

Fairfield Citizens for Flood Control Reform

The goal of this handout is to offer Fairfield residents information on our review of the Governors Flood Committee Report (GFCR), which may be helpful in focusing in on key questions and comments for greater community impact. This info is being provided to assist and add to your current opinions and thoughts....our town is your town, and our common goal is to modify and implement flood control projects.

Format of this Doc – the related section of report is referenced, with a summary of the section. The points underneath are the questions and comments provided for use in meeting.

Executive Summary Section: The overview summarizes 15 recommendations to help minimize & mitigate the impact of 10 to 100 yrs events as there is no “silver bullet” solution for flooding. Flooding is a long term problem that has been made worse by continued development in the floodplains. Any large scale solution, such as Flood Tunnel will cost Federal & State billions of dollars which they will not embrace.

1. *Why did the report focus on **minimizing and mitigating the “after effects”** of flooding vs. **focusing on developing an improved flood water management system?***

2. *The Water Resources Development Act of 1986 authorized several projects in Passaic River Basin, with the focus on physical and mechanical changes*

for short term and long term solutions, from localized tributary (stream) changes for short term floods, to the Passaic River Main Stem flood protection.

3. *Cost is noted as issue, yet per US Army Corps of Engineers (Passaic River Main stem & Tributaries, NJ, Flood Damage Reduction & Restoration Projects, March 2011); the total losses are over \$4.5 billion dollars.*

4. *The Dam on the Ramapo River in Oakland prevented \$2.6 million in damages in Oakland following the April 2007 storm which clearly demonstrates physical changes can have impact.*

Completing all of the basin projects can have protection up to the 100 yr flood event, and reduce the impact of even larger floods.

5. *The entire cost of the project as presented in the 1995 report is **\$1.87 billion** – Federal share is 75% or \$1.39 billion, with State share of 25% or **\$480 million**, which can be substantially reduced if state utilizes credits for purchases of wetlands and watershed lands. ***it is stated in report an updated cost is needed for current price level.*

6. **With the recent GFCR report stating that \$3.4 billion be allocated for a 10 yr flood way buyout of 6300 residential properties, why wouldn't the Corps plan that would protect against a 100 yr flood and reduce the impact of even larger floods be a more effective and cost efficient use of funds?**

Recent Flooding: The 7 Major rivers, Whippany, Rockaway, Pompton,

Pequannock, Wanaque, Ramapo and Saddle River all feed into the PASSAIC RIVER. State land use decisions to develop in flood plains, with a loss of impervious coverage increase runoff and sediment loading. This ultimately results in property losses, economic impact, and most importantly puts Health and Safety at risk. **The Central Basin section (Fairfield, Lincoln Park, and Wayne) experiences the HIGHEST flood damage because of their extensive development along streams, floodwater flow from upstream to “natural storage areas in the Central Basin”, and finally due to FLAT stream slopes.**

1. *What if anything has been done to help remedy this situation?*

2. *Which agency approves the development or use of floodplains? **The DEP.***

Why doesn't the state impose a moratorium on all new development within the floodplain? Why is the state putting the burden on the local municipalities?

3. **What are FILL CREDITS and why do they exist?** *If that theory is working why did the state change the rules for them?*

Has the Corps, DEP, or others actually gone to the area of Two Bridges for example and observed the flow conditions?

4. *Did you know observations have been documented where the Pompton River is actually **PUSHING the Passaic River BACKWARDS?***

5. *Is it feasible to think that the flow velocity and river merge at this location may be contributing to the Flood*

Conditions? Is this why homes that are 1–2 miles from the river are being flooded?

6. Would this explain why our area waits 24 to 36 hrs for the Passaic River to crest, THEN FLOOD THE TOWN, with upstream water...as stated in the report...central basin is a "natural storage area for upstream".

7. Recommend a modification to the merge at Two Bridges to re-orient the Pompton flow to join and naturally increase the Passaic River flow in Fairfield and upstream would have a positive impact on a large scale flood area.

8. Recommend that the Corps and DEP come to FAIRFIELD and review the conditions and observations.

9. The overall Passaic River Main Stem project, that has been proposed by the Corps, would provide comprehensive water management and a flood control system which would handle the water dropped into the Central and Lower Basins and eliminate the damage caused today.

Buyouts: Are a valuable method of Hazard Mitigation and must be supported by communities to reduce the risk of future disasters, however Federal dollars are limited. Programs are being developed for a partnership with DEP Green & Blue acres, along with NJOEM to then match with FEMA on Severe Repetitive Loss programs.

1. Buyouts are a valuable tool in the toolbox and should be supported by all communities where a particular home/business has been impacted with

repetitive flooding to eliminate the continued financial and emotional stress.

2. Buyouts are also being used as a Solution for the Lack of Action to address the Flood Control system in NJ. Why should residents and businesses whom never had flooding or are 1–2 miles from the river have to have their lives turned upside down 3 times in the last 4 years because of a lack of action by both the state and federal governments and their elected representatives?

3. As reported in 2006 by Scott Fallon of The Record, 3 major anti-flooding projects that affect parts of Bergen, Passaic, Hudson and Morris counties are expected to begin this fall. The three active projects are:

(1) A flood buyout plan in Wayne, spending \$5.1 million state and federal funds to buyout Hoffman Grove, a neighborhood of 122 summer cottages turned year-round residences along the Pompton River. Supporters of the plan, including Wayne Mayor Scott Rumana, Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., D-Paterson and an Army Corps of Engineers official believe it will have minimal impact on the region.

(2) The Pompton Lake Dam's two massive floodgates to help control flooding along the Ramapo River for \$22 million, will mitigate flooding for only 350 homes in Oakland, Wayne and Pompton Lakes, said John O'Connor, the dam's project manager for the Army Corps of Engineers
(3) Reconstructing the Rutherford Tide Gates to prevent flooding along Route 17.

"Yes, we're going to take our residents out of harm's way, but it doesn't deal globally with the issue," Rumana said. "Buyouts can only go so far. We could never afford to buy out Willowbrook Mall, but it sits right there. [Buyouts are] a piece in the puzzle, but we clearly know we need to do a lot more."

A comprehensive plan to cut flooding in the basin would cost billions, but would be more effective than town-by-town buyout plans, said Paul Tumminello, who has overseen a number of anti-flooding projects in North Jersey for the Army Corps of Engineers.

Such big-ticket projects include installing flood walls along the river banks, widening and deepening the river and building the much-maligned Passaic River flood tunnel.

The \$1.8 billion, 21-mile tunnel that would divert floodwaters to Newark Bay was **authorized by Congress in 1990**, but went nowhere **after losing support of local and federal leaders.**

Tumminello thinks it's still a viable option. "If we did the studies all over again, [the tunnel] may still be the best plan," he said.

Rumana, Pascrell and others established a regional task force last year to be more effective when lobbying the government for anti-flood funds. Fifteen towns joined last year, but the response since then has been lukewarm. In the same Corps report noted before, the updated analysis in 1988 from flood way to 100 yr plans, it was stated that **none of the buyout plans are economically justified.**