preliminary Base Flood Elevations (BFEs)/flood depths;
- Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) boundaries and/or zone designations (newer delineations are often based on more detailed or recent topography); or
- Regulatory floodway boundaries.

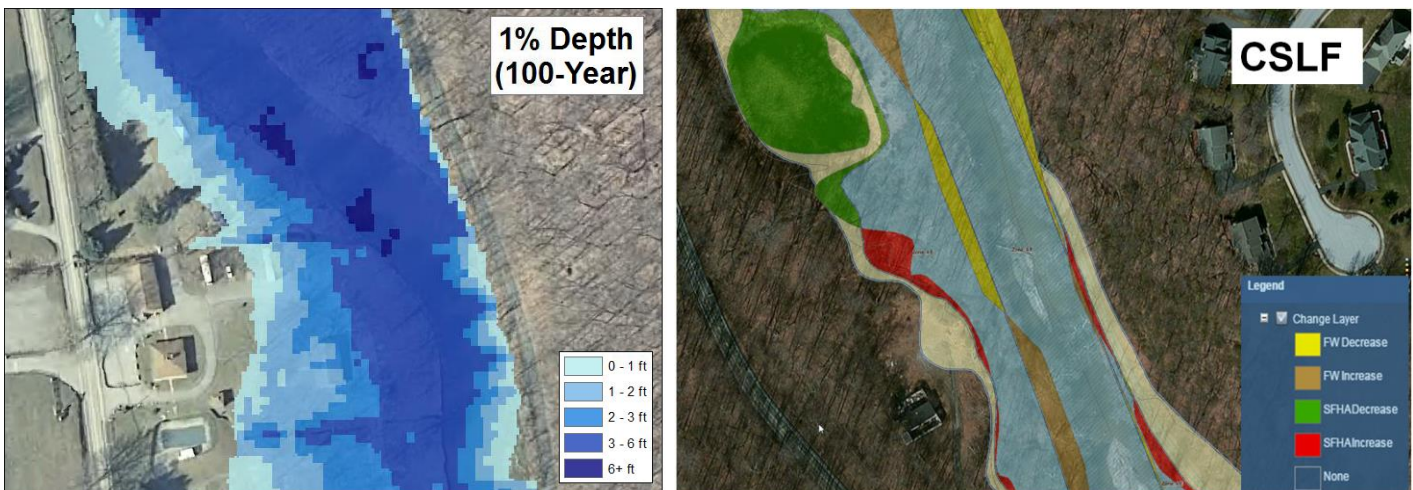
Appeals must be submitted during the 90-day regulatory appeal period. Individual property owners or community officials can propose appeals, but all appeals ultimately should be sent to the community Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who shall review and consolidate all appeals by private persons, and issue a written opinion stating whether the evidence presented is sufficient to justify an appeal on behalf of those persons by the community. The CEO will then forward any appeals to FEMA for information and placement in the Flood Elevation Determination Docket.

Appeals must be supported by scientific and technical data. Proposed BFEs, base flood depths, SFHA zone designations, or regulatory floodways are said to be scientifically incorrect if the methodology used in the determination of the BFEs, base flood depths, SFHA zone designations, or regulatory floodways are inappropriate or incorrect, or if the assumptions made as part of the methodology are inappropriate or incorrect. An appeal must be based on data that show the new or modified BFEs, base flood depths, SFHA boundaries, SFHA zone designations, or floodways to be scientifically or technically incorrect.

***Following the 90-day appeal period, there will be issuance of Letters of Final Determination. Six months after the Letter is issued, the maps will become final.***

### ***Non-regulatory Flood Risk Products***

The study team is developing non-regulatory Flood Risk Products for the Brandywine-Christina Watershed as a whole and also a unified set for Chester County to include the revised areas for Octoraro Creek and tributaries. These 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 hazard mitigation grant applications. Flood Risk Products currently being produced include a Flood Risk Database, Map, and Report, based on the following risk datasets being developed: flood depth and analysis grids, Changes Since Last FIRM (CSLF), Hazus Level 2 analysis, and Areas of Mitigation Interest (AoMI).



**Example Depth Grid (left) and CSLF (Right) Non-Regulatory Flood Risk Products**

## What You Can Do Now

**Comments and Appeals.** Consolidate any comments or appeals within your community and submit them to Nikki Roberts, FEMA Region III, at the mailing address below. Comments may also be submitted via email, to [Nikki.Roberts@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Nikki.Roberts@fema.dhs.gov).

