



NFIP/CRS UPDATE

July / August 2016

Success with CRS Communities Share their Stories on new Website

Last year, in celebration of 25 years of operation, the CRS team began collecting information about ways in which the CRS has helped communities achieve specific kinds of success—beyond discounts in flood insurance premiums. The initial idea was to find 25 such stories—one for each year of the CRS. We know there are many more success stories out there, but because we have met and exceeded that first goal, we are pleased now to unveil the new website, “Success with CRS.” The site features a collection of some ways communities have found to minimize flood damage, maximize community resilience, and achieve other local goals through the CRS. The hope is that other communities, CRS Users Groups, and others can learn from and be motivated by each other’s experiences.

“Success with CRS” features short articles based on interviews with local CRS Coordinators, highlighting some of the notable ways in which the CRS has helped their communities. A drop-down menu leads to a selection of quotes from local elected officials, testifying to the value of the CRS. The stories are arranged among several categories of “success,” for example,

- Reducing the amount of property susceptible to flood damage;
- Generating local political support for the community floodplain management program;
- Building new partnerships, both within and outside the community;
- Protecting the natural resources of riverine and coastal floodplains;
- Building credibility for and awareness of the local program to manage the flood hazard.

The Success with CRS website will be an ongoing, growing feature, and we welcome new contributions, suggestions, and comments. There is a place on the site for communities to indicate their willingness to be interviewed for an article. Check it out at www.CRSresources.org/success, and see the next page for a sample story. ≡ ≡ ≡

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Success with CRS

This month: A snapshot of the numerous floodplain management and CRS activities being carried out in Grand Prairie, Texas. For more details, see <http://www.gptx.org>. For more stories, see the Success with CRS website at www.CRSresources.org/success.

The CRS helps Grand Prairie avoid Flood Damage

“We’ve always had flooding,” explains Stephanie Griffin, Floodplain Administrator for Grand Prairie, Texas, “but improvements over the last 20 to 30 years have helped tremendously in reducing flood losses in our city. And the Community Rating System was one of the major factors that encouraged this to happen.”

This community of about 183,000 people lies in the heavily urbanized metropolitan area between Dallas and Fort Worth. Johnson Creek, a tributary of the Trinity River, runs through the city’s 81-square-mile jurisdiction, creating a 13-mile stretch of floodprone area with a long history of flooding. Urbanization over the last several decades has brought localized street flooding into the mix, complicating the flood hazard. In all, about one-third of the community lies in the floodplain, including several hundred homes.

Minimizing Vulnerability

“We use a combination of floodplain management tools,” says Griffin. Open space work is dovetailed with stormwater management by keeping some city-owned property in recreational use, such as softball fields. “Because they have no buildings, these areas aren’t susceptible to damage from flooding and that minimizes community-wide damage,” she notes. What’s more, they serve as retention and detention basins during flooding, safely storing the water temporarily to alleviate overflows in other places.

Grand Prairie earns CRS credit points for the open spaces, the stormwater management, and the drainage system facilities.

Over time the city has made numerous improvements in the management of its system for conveying both floodwaters and stormwater and to its local regulations. Many of the city’s rules for the floodprone areas exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program, qualifying for CRS credit.

According to Romin Khavari, P.E., CFM, City Engineer with over 31 years of experience with Grand Prairie—and recipient of the 2012 CRS Award for Excellence—“the city continues to make improvements through current updating of the previous drainage master plans and identifying innovative approaches towards solving drainage challenges. A decade ago, Grand Prairie had 43 severe repetitive flood loss properties. As of April 2016, it is down to one!”

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“Grand Prairie’s participation in the CRS has proven to be a valuable tool in preserving property—both private and public—by reducing the occurrence of flood damage. It has significantly reduced the cost of privately purchased flood insurance and reduced the number of flood insurance claims for home and business owners.”

—Greg Giessner
Grand Prairie City Council, Place 8

CRS help Grand Prairie reduce Flood Damage (cont.)

Grand Prairie has conducted hydrologic and hydraulic modeling for all of its watersheds. The model outputs show existing floodplain conditions as well as the projected conditions when the area is fully developed. Construction must be two feet above flood levels expected under existing conditions or one foot above those levels under future conditions, whichever is higher. The city-wide drainage master plans also include erosion zone setbacks.

