

Statewide Best Available Floodplains – New Web Viewer

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a Best Available Floodplains web viewer located at this site: <http://gis.bam.water.ca.gov/bam>. The intent of the web viewer is to provide the most up-to-date understanding of the risk exposure to flooding for communities in the State so that local governments can make informed decisions about land-use planning and the need for flood protection improvements in their communities. The web viewer will also assist landowners and homeowners to make informed choices about managing their property, including their choice about purchasing flood insurance.

In 2007, California Senate Bill No. 5⁽¹⁾ Senate Bill No. 5, Section 9 adds Part 6 to Division 5 of the California Water Code⁽¹⁾ amended the California Water Code to require DWR to develop best available information for the 100- and 200-Year floodplains for areas protected by State-Federal project levees within the Sacramento-San Joaquin (SAC-SJ) Valley. In 2008, DWR developed the first set of Best Available Maps (BAM) for the SAC-SJ Valley and posted the maps on the DWR's BAM website. The new web viewer website will replace the BAM website.

With the new web viewer, DWR has expanded the data to cover all counties in the State and to include 500-year floodplains. The 100-, 200-, and 500-year floodplains are displayed on this web viewer. The web viewer allows users to view a particular area, identify their potential flood hazards, and print a floodplain map.

These best available floodplains are subject to change and may be updated periodically. As information is updated, the latest data will be displayed on the web viewer.

Limitations of Floodplains

These floodplains do not replace existing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulatory floodplains. For more information on the FEMA regulatory floodplains, please contact FEMA directly.

Potential Use of Floodplains

The floodplains shown delineate areas with potential exposure to flooding for three different storm events: one with storm flows that have a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any year (100-year), one with storm flows that have a 0.5% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any year (200-year), and one with storms flows that have a 0.2% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any year (500-year). These flows and resulting flooded area are based on the best available floodplain information and may not identify all areas subject to flooding. Agencies should use these floodplains for planning purposes, including updating the land-use element, housing element, conservation element, and safety element of city and county general plans. Assembly Bill 162 requires that flood risks be incorporated into these elements of the community's general plan when a general plan is updated.

The floodplains can also be used by communities in the development of their Floodplain Management Plan, which is a requirement of the FEMA Community Rating System Program (CRS). The CRS Program provides property owners in special flood hazard areas discounts on flood insurance premiums. The Floodplain Management Plan can also be used to qualify for a FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance grant or a FEMA Severe Repetitive Loss grant. The floodplains can also be used to develop local multi-hazard mitigation plans and emergency response and evacuation plans. Multi-hazard plans are a requirement of the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. Completion and approval of a multi-hazard mitigation plan is a requirement to receive pre- and post-disaster FEMA mitigation grants.

Sources of Data

The best available floodplains were developed for each county using floodplains for the 100-, 200-, and 500-Year developed by the FEMA Effective Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM), FEMA Effective Q3 Flood Data, FEMA Preliminary DFIRM, DWR Awareness Mapping, United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins Comprehensive Study, and Regional Floodplains developed by local agencies. The levees displayed in the web viewer are gathered from the California DWR Levee Database and the USACE National Levee Database.

If you have questions or comments regarding the Best Available Floodplains Web Viewer or for additional information on available products please contact Ricardo Pineda via e-mail at rpineda@water.ca.gov or (916) 574-1475. You may also contact Senarath Ekanayake at sekanaya@water.ca.gov or (916) 574-1406.