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**Contact FEMA if you need assistance with mitigation projects.** For more information on grants that may be available, please visit [www.fema.gov/grants](http://www.fema.gov/grants). For more information on hazard mitigation assistance, please visit [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance). **If you have any areas of mitigation interest, please let Mike Seering know as soon as possible at [Mike.Seering@aecom.com](mailto:Mike.Seering@aecom.com)**, so they can be included in the non-regulatory AoMI product the community will receive as part of their Flood Risk Products package.

**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](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system).

**Encourage your citizens to purchase flood insurance now.** If a revised FIRM shows a property newly included in an SFHA, flood insurance rates for that property will likely change. However, there are ways to save money with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Grandfather Rule. For more information, visit [www.floodsmart.gov/grandfathering](http://www.floodsmart.gov/grandfathering).

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

- **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. **Flood Risk Review Meeting:** Flood Risk Review Meeting for the project was conducted for Chester and Delaware Counties in September 2015. During the meeting, the community officials had a chance to review and provide early feedback on draft versions of the Preliminary FIRM and FIS report. The feedback received during the meeting was incorporated by the project team to update FIRM and FIS report and the Flood Risk Products.
  2. **CCO Meetings:** CCO Meetings for Chester and Delaware Counties following the Preliminary issuance were held in January 2016. After the release of Preliminary FIRMs and FIS reports, FEMA held the meetings to present updated information to community officials. The changes in flood risk data (e.g. floodplains, etc.), FEMA's post-preliminary process, and community responsibilities were explained during the meetings.
  3. **Ordinance Workshop:** Working with PA DCED and Chester County, an Ordinance Workshop is being scheduled for July 22. The workshop is being held in the morning and the exact time and location are being finalized; further details (location, time, agenda, etc.) will be provided as soon as they are available.
  4. **Resilience Meeting:** FEMA will hold a joint Resilience Meeting in Winter 2016-2017. The meeting focuses on communities within the Brandywine-Christina Watershed, plus the communities with map updates in the Octoraro Creek Watershed (see Municipal Index Excel spreadsheet for communities to be invited). The meeting will focus on non-regulatory Flood Risk Products discussed above. The goal of the meeting will be to provide guidance to local officials to help them identify mitigation opportunities.
  5. **Open House Meeting(s):** The project team is working on determining the timing for a potential Open House Meeting for Chester County and one for Delaware County. At this meeting, FEMA, the contractor team, and community officials would be available to the public to discuss the updated FIRMs and answer questions on how it affects individual stakeholders.

- **Floodplain Analysis and Mapping.** FEMA and the Risk Assessment, Mapping, and Planning Partners (RAMPP) have released Preliminary FIRMs for Chester County and portions of Delaware County. The FIRMs are going through the regulatory process and are currently in the 90-day appeal period. Also, non-regulatory Flood Risk Products are now being developed for community use in risk management.
- **FIRM Adoption and Ordinance Review:** Following the appeal period, the Letter of Final Determination (LFD) will be issued (anticipated date December 2016) and the communities will then have only six months to complete the adoption of the new FIRMs into their flood damage prevention ordinance and receive ordinance approvals from PA-DCED and FEMA. For the Pennsylvania model floodplain ordinance, contact Daniel Fitzpatrick, State NFIP Coordinator (see contact information section below). Communities should take this opportunity to implement higher standards if desired, finalize their ordinance updates, and ensure all other flood damage prevention actions comply with the Code of Federal Regulations 60.3, so that the community receives FEMA approval and remains in good standing with the NFIP. If the community does not receive FEMA approval prior to six months after the date of the LFD, then that community will be suspended from the NFIP and will need to work toward reinstatement.
- **FIRMs Effective:** At the effective date (anticipated June 2017), the new FIRMs and FIS 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 Brandywine-Christina Watershed Study, Preliminary FIRMs/FIS reports, and potential mitigation actions from the stakeholders in Chester, Delaware, and Lancaster Counties, 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

- Effective and Preliminary FIRMs, FISs, and digital FIRM Databases are available 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/>
- FEMA Floodplain Management Publications are available at [www.fema.gov/floodplain-management-publications](http://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management-publications).

## Study Contact Information

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