



# NFIP/CRS UPDATE

August—September 2011

## More Progress on Improvements to the CRS

*Send Comments until end of August*

The content of the 2012 edition of the *CRS Coordinator’s Manual*, to be released early in 2012, is growing closer to its final form. Work to refine the proposed changes to the *Manual* has been ongoing throughout this summer. Communities and others are encouraged to review the proposed changes (via the website, see below) and to make comments and suggestions. All comments received by August 31 will be forwarded to the CRS Task Force. The Task Force meets in September and at that time will formulate for FEMA its final recommendations on revisions to the CRS.

More than 500 people participated in 15 two-hour “webinars” held during July and August to explain and discuss proposed new aspects of the *Coordinator’s Manual*. Several of the webinars were hosted by CRS Users Groups and focused more closely on localized concerns. Two were devoted entirely to the revamped 300 series—the Public Information activities. Lots of questions were asked and answered, and all the comments will be forwarded to the CRS Task Force.

Several additions have been made to the special website for the 2012 *Coordinator’s Manual* (<http://www.crs2012.org>). Comments on any of them are welcome, and should be submitted through the “Outreach and Feedback” tab on the website. Remember that numerical points have not yet been assigned to the various elements and activities, but their weights as reflected in the proposed revisions are accurate.

### New on the *Manual* Website this Month

On main page’s right side you will find [*click the title to link to the document*]

- “2012 CRS Coordinator’s Manual Changes—Proposals July 21, 2011.” This updated, 32-page report summarizes the changes proposed in CRS criteria, credits, and procedures as of July 21, 2011.

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## Updates to *Manual Website*

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A new tab has been added, for the 200 series (Procedures). Posted there are [*click the title to link to the document*]

- [“Prerequisites: Their Use in the CRS.”](#) This is the 50-page report of the Prerequisites Committee, as made to the CRS Task Force in June 2011.
- [“Proposed CRS Participation Prerequisite: Purchase of Flood Insurance.”](#) Under the proposal outlined in this paper, all communities that wish to participate in the CRS would have to certify that all their community-owned buildings in the Special Flood Hazard Area are covered by flood insurance. The prerequisite in effect up until now has applied only to those buildings for which insurance was required as a condition of federal aid.

Under the 300 series (Public Information), several updates were made.

- [“Summary of Proposed Changes to CRS Activity 330—Outreach Projects”](#) has been updated, based on feedback from webinar discussions and the pilot communities.
- [Rethinking Outreach in the Community Rating System: Activity 330 Pilot Program](#) is the report produced for the CRS by Ogilvy in 2010.
- [Strategic Plan Evaluation: Activity 330 Outreach Projects](#) is the report to the CRS Task Force made by the Activity 330 committee in 2010.
- The [presentation made at the Activity 330 webinars](#) has been converted to a pdf file and can be downloaded from the “Webinars” tab.

Under the 400 series (Mapping and Regulations) tab you can now access

- [“Credit for Regulation Administration.”](#) This four-page paper summarizes the proposed new element Regulation Administration (RA) in Activity 430 – Higher Regulatory Standards.



### 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 six times each year and distributed electronically, at no cost, to local and state officials, consultants, and others who want to be on the mailing list. 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.

To become a subscriber or to suggest a topic that you would like addressed, contact

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# New Manual grew out of Program Evaluation

The revised *CRS Coordinator's Manual* for 2012 will incorporate many improvements to the CRS' elements, activities, prerequisites, procedures, documentation, and credit points. The proposed refinements are the culmination of work by the CRS Task Force, FEMA, and many CRS stakeholders, who collaborated to review and evaluate the current program, pursuant to *A Strategic Plan for the Community Rating System, 2008–2013*.

The *Strategic Plan* was approved by FEMA in 2008 in order to guide the CRS Task Force in a multi-year evaluation of the CRS—the first complete evaluation since 1990. Five objectives were established in the Strategic Plan to move the CRS towards its goals (see box).