Advanced Public Outreach

Grand Prairie is no stranger to active outreach programs. “But the CRS’s new Program for Public Information has caused us to step up our efforts in this area,” Griffin says.

The city formed a Program for Public Information Committee, engaging lenders, insurance agents, the public at large, school districts, and three city staff members. Under the Committee’s direction annual letters—in both English and Spanish—are sent to homeowners and renters in the floodplain, reminding them about flood insurance. A brochure on flood safety and flood insurance is also produced, and the city has a website presence for its floodplain management program. “I’d say that, because of the CRS and the PPI activity, we now have a vastly improved outreach program,” notes Griffin.

Along with other communities in the Dallas-Forth Worth area, Grand Prairie participates in a North Texas CRS Users Group that meets every other month to watch CRS webinars on various topics, discuss their common interests in floodplain management and the CRS, and provide input and feedback on CRS-related activities.

Grand Prairie holds a Class 5 in the CRS, and is currently one of the best-rated CRS communities in Texas, earning a 25% reduction in flood insurance premiums for its residents. “Overall,” Griffin says, “the motivation provided by the CRS and its program activities have greatly reduced flooding in our community.”

“Through our proactive and innovative approaches to address drainage challenges, the current goal of the City of Grand Prairie is to enhance its efforts through the CRS and improve its CRS rating to a Class 4—all in service to our community and citizens,” Khavari adds. ≡ ≡ ≡



Care and maintenance of retention areas within Grand Prairie, Texas, allow stormwater and flood waters to be stored and released more slowly into the drainage system. At left: an overgrown and clogged channel. At right: the same area after proper maintenance.

CRS Recertifications are Coming Up

October is the annual recertification deadline for the Community Rating System. In August, ISO/CRS Specialists send each community a detailed list of the activities for which they are receiving CRS credit. Some communities will have this year's recertification based on the 2007 *Coordinator's Manual*. However, those communities that have been visited recently and verified under the 2013 *Coordinator's Manual* will receive a new set of activity statements as part of their annual recertification. Some of the more common trouble spots for communities are discussed below.

- **Annual Reports** Activities 330, 510, and 610 require an annual report. Your customized recertification form will request a report if you have credit for these activities. For Activity 330, under the 2007 *Coordinator's Manual* we will be looking for a report on your outreach program strategy (OPS). Under the 2013 *Coordinator's Manual*, we will be looking for a report on your Program for Public Information (PPI). Both editions of the *Coordinator's Manual* require an annual progress report if you have credit for Activity 510 FMP, Activity 510 RLAA, or Activity 610.
- **Permit Lists and Elevation Certificates** If your community is now using the 2013 *Coordinator's Manual*, your recertification will ask for a list of building permits and copies of Elevation Certificates for all new construction and substantial improvements in your community since your last CRS visit. Be sure your permit list and copies of the Elevation Certificates match.
- **Outreach Projects** You may be requested to provide copies of outreach projects or the annual publicity completed during the year for Activities 320, 330, 360, 501 (repetitive loss areas), 540, and 610.
- **Reports** If you have credit under Activity 610, you may be asked to provide a report from the local emergency manager about the annual exercise or drill of the emergency response plan, lessons learned from implementing the plan in an emergency or disaster, and the updated list of critical facilities affected by flooding.

One more tip: Unless the statement on the recertification form (AW-214 under the 2007 *Coordinator's Manual* or CC-213 under the 2013 *Coordinator's Manual*) requires you to attach or provide some type of documentation, please do not attach or provide anything. All you need to do is put your initials next to the activity, signifying that your community is still conducting that particular activity.

Also, check out the webinar, "Preparing for the Annual CRS Recertification," which will be held September 7, 2016. See www.CRSresources.org/training for more information.

