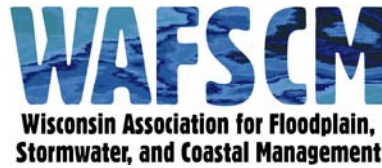

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A newsletter for people concerned with water management issues



October, 2008

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Fellow Association Members:

On numerous occasions over the past few months, I have traveled along State Road 60 from my home in Cedarburg to a company meeting in the Wisconsin Dells, or transported my daughter (and her things) to or from college (she is a student at UW La Crosse). Along the way, I routinely noticed flooded farm fields, high water levels in the Rock River, closed bridges, and inconvenient detours that took me from my desired route. These observations remind me of the extreme rainfall events and severe flooding that occurred throughout Southern Wisconsin during the summer months, and the resulting property damages and disruption to many households and families. As a result, I feel a bit small that I am mostly concerned about losing a few minutes of travel time as I take a necessary detour off SR 60.

If you are not directly involved, it is perhaps human nature to quickly move on following a “natural disaster” and lose interest in the recovery aftermath. One mission of the Wisconsin Association for Floodplain, Stormwater and Coastal Management (WAFSCM), however, is to provide assurance that lessons learned from historic, and occasionally recent, flood events are not lost on those individuals that are charged with developing sound land use policies and enforcing local floodplain regulations. In this manner, the next time we face an extreme rainfall event we can hope to be better prepared, experience reduced property damages, and encounter fewer community disruptions.

Of course, a great way to help achieve this goal and stay current with Wisconsin floodplain management practices and regulations is for interested parties to attend the upcoming WAFSCM Annual Conference being held at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, November 12 to 14, 2008. With assistance from his dedicated planning committee, Program Chairperson Dave Fowler has arranged a terrific conference that includes a Wednesday No-Adverse-Impact (NAI) workshop; a series of technical and informational presentations on Thursday; and a Lake Delton Flood Tour on Friday.

Given recent flooding events and related concerns, WAFSCM is uniquely positioned to provide meaningful support to local community officials and professionals seeking to become better prepared for the next major event. If you are not already active in WAFSCM, please consider it. We look forward to conducting another successful WAFSCM conference and would value your participation. We hope to see you at the Kalahari in November!

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas R. Sear, PE, CFM
Chairperson

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CHANGE IN FLOODS AND FLOODPLAINS “HOW WILL WE RESPOND?”

**WAFSCM Annual Conference
November 12th, 13th, and 14th, 2008
Kalahari Resort and Convention Center**

I am very enthusiastic as we enter our eighth year as an organization. This year the conference theme is “Change in Floods and Floodplains, How Will We Respond?” and it is at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells. We are looking forward to a memorable event and we hope to surpass the 100 participants that we had last year.

The conference is an excellent venue to learn more about stormwater, coastal and floodwater issues at both the state and the national level. This year we are hoping to have several speakers discuss the June flooding that devastated Wisconsin. We also plan to tour the Lake Delton Area which was particularly hit hard by the floods. With the large number of issues surrounding the aftermath of the floods, the presentations should be timely and informative.

We usually have an excellent mix of state, local and federal officials, as well as consultants, as both attendees and presenters. Many participants at the conference take the opportunity to network within the relaxed atmosphere of the conference.

We are planning breakout sessions that will provide an excellent forum to learn about projects and issues that are ongoing here in the state. We are looking for a variety of topics covering coastal, stormwater, and flood management issues. If you would be interested in presenting, please contact Tom Ganfield at tganfield@baxterwoodman.com or (262) 763-7834.

So please mark your calendars for the WAFSCM Annual Conference on November 12th, 13th, and 14th, 2008, at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells. A brochure with registration materials is available at our website www.wi.floods.org.

Dave Fowler
Conference Co-Chairman

NEW FLOOD MAPS BECOME EFFECTIVE FOR 21 MILLION U.S. RESIDENTS

As part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Map Modernization program (Map Mod), new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) for more than 21 million people have or will become effective over the next several months. These maps will affect more than 900 communities in nearly 30 states and include large, metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; and Baltimore, MD.

As the new DFIRMs become effective, flood risk designations for many properties are subject to change. This means that home and business owners may have questions about whether or not they should, or are eligible to, purchase flood insurance. Current policyholders may also have questions about selecting the best product and/or policy rate changes.