## Committee Work and Research

The Task Force created committees and project teams to review each CRS activity and several cross-activity issues, such as protecting natural floodplain functions and reducing losses to repetitive loss properties. Each committee was chaired by a Task Force member and included representatives of communities and outside interest groups, such as the Association of State Floodplain Managers.

The first step in the committee work was to review existing reports, past experience, and lessons learned, and, in some cases, conduct new research. For some of the issues, the committees called on academic and subject-matter experts. Other research was conducted by Task Force consultants.

Next, many reports and recommendations were prepared for the Task Force's deliberation. These were done from April 2010 through April 2011. The latest versions of these committee reports are available on the 2012 *CRS Manual* website, at <http://www.CRS2012.org>. After Task Force approval, the committees and teams prepared more specific proposals for the credit points, procedures, elements, prerequisites, and other details.

## Assigning Relative Value to Program Components

In May 2011, a series of “element weighting webinars” was held to determine the appropriate distribution of the existing and proposed credits within each activity. In June 2011, the Task Force conducted a week-long “Weighting Forum” in Philadelphia. This involved all Task Force members, consultants, and 17 outside subject-matter experts. Using a small-group Delphi process, the participants determined the relative value of each

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### Objectives of the *Strategic Plan*

- Ensure that all CRS credits are appropriate and fully earned.
- Support FEMA's initiatives to reduce repetitive flood losses.
- Encourage communities to improve their floodplain management programs continually.
- Support the CRS Strategic Plan with appropriate procedures and adequate resources.
- Implement a knowledge management plan for the CRS.

## **New Manual** —continued from previous page

activity and then for the four series. The Forum’s recommendations are being used by FEMA and the Project Team to calculate points under the revised *Manual*.

### **Input from Stakeholders**

The results of this process are being used to prepare the 2012 *CRS Coordinator’s Manual*. Papers on the proposed changes have been publicized and are posted on the 2012 *Manual* website. In July and August, 15 webinars were conducted to explain the proposals and seek comments. They were attended by over 500 people from all over the country. The comments will be collated and summarized for the September Task Force meeting.

### **A New Manual**

Every activity in the Community Rating System will have some revisions in the 2012 *CRS Coordinator’s Manual* in order to meet the goals and objectives of the *Strategic Plan*. Some major changes have necessitated reorganization of an activity and/or affect several different activities and associated elements.

The 2012 Manual will be drafted during the fall and is anticipated to be released early in 2012. Specific points will be assigned to the various activities and elements after the September Task Force meeting. The next issue of the newsletter will provide information about the final points.

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## **Cape Coral Honors CRS Efforts**

Two staff members from the City of Cape Coral, Florida, Department of Community Development have been named “employees of the year” for their work to save homeowners \$5.1 million on their National Flood Insurance Program policy rates, according to news-press.com.

Richard Sosnowski, Comprehensive Planning Team Coordinator, and Lori Blydenburgh, Planning Technician, spent many months documenting the City’s open space preservation, cumulative substantial improvement regulations, outreach projects, provision of information on flood protection of buildings, building codes, stormwater management, and other credited activities. Cape Coral is a CRS Class 5 community, earning a 25% reduction in the flood insurance premiums of its policyholders in the Special Flood Hazard Area.

Between them, Sosnowski and Blydenburgh have about 35 years of experience with the City. “I was on the Cape Coral cycle visit last year because the city is one of the CRS’s top 10 high-discount communities. Those two were impressive,” said French Wetmore, a consultant to the CRS. “And they were fun to work with.”

A city of 150,000 people, Cape Coral lies along the southwest Florida coast. In October, Cape Coral will celebrate its 20th anniversary of participation in the CRS.

# Help with Open Space Easements

Land within a community’s jurisdiction that is preserved as open space can receive CRS credit under the OS (preserved open space) element of Activity 420—Open Space Preservation.

