

# Floodplain Management Program Notes

By

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## Food for thought

Many years ago, soon after we moved to Denver, my wife and I took a series of walking tours of historic Denver neighborhoods. During one of those walks we came across a man who was renovating an old warehouse into street level commercial spaces and upstairs lofts. One of our fellow walkers asked the man what motivated him to preserve that historic building. His response: "To make money." I've never forgotten that, and it's a useful lesson for floodplain managers.

Developers want to make money. If you can show them how to make money while preserving the natural and beneficial values of the floodplain they will often accept that. We are seeing more and more development proposals in which the floodplain is set aside for open space, trails, habitat, etc.; and the developer markets them as amenities to his project. Not only are floodplains preserved but the brain damage resulting from confrontations with developers is significantly reduced as well.

## LOMC pilot project

On July 1, 2001 we began a pilot project with FEMA to assume the responsibility to review requests for Letters of Map Change for the 32 communities within the District that are participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. We are now six months into the second year of the project. For more information please see the cover story of this issue.

## Broomfield DFIRM conversion

Last year we also tried our hand at converting a paper Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) to a FEMA Digital FIRM (DFIRM) format. A paper describing that effort is on our web site. Go to [udfcd.org](http://udfcd.org) and click the Broomfield DFIRM link.

## FEMA map modernization

President George W. Bush's proposed budget for fiscal year 2003 included \$300 million in new money for FEMA's map modernization effort. Unfortunately, Congress did not act on

FEMA's budget (among many others) prior to adjourning for the year.

At the time they left town the Senate budget proposal included the full \$300 million and the House version stood at \$200 million. As this is written we have no idea what the new Congress will do or when.

In anticipation of some significant level of funding, FEMA asked each state to prepare a Map Modernization Implementation Plan (MMIP). Colorado's plan was prepared by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (COWCB) under the direction of Brian Hyde and Tom Browning. The key part of the plan from our standpoint is that the District would be given the responsibility for map modernization for the seven counties within the District.

## The year in review

We continue to be just about maxed out on development referrals, and it is a constant struggle to assure that new development doesn't increase the flood hazard potential within the District.

Our maintenance eligibility program continues to flourish under David Mallory's direction. See David's column elsewhere in this issue.

Kevin Stewart continues to assure that we have the best possible flood detection and warning system, and he continues to be in demand as an expert in this field (see his list of professional activities on page 22 and his column in this issue). If you check out our web site at [www.udfcd.org](http://www.udfcd.org)

you will also see Kevin's handiwork.

## Implementation efforts

Implementation of portions of our master plans, particularly regional detention facilities, is always a challenge. We continue to have some successes that I would like to highlight.

We completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) of alternatives for the Irondale Gulch watershed within the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA). The comment period is complete and we are expecting a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) at any time. The FONSI will allow us to move forward with intergovernmental agreements between the District, Denver and RMA; and between the District, Commerce City, Adams County and RMA for the construction, operation and maintenance of these facilities on the RMA.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance we received from Tim Kilgannon and Tom Jackson in guiding us through the EA and FONSI process.

Denver, Aurora and the District have agreed to fund the final design and construction drawings for a detention pond called Silverado II, which is to be located on Pena Boulevard right-of-way.



Last year I wrote about the completion of the Green Valley Ranch Golf Course detention facility. Here is an aerial view showing the road embankment that creates the detention, the creek, a water quality pond for local runoff and portions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> holes.

We anticipate that a major developer in the area will construct a significant portion of the pond once the design is complete. We are also talking to two other developers about building three additional ponds called for in the master plan.

The Parkfield developers, represented by Ken Schmidt, have continued to implement portions of the Irondale master plan. In 2002, a connection was completed between the RMA and Parkfield Lake, a spillway was completed at the lake, and an inlet channel was partially constructed.

### **Floodplain delineation**

We did not complete any flood hazard area delineation (FHAD) studies this year. However, I'm reviewing two drafts as this is written. Both FHADs should be published in early 2003. One is for Cherry Creek from the reservoir to the District's upstream boundary. The other is for Little Dry Creek and Tributaries in Arapahoe County. Both are being completed as part of outfall systems planning efforts for the two watersheds.

We began a FHAD for Ralston and Leyden Creeks in Arvada in order to account for the effects of the new Leyden Lake Dam project on the downstream floodplains. We are also doing a FHAD for Kinney Creek and Fonder Draw in Douglas County as part of an outfall systems planning study. In 2003 I hope to begin re-studies of the South Platte River through Adams County and Clear Creek through Adams County.

All of these studies are prepared in digital form compatible with FEMA's Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) specifications. This will make it easier to add these floodplains to the DFIRMs.

### **Good examples photo album**

We are continuing efforts to put more information on our web site. One project in the works is a photo album of good projects. We are often asked for examples of good projects by developers and their consultants, and we thought that the web would be the best way to distribute this information,

particularly as new projects are completed.

The photo album will have chapters on drop structures, pedestrian/bicycle bridges, low flow channels, formal channels, stormwater detention facilities, integrating the floodplain into a development, and multiple use facilities. As this is written there are photos in the first two chapters. We will be adding to the other chapters as time and good photos permit. To access the photo album, go to our web site and click the "Good Examples" button.

### **Activity summary map**

One of our publications is our "Activity Summary" that briefly describes the District's programs. It also includes a large map that identifies all District studies completed or in progress. Unfortunately, we only publish the Activity Summary in January of odd numbered years, and the information regarding District studies is more and more out of date the further you get from the publication date.

To overcome that problem we are going to experiment with putting the map on the web site where we can frequently update the status of all our studies. We envision a process where the user can click on a given drainageway or watershed on the map and instantly obtain all the information we have on that drainageway or watershed, including completed study titles and

## **Parkfield Project Photos**



**Parkfield Lake outlet channel.**



**Parkfield Lake spillway.**



**Parkfield Lake inlet channel forebay.**

dates, on-going studies, scheduled studies, and, perhaps, construction information as well. The map should be on our web site the first quarter of 2003.