As a result, it is important for community officials and insurance agents to know when new flood hazard maps will become effective for their communities and how to appropriately communicate risk. A schedule of map effective dates is posted on FEMA's website at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/st_lfdlist.shtm. Tools for communicating about FEMA's Map Mod program are also available by visiting www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/mm_main.shtm.

FEMA's Map Mod program is a multi-year effort to provide new DFIRMs for 92 percent of the nation's population by the end of Map Mod. The new maps are more reliable, easier-to-use, and more readily available than paper maps.

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WAFSCM AWARD NOMINEES SOUGHT

Gary Korb

At its November conference in Wisconsin Dells, the Wisconsin Association for Floodplain, Stormwater, and Coastal Management would like to present several awards, relying upon the membership for nominations. The Board has acted to establish a Chapter Service Award, a Local Award for Excellence, and would entertain a Lifetime Achievement Award, if appropriate.

The Awards Program was begun in 2006 with presentation of the First Chapter Service Award to Dave Fowler of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, who was instrumental in forming WAFSCM. The Board is anxious to continue and expand upon this recognition.

The **Chapter Service Award** is intended to recognize individuals who, through significant accomplishments and/or long-term efforts, have clearly influenced the work of the Association to improve floodplain, stormwater, or coastal management in Wisconsin.

The **Local Award for Excellence** is intended to recognize an individual, organization, program, governmental unit, or the like, which has contributed outstanding or essential work toward implementing sound floodplain, stormwater, or coastal management.

A **Lifetime Achievement Award** would also be entertained for distinguished and extensive service, normally over the course of a career, toward advancing the cause and/or ideals of best practical floodplain, stormwater, or coastal management. This award may be given annually as warranted.

To make award nominations a fairly easy process which is not cumbersome for members, the following are simply asked for—pertaining to both the nominee and person submitting information (may be one-in-the-same):

Name
Title
Affiliation
Contact information, including telephone and email
Brief description of merit (regarding nominee; no resumes, please)
Statement of familiarity re: the meritorious work (nominator relationship/perspective)

If necessary, the Awards Committee may contact persons submitting nominations for additional information. Please submit by October 20, 2008 (preferably electronically), and feel free to direct any questions to:

Gary Korb, WAFSCM Awards Chair
UW-Extension/SEWRPC
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive
P.O. Box 1607
Waukesha, WI 53187-1607
Phone: 262-547-6721
Fax: 262-547-1103
gkorb@sewrpc.org

Thank you for the consideration on behalf of deserving individuals, groups, and efforts.

FEMA Releases MHIP Version 3.0

FEMA has released the latest version of the Multi-Year Flood Hazard Identification Plan (MHIP), Version 3.0, which details FEMA's plan for prioritizing and delivering modernized flood maps for areas of the United States with the greatest flood risk. MHIP Version 3.0 amends Version 2.0 dated September 2006 and Version 2.5 dated April 2007.

MHIP Version 3.0 provides:

- Detailed tables of flood map production targets;
- Stakeholder input information;
- A summary of FEMA's progress in meeting Key Performance Indicators for the Flood Map Modernization program; and
- Appendices that provide a detailed listing by State and county for all map production activities, both scheduled and completed.

MHIP Version 3.0, as well as previous versions, is available on FEMA's Flood Hazard Mapping Web site at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/mh_main.shtm. Interested parties with questions pertaining to the updated flood map production sequencing in MHIP Version 3.0 are encouraged to contact their appropriate local and State officials, who are working with one of FEMA's 10 Regional Offices.

Source: Ernie Lepore (703) 317-6276

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DEAR EDITOR:

Unfortunately, 2008 is shaping up to become one of the most memorable years experienced in terms of flooding and stormwater damage problems. June rainfall in many Wisconsin locations set records for total amount and/or intensity. Even with dryer periods in July, many riverine locations are still bracing for the next storm which could again send water over the banks to cause further damage and suffering. But are such conditions really so extreme or unexpected?

No, is our contention in the Wisconsin Association for Floodplain, Stormwater, and Coastal Management (WAFSCM). The tragedies do exist, requiring empathy, with the need to both figuratively and literally roll-up-the-shirtsleeves to help. But many of the difficulties could have been expected—sooner or later. It is merely fate that our Association's Annual Conference to discuss water problems and management solutions is scheduled for November 12-14 in Wisconsin Dells, a short distance from the Lake Delton dam failure.