If you wish to submit your recertification electronically, please feel free to do so via e-mail with attachments or by submitting information on a CD or USB drive. Just make sure the documents are appropriately marked to correspond with the activities. ≡ ≡ ≡

Debbie's Dish . . . on CRS Users Groups

Debbie Cahoon Vascik, CFM
Users Groups Liaison

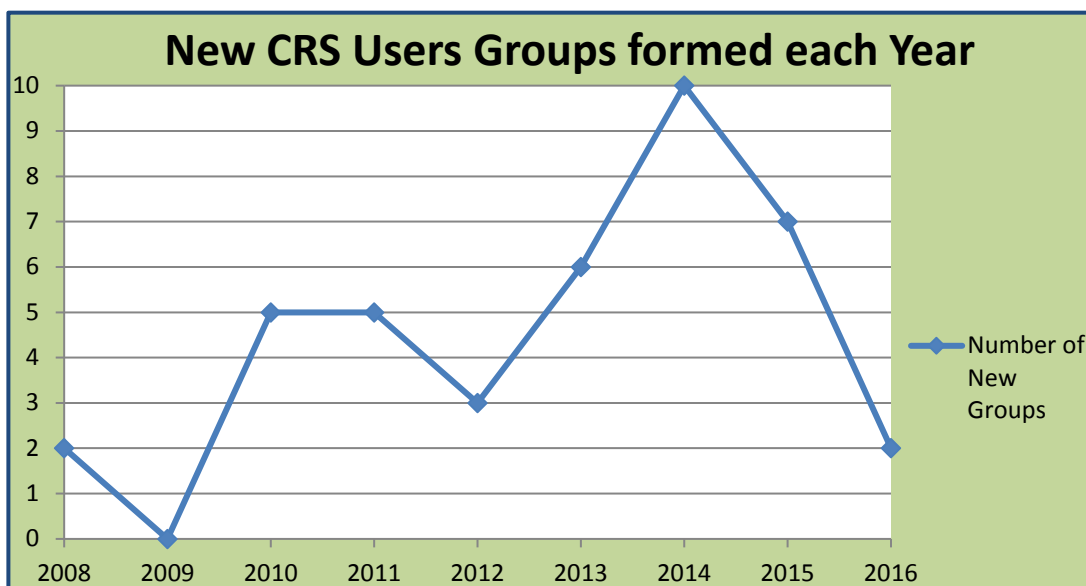
Part of a Movement

I was recently asked to speak at a CRS Users Group meeting via teleconference call. I love it when that happens. It gives me an opportunity to really feel as though I am a part of these CRS Users Groups, aside from the emails that go back and forth. Plus, I get to put voices to names I've been communicating with for years.

I called in, gave a little background about myself, and talked about everything from meeting topics to ideas for increasing attendance. I also highlighted what other groups in the country are doing, such as newsletters, websites, and regional Programs for Public Information (PPIs). It occurred to me in that moment that we're all a part of a movement. "Movement" seems to be a popular term these days. People want to feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves, that their purpose has meaning, and that what they do has lasting and positive effects. That's exactly what CRS Users Groups do. They band communities together to broaden that "movement" thinking even more, they strengthen connections when communities have been getting by with only bridges, and they give a louder voice to people who have something to say.

When I started thinking about this CRS Users Group movement, I had to go back to the beginning to see its progress. The National Flood Insurance Program started in 1968, and the Community Rating System began in 1990. Nine years later, the first CRS Users Group was created in Palm Beach County. Nine years after that, two more groups formed. From 2008 to the present, we've grown to 40 groups nationwide. Take a look at the graph showing the trend in the numbers of CRS Users Groups formed each year.

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DEBBIE'S DISH (cont.)

The number of new groups each year has fluctuated, but at least two have formed in any given year since 2010. I suspect the rise from 2012 to 2014 was due, in part, to the revisions made to the *CRS Coordinator's Manual* in those years. Maybe communities figured that tackling those challenges together would make the transition easier.

What's happened since? The number of new groups went down a little in 2015. With 2016 more than half over, it looks as though that slight decline is continuing. Where is everyone? Are we going to see a surge in 2017 when another edition of the *Coordinator's Manual* is released? Will there be a time when our movement simply stops moving? It's clear that communities see a value in the CRS, because over 1,300 communities participate in it. For a program of this size, are 40 CRS Users Groups across the nation enough?

My thinking is that there are still folks who would benefit from the shared experiences and mutual support that a CRS Users Group brings, and a quick look at the list [[see *http://crsresources.org/crs-users-groups/*](http://crsresources.org/crs-users-groups/)] shows that some places in the country don't have one yet. If you don't have one in your area and think your surrounding communities would join in, contact me at debbie.vascik@yahoo.com and I'll do everything I can to help get you started. You'll be amazed at how big the return is once you have one in place. ≡≡≡

FEMA to Conduct Community Customer Experience Workshops in Fall 2016

In the spring of 2016, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed a detailed assessment of the customer experience of National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policy holders. The assessment identified opportunities to improve how the NFIP's flood insurance policy is designed, delivered to consumers, and serviced. FEMA now is embarking on a similar effort to understand the experience COMMUNITIES have with FEMA as they participate in the NFIP. The workshops will include CRS communities as well as communities that are not in the CRS. The goal is to learn of the variety of ways in which communities interact with FEMA, what is going well, and what elements need improvement.

