

Mitigation Measures after Historic Flooding in West Virginia Prove Effective in Recent Storms

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PHILADELPHIA- Officials in Lincoln County, W.Va., say mitigation projects in this community prevented further damage this past February when the area experienced heavy rains.

Following severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides that occurred throughout much of the state in June 2016, FEMA approved \$1.5M through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) that was matched by the state of West Virginia with an additional \$500K for the acquisition and demolition of nineteen (19) residential structures in flood-prone areas of Hamlin, Lincoln County.

Funding. Mitigation. Acquisition. Demolition. It can all be very confusing. So, let's break it down. The program begins with families who are offered the opportunity to receive money for their badly damaged properties, so the buildings can be destroyed, and the families can start fresh, in areas less likely to flood. That opportunity affords them a better and safer life.

But it also helps those homeowners that remain. Picture a football field with 40 homes on it and the rain comes down hard while severe flooding occurs. With all those structures in the way, the water has little room to run off and the floods get higher, and the saturation causes more damage. Now picture that same football field with only four homes on it. There is much more land space for the water to flow, at lower levels and less saturation. In addition, by removing the flood-prone structures, the open space restores the natural vegetation in the floodplain further reducing the flood risk to the area. As a result, it is projected that more than \$14M in future damages to former and current homeowners were avoided by this mitigation project - a critical part of FEMA's mission.

"It's always gratifying to see how this program can help communities build their resilience after flooding occurs," said FEMA Region 3 Administrator MaryAnn



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Tierney. "Reducing the severity of floods helps save lives and protects homes, as well as, local infrastructure, like roads and bridges."

"The projects prevented additional homes from flood damage during this storm. I'm proud to report mitigation projects in other areas worked as intended as well, making a real difference in preventing damages," said WVEMD Director G.E. McCabe.

Learn more about the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant program at <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/hazard-mitigation>. For information about WVEMD Hazard Mitigation, go to <https://emd.wv.gov/MitigationRecovery/Pages/Hazard%20Mitigation.aspx>.

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