

# Pennsylvania Coastal Resiliency



## Outreach

### Recommendations

**Create a Program for Public Information (PPI) to help organize the municipality's outreach practices on coastal hazards.** The PPI involves assessing the community's information needs; formulating messages; identifying means of conveying the messages; and implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the program. Outreach is targeted to community members, visitors, elected officials, businesses, and industries. It makes use of multiple forms of communication, such as news media, radio, brochures, community meetings, social networks, blogs, and websites.

**Hold annual presentations for residents, business owners, and other groups to discuss coastal hazards.** By continuing to emphasize the importance of planning for flooding, the municipality can set an example that disaster readiness should be maintained, even in relatively "quiet" times. A PPI can ensure that these presentations are effective. Publicized and recorded presentations can reduce the need for numerous one-on-one meetings with constituents. Topics can include, but are not limited to, discussing the science behind storm surge; defining base flood elevations, flood zones, and flooding risk; providing updates on changes to FEMA's flood maps; sharing information on evacuation routes; providing recommendations for renovating a structure in the floodplain to better withstand floods; and discussing actions that can be taken to reduce flood insurance rates. Presentations could be accompanied by information on the municipality's special needs database and/or flood warning systems to get more residents registered.

### Examples and Resources

*Resource:* The NFIP's [Community Rating System materials](#) provide guidance on establishing a PPI, as well as information on outreach projects.

## Recommendations

**Package flood-preparedness materials to residents in anticipation of future floods.** This action could save time and energy leading up to, during, and after a flooding event as outreach will already have been prepackaged and prepared for dispersal. The outreach should cover evacuation routes, safety procedures, shelter locations, recovery operations, procedures for entering a flooded building, steps for getting a permit for repairs, substantial damage rules, flood protection opportunities during repairs, and information on grants.

**Create a dedicated and easily accessible (from the homepage) “Flood Information” page on the municipal website.** The process for creating and maintaining this webpage can be included in the PPI discussed previously. The webpage can contain a link to the FEMA Region III website; Flood Insurance Rate Maps; future flood maps; evacuation routes; the municipality’s base flood elevation; basic outreach brochures; and other information that further educates the community on coastal hazard preparation, response, and recovery.

**Create a consistent coastal hazard disclosure policy that is used by all lenders and real estate agents when speaking with potential buyers about buildings located in flood-prone areas.** Disclosure of known flood, erosion, or other coastal hazard risks at the time of property transfer is an important educational effort consistent with the “No Adverse Impact” concept. Some states, such as Florida and California, have disclosure requirements. If a disclosure is required for property in a flood or coastal hazard area, the seller is required to notify potential buyers of the risks, and the risks can be factored into the purchase decision. If there is a berm, sea wall, or other protective structure on coastal property for sale, a disclosure policy could also require that prospective buyers be made aware of the issues surrounding such structures, particularly the need for monitoring and maintaining them. This type of policy can help sellers avoid transferring known adverse impacts that become unpleasant surprises to buyers.

## Examples and Resources

*Example:* Bucks County’s [“Ready Bucks” program](#) devotes several webpages on the county website for preparing for a variety of disasters, including [extreme weather](#) and [floods](#). The county also provided [post-flooding resources](#) for Tropical Storm Lee (2017).

*Example:* The Monmouth County (New Jersey) Planning Department has some [sample resources](#) on its website.

*Resource:* Association of State Floodplain Managers, [No Inverse Impact \(NAI\)](#).

## Recommendations

**Conduct regular outreach to residents about the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains.**

Preserving floodplain areas as open space or for recreational uses only is an effective strategy for reducing—if not eliminating—risks of damage or injury from floods. A continued outreach effort focused on the positive aspects of floodplains is part of a long-term strategy for getting residents to understand and support converting more of a municipality’s floodplain areas into open space (see the “Converting Floodplain Parcels” recommendation).

**Prioritize outreach for flood preparedness and disaster assistance to the residents living in neighborhoods that have flooded multiple times, or are projected to flood in the future.**

A municipality can also work with residents of these streets to ensure that they have emergency plans to help them evacuate the area if necessary. A municipality could assign “block captains” as liaisons to educate their neighbors on risks, work with municipal staff to help residents evacuate before severe storms, and reach out to new residents in the neighborhoods at risk.

## Examples and Resources

*Resource:* A [report](#) written by the National Association of Floodplain Managers in 2008 has more information on the topic.

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