About 15 "Customer Journey Workshops" are being scheduled across the nation, to be completed by the end of September. Each workshop will be attended by representatives from a range of communities varying in size, flooding history, urbanization, etc.. The workshops use an interactive participation format to pose a number of open-ended questions about working with FEMA. This method is designed to foster discussions aimed at identifying how FEMA can better enable communities to protect themselves from the impacts of flooding.

The results of the workshops and suggestions for improving how FEMA works with communities are expected to be completed early in 2017. This initiative will play a large role in helping FEMA to understand how best to work with NFIP communities and also in shaping new directions for the NFIP. Watch future editions of the *NFIP/CRS Update* newsletter for progress reports. ≡≡≡



Online Resources

At FloodSmart.gov

Remember that the CRS pages of the FloodSmart website [https://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/crs/community_rating_system.jsp] are THE place to go for people new to the CRS, elected officials, newly hired CRS Coordinators, and the public. It is designed for those who don't need the full technical details posted elsewhere.



At CRSresources.org

Check frequently at www.CRSresources.org to see what's been added in the way of CRS materials. All documents referred to in the *Coordinator's Manual* are posted here as soon as they are available. If you cannot find a piece of information or document, please notify your ISO/CRS Specialist or NFIPCRS@iso.com. Here are some recent additions to the website.

- **Success with CRS** is a new tab on the www.CRSresources.org website, featuring short articles about the many different ways in which communities have found their own types of success through the CRS.
- **Webinar Schedule**—A schedule for the rest of 2016 and early 2017 is posted under the *Training & Videos* tab at www.CRSresources.org/training. This link also has registration information. Also, see the webinar schedule below.
- The most recent issue of the *NFIP/CRS Update* newsletter, in case you missed it (May/June 2016), along with all other past issues, can be found at www.CRSresources.org/100. ≡≡≡

Training Opportunities

Webinars

The CRS offers webinars to help communities with their CRS requirements. Many will be recorded, so they can be accessed later. Registration is free, but required, as space is limited. Some courses provide continuing education credits for Certified Floodplain Managers (CFMs). See www.CRSresources.org/training. The following one-hour topical webinars are on the calendar, and others will be scheduled. All webinars begin at 1:00 pm EST / 10:00 am PST.

Preparing an Annual Recertification— September 7, 2016

Preparing an Impact Adjustment Map— September 27, 2016

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Training Opportunities (cont.)

Webinars (cont.)

Flood Warning & Response (Activity 610)— September 28, 2016

Preparing for a Verification Visit (1 hour and 15 minutes)— October 18, 2016; December 20, 2016

The CRS and Class 4 Prerequisites— October 19, 2016

Introduction to the CRS— November 15, 2016

*Developing a Program for Public Information and
an Insurance Coverage and Improvement Plan*— November 16, 2016

Preparing for a Verification Visit (1 hour and 15 minutes)— December 20, 2016

The CRS and Coastal Hazards— December 21, 2016

The Role of the Community CRS Coordinator — January 17, 2017

Changes in the 2017 CRS Coordinator's Manual — January 18, 2017

Introduction to the CRS— February 21, 2017

Repetitive Loss Properties and the CRS— February 22, 2017

Preparing for a Verification Visit (1 hour and 15 minutes)— March 21, 2017

Changes in the 2017 CRS Coordinator's Manual — March 22, 2017

The Role of the Community CRS Coordinator — April 18, 2017

Repetitive Loss Properties and the CRS— April 19, 2017

Introduction to the CRS— May 16, 2017

The CRS and Coastal Hazards— May 17, 2017

Preparing for a Verification Visit (1 hour and 15 minutes)— June 20, 2017

Developing Outreach Projects for Activity 330 — June 21, 2017

Some other anticipated webinars include **How FloodSmart Tools can help CRS Communities, Forming a Users Group, and Stormwater Management**. If you'd like to have a webinar on the FEMA Elevation Certificate, or a particular CRS activity, contact your ISO/CRS Specialist.

