



**Case Concentration:** The Borough of Staten Island and FEMA work together to correct Zone A boundaries.

### Scope of Project:



In the summer of 1999, the Borough of Staten Island, New York, signed an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Cooperating Technical Communities (now the Cooperating Technical Partners [CTP] program). The objective - to refine and/or eliminate floodplains designated in Zone A from the effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Richmond County, Borough of Staten Island. The Zone A boundaries had originally been delineated (drawn, sketched) from the State of New York Freshwater Wetland Maps, and subsequent to the FIRMs' effective date, FEMA was notified the wetland maps were in error. In conjunction with CTP, Staten Island provided FEMA with a written summary of the Zone A areas in need of investigation and the technical assistance necessary to accomplish the goal of correcting the maps.

### Mapping:

To correctly delineate the floodplain boundaries on work maps prior to preparing a revised FIRM, FEMA conducted onsite investigations to verify the wetland delineations and performed new analyses for storm sewers within the community that contained flooding discharges. Then FEMA digitized the FIRM and issued a preliminary version of the digital FIRM to the community for review on September 7, 2000. The final digital FIRM became effective on May 21, 2001.

### Outreach:

#### Activities

To minimize opposition and prevent confusion, the Borough of Staten Island, FEMA, and the MCC worked together to counteract erroneous information in the local press and to distribute correct information to stakeholders.

**Post-Preliminary Phase:** Outreach activities preceded the release of preliminary maps for Staten Island. After the release, it was discovered incorrect information was published concerning how the maps may affect property owners. This necessitated the borough and FEMA to quickly respond to the criticism from local officials and coordinate a "best practice strategy" to distribute correct information and re-establish positive public relations.

## Tools

After the initial public outcry over new mapping, Staten Island became very proactive in creating and using effective tools to reach the public, particularly when it came to making information accessible for stakeholders' use. Meetings on a technical level were also very beneficial in determining revision needs to the preliminary maps.

- **Public Accessibility:** Public libraries were tapped as map repositories for greater, faster response to stakeholders' request for information and to alleviate the burden from public inquiries on community officials.
- **Information Letters:** Letters, informing stakeholders where to direct questions (FEMA's Map Assistance Center - FMAC), were drafted to accompany maps located at public libraries.
- **Property Owner Letters:** Customized letters were prepared for property owners who requested LOMCs to properly inform them on how revised maps could affect the determination of their requests.
- **Announcements:** Public announcements were created to alert stakeholders how to obtain official FEMA information.
- **Products:** Demographics maps, with identified flood zones, were prepared for stakeholder use.
- **Call Center Support:** More than 800 calls were received by FMAC stemming from Staten Island map revisions. In response, FMAC produced a one-page fact sheet to educate stakeholders on referencing/reading the maps and on the proper procedure for requesting a property's removal.
- **Documentation of Community/Staff Notes on Processes:** To assist the Borough of Staten Island, FMAC tracked calls and conversations from Staten Island stakeholders and reported trends to FEMA and the borough for appropriate customer service resolution.

## Results

The Borough of Staten Island received positive feedback on the CTP project. The updated, digital FIRMs provided local officials with a reliable floodplain management tool, and with the accurate delineation of the floodplain boundaries, the floodprone designation removed 400-500 properties.

The CTP agreement and related mapping activities supported Staten Island's achievement of three Map Modernization Plan objectives: delineation or removal of erroneous Zone A areas; converting flood maps to a digital format; and increasing local involvement in the mapping process.



*"A Nation Prepared" is FEMA's vision, and all at FEMA are dedicated in its mission to lead America in preparing for, preventing, responding to and recovering from disasters. If you would like more information on FEMA's Multi-Hazard Flood Map Modernization Initiative and how we may provide expert resources for you and your community, please visit our website at <http://www.fema.gov/fhm> or call 1-877-FEMA-MAP. You may view flood hazard maps at the FEMA Map store - <http://www.msc.fema.gov/>.*