The Wisconsin flooding in 2008 is not "unheard of" or "beyond belief" or the type of event which "could not have been predicted," but flooding which can be expected from time to time, and which has occurred a number of times in the last 15 years (which means most property owners were probably here and probably should remember it). A 100-year flood recurrence event is not something that can be expected every 100 years, as if by schedule. It is the type of event which has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year—and the odds are going up.

Is flooding increasing?

Yes, for a number of reasons, according to our Association of State Floodplain Managers headquartered in Madison. First, changes in rainfall patterns are occurring. It makes no difference if you think it is caused by global warming or something else—the reality is that while average yearly rainfall may remain fairly constant, rain occurs through less frequent, but more intense storms during the year. A storm dropped 12 inches of rain in an area about 10 miles south of Lake Delton in 1993, which caused Devils Lake to overflow for the first time. Less than one year ago, these intense storms occurred in the Vernon County area, causing major flooding, dam failures and community devastation where it occurred again this year, such as Gays Mills.

Secondly, as development changes watersheds by converting farm land and forests to roof tops and big box parking lots, less water soaks in and more rain runs off into our streams and rivers. This increases the amount of

water from each rainfall event in our streams and thus increases the flood heights.

Lastly, and of great importance, is that we sometimes naively manage development to be elevated to yesterday's flood not tomorrow's flood. Because of the changing factors just noted above, floods heights will increase. When a new flood map is produced, it will likely show higher flood levels—this is reality and it is important for communities to use that better data and for property owners to know their true risk and build accordingly.

While many people seem to think it only can flood in the 100-year floodplain shown on a map, there is flood risk above and beyond that relatively common and small floodplain. Just ask the folks who lost their home in Lake Delton—they may have been above the 100-year flood level, but they were not safe from a larger storm. Those storms explained above have occurred and will continue to occur. Each property is subject to a variable risk of flooding, it just depends on how big the flood must be to impact each of them. In fact, portions of a property may have variable risk, depending on the level above the stream or watercourse. Plus, flooding risks can increase with blockages to flow at bridges and culverts which could never be completely projected nor shown on a map.

What can you do to protect your life and property?

Buy flood insurance. Anyone, anywhere, can buy flood insurance as long as their community has joined and complies with the minimal requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). A primary responsibility of your community is public safety, and flood safety is no different than fire or police safety. Insist your community leaders join and comply with the NFIP.

If you live on or anywhere near water, know your flood risk. If your property may be flooded, know how to evacuate you and your family—homes and possessions can be replaced, but life is precious and cannot.

Develop wisely. Avoid building in floodplains, the high risk flood areas. Communities have land that is not at high risk of flooding.

Don't build in a way that pushes flood water on other people's property—that is not a good neighbor policy and may create liability for you.

Do not drive through flood water: this causes the most deaths from floods. Six to 12 inches of water can float any vehicle and moving water will carry away people and vehicles.

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Discourage projects, however tempting to an individual or for a community, that would claim to “maximize the economic benefit, tax base, or number of jobs,” if it means putting people or new development in harms way of a flood.

After the flood water recedes, communities and property owners will consider what they can do to reduce the loss of property or life from the next flood. The most effective solution is to move from or avoid the flood risk areas. Next best is to elevate structures above expected (future) flood levels—this not only protects the structure, but makes flood insurance cheaper. Many communities and property owners have done some of these things and more can do them. Remember, the federal government cannot prevent flooding or make us whole after a flood. Only by accepting personal and community responsibility will we reduce the adverse impacts of flooding.

So this time, let’s not let our collective memories grow short regarding the devastation experienced due to flooding in 2008. If you’d like to learn more about the subjects discussed in this letter, consider attending WAFSCM’s Annual Conference, scheduled for November 12-14 at the Kalahari Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells: “Change...How will we respond?” Included will be workshops, exhibits, and presentations on new stormwater management technologies, flood hazard mitigation, policy updates, and climate change. Local officials are especially encouraged to attend.

For more information, go to www.wi.floods.org, or call:

Sincerely,

Tom Sear
Dave Fowler

Parts of this letter were prepared by Larry Larson, Executive Director of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, a professional non-profit organization (www.floods.org). Mr. Larson has 40 years of professional experience working with 20,000 flood-prone communities, the states, federal agencies and the private sector.