One credited way to protect such open space is with easements—legal contracts that allow one party to “use” the property of another for specified purposes. In the case of an open space easement, the owner of the land would relinquish development rights to the holder of the easement (the community, a nonprofit group, a government agency, or other entity) but would retain ownership and other rights, such as to farm, ranch, or enjoy “quiet use.”

The Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has a range of conservation easement programs that can provide technical and financial help to communities and their partners who are trying to protect and/or restore natural floodprone or watershed areas.

For example, under the floodplain easement option of NRCS’s Emergency Watershed Protection Program, a landowner voluntarily sells to the NRCS a permanent conservation easement that provides the NRCS with the authority to restore and enhance the floodplain’s functions and values. The landowner can still use the property for recreation and other activities compatible with the protection of the natural open space.

The NRCS website describes all the easement programs available, and also provides numerous



handbooks, guidelines, and additional resources on conservation. See

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>. Click on “Programs and Services,” then scroll down to “Easement Programs.”

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## CRS Recertifications Due Soon

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 of the more common trouble spots for communities are

- Annual reports, including those done for a public information program strategy (OPS, Activity 330) and a mitigation or floodplain management plan (Activity 510).
- Under Activity 330 (Outreach Projects), copies of all the projects sent out during the year, including additional projects (OPA), projects done pursuant to a public information program strategy (OPS), and a project to the repetitive loss area (see Section 503 of the *Coordinator’s Manual*).
- Reports from the local emergency manager on the annual exercise or drill of the emergency response plan, lessons learned from implementing the plan in response to an emergency or disaster, and the updated list of critical facilities affected by flooding (Activity 610).

# Training Opportunities

## CRS Training

Don't forget that the CRS offers "remote" workshops to help communities with their elevation certificate requirements. If you are interested in hosting a "webinar" on the FEMA Elevation Certificate, contact your ISO/CRS Specialist.

## Emergency Management Institute Courses

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) conducts courses on floodplain management and other CRS-related topics. These are oriented to local building, zoning, planning, and engineering officials. Tuition is free for state and local government officials and travel stipends are available. Call the training office of your state emergency management agency, see <http://training.fema.gov/>, call EMI at 1-800-238-3358 or (301) 447-1035, or see <http://www.training.fema.gov/EMICourses/EMICourse.asp>.

- **The Community Rating System (E278)** September 26–29, 2011;  
February 27—March 1, 2012; August 6–9, 2012; September 17–20, 2012

Note that, beginning in February 2012, the CRS course will use the 2012 edition of the *CRS Coordinator's Manual*. The September course will work from the 2007 *Coordinator's Manual* (current edition) but also will cover the changes underway.

Prerequisite: To enroll in the CRS course, you must be a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) or have completed the National Flood Insurance Program course listed below (E273) or be a full-time floodplain manager with more than 3 years of experience specifically related to floodplain management.

The CRS course is also offered at other sites upon request. Scheduled so far are

Colorado (FEMA Region VIII), October 11–14, 2011, Longmont, Colorado; contact Cristina Martinez at [cristina.martinez@iso.com](mailto:cristina.martinez@iso.com).

North Carolina (FEMA Region IV), October 26–28, 2011, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina (a "short," 2 ½ day course); contact John Gerber, (919) 715-5711 x106 or [jgerber@ncem.org](mailto:jgerber@ncem.org).

- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts I (E194)** February 13–16, 2012
- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts II (E282)** December 12–15, 2011
- **Basic HAZUS Multi-Hazards (E313)** September 19–22, 2011
- **Managing Floodplain Development through the NFIP (E273)** August 29—  
September 1, 2011; October 31—November 3, 2011; March 19–22, 2012

E273 is also field deployed periodically. Contact your State NFIP Coordinator for more information. Find your State Coordinator at

<http://www.floods.org/index.asp?menuID=274>.

- **Residential Coastal Construction (E386)** August 15–18, 2011

Under Section 431.n, Staffing (STF) of the *CRS 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 five points under Activity 360—Flood Protection Assistance.