

Action Plan

Category 7 – Mapping and Modeling

Action 7.4 – Update Oxon Run Flood Insurance Rate Maps



Overview and Implementation Strategy:

To better understand the flood risk in the Oxon Run area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and DC Silver Jackets team conducted modeling and mapping to capture the flow of water more accurately throughout the watershed. As a result of this effort, the District now has access to flood risk maps that are more accurate than the existing Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) produced by FEMA. DOEE will apply to FEMA for a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) to officially update the FEMA FIRMs for the area.

Impacted City Ward/ANC:

- Ward 8
- ANC 8B, 8C, 8D, 8E

Lead Agency:

- DOEE

Supporting Agencies, Roles/Commitments:

- DOEE
- FEMA (review of LOMR application and revision of FIRMs)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (potential revision of modeling to achieve “tie-in” with Prince George’s County, MD maps)

Background:

Impact of this Effort on Task Force Goal:

- This effort updates flood maps using more accurate modeling. It bolsters flood readiness by providing a more accurate depiction of areas most at risk for flooding. The updated maps will also reduce the financial impact of federal insurance requirements by reducing the number of properties in the floodplain. Updated and more accurate modeling does not always reduce the number of properties in a floodplain, but in this case it does. While outside the updated flood area, there may still be flood risk and property owners are encouraged and able to get flood insurance at more affordable rates than those within the floodplain.

Historical Context:

- To better understand the flood risk in the Oxon Run area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Silver Jackets team conducted modeling and mapping to capture the flow of water more accurately throughout the watershed.
- This modeling and mapping project was initiated to support a proposed stream naturalization project by producing a more accurate depiction of existing conditions.

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Equity

How does this action assist vulnerable communities?

- The underlying reason for this action is to provide the best and most accurate data to District residents.
- The action does have an equity impact as the area that needs to be updated is also an area with high social vulnerability. Each of the Census tracts bordering the Watts Branch floodplain in Ward 7 and the Oxon Run floodplain in Ward 8 is ranked as having a high or moderate-to-high level of vulnerability to disasters by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). The median SVI Score of Census tracts in Wards 7 and 8 intersecting 100-year floodplains is 0.829, while the District as a whole has a median SVI of 0.5029. Scores closer to 1.0 indicate higher vulnerability.
- Through adoption of the updated mapping, the number of structures in the 100-year floodplain drops by 38% (from 89 to 55), and the number of structures in the combined 100-year and 500-year floodplains drops by 42% (from 146 to 85). The immediate result is that it will remove the federal flood insurance requirement from the homes that were removed from the 100-year floodplain, helping to make housing more affordable.

Timeline:

Fiscal Year	Responsible Agency	Action
2022	DOEE	Coordinate with Prince George’s County, MD to assess interest in coordinated LOMR application.
2022	USACE	Potentially revise modeling to achieve “tie-in” with Prince George’s County, MD maps or adjust timeline of update to synchronize with the County’s map update schedule.
2023	DOEE/USACE	Perform GIS analysis to identify addresses of District residents that may be affected by the map update.
2023	DOEE	Conduct outreach via mailings and newspaper publication.
2023	DOEE	Submit Letter of Map Revision application (MT-2 Form) to FEMA.

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Budget:

Total Estimated Cost: \$3,000

Cost Breakdown by Phase / Action:

- \$ 2,000 for mailing to property owners
- \$ 1,000 for newspaper publication

Long Term Budget Requirements: None

Public Outreach and Input :

Public outreach & engagement approach/actions:

- A public notice will be published in a newspaper in accordance with 44 CFR 65.12. The updated floodplain maps will be posted for public viewing using the DC Flood Risk Tool (<http://dcfloodrisk.org/>). Residents will also be able to contact DOEE staff via phone or email to request a copy of updated map layers at their property. DOEE will also use mailers to affected addresses as a strategy to raise awareness.
- In order for FEMA to adopt new floodplain maps for the District or any community in the United States, the new maps must be created according to standard methodologies. These standard methodologies only allow maps to be based on *historical* flood risk, and by law, are not able to account for the likely increases in flood risk due to climate change. DOEE and agency partners will need to be careful about how this map update is conveyed – as DOEE expects flood risk in this area to increase as a result of more frequent and severe rainstorms. This could be a potentially confusing message as the map updates will show a decrease in flood risk, which only reflects a decrease in the risk as historically calculated, and does not account for climate change induced risks.

What were the Public Comments of relevance to this Action?

Public Comments on this Action Plan from July/Aug 2022

- From the DC Commission on Climate Change and Resilience: We offer the Commission's support for proposed public outreach activity in the Oxon Run and Watts Branch mapping updates.

From the Sierra Club: In Actions 7.3 & 7.4, Sierra Club questions how the U.S. Army Corps and the DC Silver Jackets team — those responsible for the updated maps — define “historical flooding;” and what year constitutes the cut off for historical? Also, for Watts Branch, how does more accurate modeling necessarily lead to a decrease in the number of properties in the floodplain? Can it not also conceivably result in an increase? Sierra Club understands a smaller number, if accurate, is desirable because it means that fewer houses will be burdened with costs associated with the federal flood insurance requirement or other floodproofing costs.