FROM “MILWAUKEE RPI” TO “SWEET WATER TRUST,” THE ROAD TO ETERNITY!

At the 2007 WAFSCM conference, you may have attended a session where start-up activities of Milwaukee’s Regional Partnership Initiative (or Milwaukee RPI) were presented. Much has transpired in the past year as the group has evolved into the Sweet Water Trust! This article serves as an update to that effort, and provides information about how you can get involved.



As we told you at the conference, the group will achieve its primary purposes by prioritizing, supporting and facilitating the implementation of cost-effective projects that result in measurable improvements in our water resources. With membership open to all, the group is becoming a regional force for stewardship of water resources in Southeastern Wisconsin, advising and cooperatively implementing projects throughout the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds. Guiding the future work efforts of the group is the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) update to the Regional Water Quality Management Plan for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds. That document provides the overall framework for future watershed restoration plans as well as early-out activities of Sweet Water Trust members, and can be accessed at www.sewrpc.org/waterqualityplan/chapters.asp

Watershed planning efforts to identify the best structure for the group ramped up over the fall of 2007 and winter of 2008, with an Organizing Committee formed to consider how Milwaukee RPI should be structured and governed. In successful fulfillment of their obligation, the Organizing Committee issued and posted to their website a draft set of Policies and Procedures in April 2008. Also in April, the new group was highlighted at the annual watershed planning conference of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) and SEWRPC. To establish foundations for a culture of participation, some 300+ conference attendees voted on a new name for the Milwaukee RPI – the name Southeastern WI Watersheds Trust (“Sweet Water Trust”) was selected as the winner.

An Executive Steering Council (ESC) for the Trust was formed mid-2008 and has begun deliberating in fulfillment of its lofty mission. The ESC is chaired by Pat Marchese and includes representatives from all sectors of the regional economy, including government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Simultaneously, Pat is also facilitating a group of NGOs that are currently implementing six initiatives, including water quality monitoring, supporting future watershed action plans,

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planning for community involvement/communications, developing innovative strategies, considering and implementing stormwater best management practices, and fully integrating with other Sweet Water Trust activities. These initiatives are supported by a Joyce Foundation grant.

Opportunities for your involvement include participation on the Science committee or on one or more Watershed Action Teams. Both levels of participation will guide and inform the preparation of watershed restoration plans piloted in the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River watersheds.

- The Science Committee is where your special expertise may be of use. According to Pat, it is through the Science Committee that the group will “help develop local technical and scientific expertise in water resources and water resource- related habit.” The Science Committee is forming now, and will continue evolving over the course of the year to come.
- Watershed Action Teams are grassroots-level collaborations that will provide input to the watershed planning process to implement future science-based, cost-effective recommendations. Watershed Action Teams will also play a role in implementing solutions. Watershed Action Teams for the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River watersheds will begin forming in late 2008, and will continue evolving over the course of the year to come.

The Sweet Water Trust fills an unmet need in this region. There have been many good efforts at improving our water resources throughout the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds in years past, but coordination is in order. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, traditional single-agency approaches to water resource improvements have been subject to increasing criticism and calls for significant reform. Reforms to traditional approaches to improving water resources necessarily focus on all sources of pollutants within watersheds (regardless of the types of sources and political boundaries from which they flow). They also involve collaboration and consensual decision-making. The Sweet Water Trust’s value-added reform is to foster the necessary synergy and efficiency among water resource projects and decision-making. Because money available to local governments, non-profit organizations, and household budgets is generally tight, the Sweet Water Trust provides an answer to a call for fiscal efficiency and effective actions, enhancing this region’s strong tradition of water resource improvements.

A first step to your participation in these efforts is joining. By joining the Sweet Water Trust, you recognize there are unmet water resource needs in the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds (including nearshore Lake Michigan), and you commit to collaborating on solutions. Your level of involvement is your choice!

To join, go here: <http://swwtwater.org> and print out the MOU. Please sign and return all MOUs (and direct questions) to:

MMSD
Bernadette Berdes
260 West Seeboth Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204
bberdes@mmsd.com

Authorized MOU signatories will be listed at the web-site, and you will be added to the mailing list and provided with Sweet Water Trust updates electronically.