

Reclamation Manual

Policy

Subject:	Floodplain Management
Purpose:	To (1) reduce the vulnerability of the nation to loss of life and property and the disruption of societal and economic pursuits caused by flooding or facility operations; and (2) sustain, restore, or enhance the natural resources, ecosystems, and other functions of the floodplain. The benefits of this Policy are to ensure the Bureau of Reclamation's compliance with Federal laws, protect life, and preserve the functions of floodplains.
Authority:	Reclamation Project Act of 1902 (32 Stat. 388), as amended and supplemented; Reclamation Safety of Dams Act of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-578), as amended; National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Pub. L. 91-190; 83 Stat. 852), as amended; Executive Order (E.O.) 11988 Floodplain Management; E.O. 11990 Protection of Wetlands; Energy Policy Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102-486); Principles and Requirements for Federal Investments in Water Resources (Council on Environmental Quality, March 2013); Federal Water Project Recreation Act (Pub. L. 89-72; 79 Stat. 213), as amended; Migratory Bird Conservation Act (45 Stat. 1222), as amended; Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Pub. L. 83-566); Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (Pub. L. 102-240); Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (Pub. L. 110-114); 520 Departmental Manual Chapter 1 (Floodplain Management and Wetlands Protection Policy and Responsibilities) and Chapter 2 (Floodplain Management and Wetlands Protection Program Requirements); and project-specific authorizations.
Approving Official:	Commissioner
Contact:	Environmental Compliance Division (84 53000)

1. **Introduction.** Reclamation, both independently and in partnership with others, will pursue and encourage appropriate use of floodplains. In doing so, Reclamation will seek to (1) reduce the vulnerability of the nation to loss of life and property and the disruption of societal and economic pursuits caused by flooding or facility operations, and (2) sustain, restore, or enhance the natural resources, ecosystems, and other functions of the floodplain.
2. **Applicability.** This Policy applies to Reclamation staff responsible for the management of floodplains.
3. **Definitions.**
 - A. **Floodplains.** Floodplains are the low lands adjoining the channel of a river, stream, watercourse, ocean, lake, or other body of water that have been or may be inundated by

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floodwater. Floodplain lands and adjacent waters combine to form a complex, dynamic physical and biological system that supports a variety of natural resource and societal functions.

- B. **Floodplain Management.** Floodplain management is a continuous process of decisionmaking and subsequent implementation of those decisions with the goal being appropriate use of the nation's floodplains. Appropriate use is any activity or action that is compatible with both the acceptable risks to human life and property from floods, and the floodplain's functions.
 - C. **Functions (Natural) of Floodplains.** Functions of floodplains include, but are not limited to, natural moderation of floods; fish, wildlife, and plant resources and habitat; groundwater recharge; and water quality maintenance.
 - D. **Nonstructural Measures.** Nonstructural measures alleviate flood losses by modifying the susceptibility of land, people, and property to flood damage or by modifying the impact of flooding. Nonstructural measures include, but are not limited to, flood warning, flood proofing, acquisition, relocation, and dikes around individual properties. Nonstructural measures can also be used to acquire, perpetuate, restore, and enhance the natural capability of wetlands and floodplains to retain excessive floodwaters, improve water quality, sustain stream flows, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.
 - E. **Structural Measures.** Structural measures modify floods and associated erosion and sedimentation. Structural measures include, but are not limited to, floodwater retarding structures, channel work, levees and dikes, floodways, floodwater diversions, sediment basins, grade stabilization structures, and streambank stabilization.
 - F. **Uses of Floodplains.** Floodplain uses include, but are not limited to, stormwater management; erosion control; open space; natural beauty; opportunities for scientific study, outdoor education, recreation, and cultural preservation; and compatible economic utilization of floodplain resources by human society.
4. **Responsibilities.**
- A. **Commissioner.** The Commissioner is responsible for establishing policy regarding floodplain management.
 - B. **Regional Directors and Director, Policy and Administration.** The regional directors and the Director, Policy and Administration are responsible for ensuring compliance with policies regarding floodplain management.
5. **Floodplain Management.** Reclamation's floodplain management activities will seek to balance the competing uses of floodplains in a way that maximizes benefits to society. Emphasis will be given to: (1) utilizing cost- effective nonstructural approaches to reduce potential flood damage and enhance the functions of floodplains, (2) encourage pursuit of

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opportunities to operate facilities or undertake activities that benefit functions of floodplains, (3) approach watershed flow management and flood risk assessments on an integrated systems basis (i.e., considering watershed hydrology, river hydraulics, channel and basin geomorphology, river mechanics and sedimentation, land use, water quality, ecosystems, and functions of the floodplain) and (4) assisting, through partnering, development and implementation of community-based sustainable solutions to floodplain management problems that avoid repetitive losses and fiscal outlays. This emphasis is not intended to totally exclude structural approaches in accomplishing the objectives. Reclamation's floodplain management responsibilities include, but are not limited to flow management, channel maintenance, control of floodplain encroachment, hazard mitigation on critical infrastructure, environmental preservation and restoration, emergency management and preparedness, public safety, flood recovery, and other activities and actions involving use of floodplains. Reclamation's activities will be managed according to applicable directives addressing these issues in the Reclamation Manual, Directive and Standard, *Floodplain Management*, CMP 01-01. Example applications are discussed in the *Floodplain Management Guidelines for Implementing Executive Order 11988* (Federal Register, Volume 43, 6030). This includes notification and early public involvement in any floodplain management as required by E.O. 11988 and 520 DM 1 and 2.

RECLAMATION MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Effective Date: _____

Release No. _____

Ensure all employees needing this information are provided a copy of this release.

Reclamation Manual Release Number and Subject

Summary of Changes

NOTE: This Reclamation Manual release applies to all Reclamation employees. When an exclusive bargaining unit exists, changes to this release may be subject to the provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

Filing instructions

Remove Sheets

Insert Sheets

All Reclamation Manual releases are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman/>

Filed by: _____

Date: _____