For more on the CRS webinars, go to www.CRSresources.org/training. If you have questions about or suggestions for the CRS Webinar Series, contact Becca.Croft@atkinsglobal.com.

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Training Opportunities (cont.)

Workshops and Training related to the CRS

- **The Community Rating System (E278)** (field-deployed course is designated as L278)
..... September 19–22, 2016;
..... March 20–23, 2017; June 26–29, 2017; September 11–14, 2017

This is the all-purpose training course for the CRS. It is taught at both the Emergency Management Institute (see below) and at sites throughout the country at the request of interested communities, groups, or states, pending available funding. It is based on the 2013 *CRS Coordinator's Manual*.

- Attendees of E278 CRS courses based on previous *Coordinator's Manuals* may want to repeat this course. Therefore, restrictions on repeat attendance have been waived.
- For continuing education credit for Certified Floodplain Managers, the ASFPM will award CECs earned at the E278 CRS course.
- No more than two persons per community may attend at one time.

Prerequisite: To enroll in the CRS course, you must be a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM®), or have completed the National Flood Insurance Program course (E273), or be a full-time floodplain manager with over two years of specific floodplain management experience.

- **Hazus-MH for Flood (E172)** November 28, 2016—December 1, 2016
..... June 12–15, 2017
- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts II (E282)** April 24–27, 2017
- **Managing Floodplain Development through the NFIP (E273)** September 12–15, 2016,
..... October 31, 2016—November 3, 2016; May 22–25, 2017; August 21–24, 2017

E273 is also field deployed periodically. Contact your State NFIP Coordinator for more information [see <http://www.floods.org/index.asp?menuID=274>].

- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts III (E284)** July 24–27, 2017
- **Residential Coastal Construction (E386)** August 28–31, 2017
- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts I (E194)** January 30—February 2, 2017
- **Unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance—
Project Implementation and Programmatic Closeout (E214)** February 22–23, 2017;
..... June 21–22, 2017
- **Unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance—
Developing Quality Application Elements (E212)** May 15–18, 2017
- **Retrofitting Floodprone Residential Buildings (E279)** May 22–25, 2017

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Training Opportunities (cont.)

CRS communities can receive CRS credit points after their staff members complete certain training sessions. Under Section 432.o, regulations administration (RA) of the *Coordinator's Manual*, five points are provided for each member of a community's floodplain permit staff who graduates from courses E194, E273, E278, E282, E284, or E386 (up to 25 points). Graduating from E279 is worth up to five points under Activity 360 (Flood Protection Assistance).

About the Emergency Management Institute

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI), in Emmitsburg, Maryland, offers training on topics related to floodplain management, mitigation, and construction, including the basic CRS course (E278). These are oriented to local building, zoning, planning, and engineering officials. Tuition is free for state and local government officials, travel stipends are available, and on-campus lodging is free. Free transportation is provided from the airport to the campus and back to the airport. The only out-of-pocket expense is a meal ticket—all-you-can-eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Go to the EMI website for specific details at http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/NETC_Welcome_Package.pdf. The application to attend can be found at <http://training.fema.gov/Apply/>, or call EMI at 1-800-238-3358 or (301) 447-1035. Signed applications should be submitted through the state's Emergency Management Training Officer.

Bring the CRS to Your Home Town

The CRS conducts the field-deployed CRS course (L278, the same as EMI's E278, but tailored to local conditions) throughout the year, depending on funding availability. The 2013 *CRS Coordinator's Manual* and increased interest by non-CRS communities are generating a growing demand for CRS training. A state, CRS Users Group, or organization that would like to host a course or discuss CRS training opportunities should contact its FEMA Regional CRS Coordinator (see www.CRSresources.org/100). ≡ ≡ ≡

Statement of Purpose

The *NFIP/CRS Update* is a publication of the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System. It provides local officials and others interested in the CRS with news they can use.

The *NFIP/CRS Update* is produced in alternate months. It is distributed electronically, at no cost, to local and state officials, consultants, and other interested persons. Communities are encouraged to copy and/or circulate the *Update* and to reprint its articles in their own local, state, or regional newsletters. No special permission is needed.

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