

West Virginia

Fact Sheet

July 2012

Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout

Introduction

Planning for the Dunloup Creek Watershed was re-initiated in 1995 in response to repeated flooding to the communities of Kilsyth, Mount Hope, Glen Jean, Red Star, Harvey, and other settlements along Dunloup Creek. The project was planned under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-93-566, as amended). Approximately 290 properties and associated infrastructure have suffered repeated flooding, with two devastating floods in 2001 and 2004. The area is distressed, with low house values and low per capita incomes.

Measures such as dams, channels, floodwalls, dredging, and floodproofing are not effective in reducing flood damages. All of these alternatives were evaluated in an effort to find a solution to the flooding. The most cost-effective and feasible option for the communities is a voluntary floodplain buyout.

Project Description

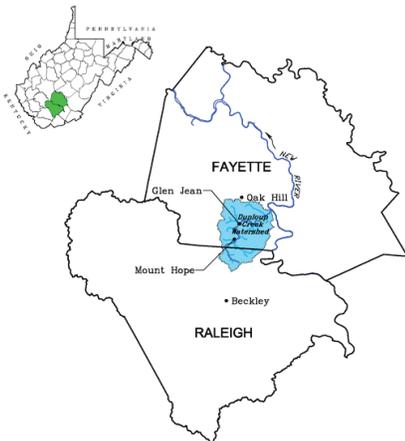
- **Location:** Fayette and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia, Third Congressional District
- **Size:** The watershed is 31,510 acres. The project area is up to 203 acres, with approximately 298 affected properties.
- **Start Date:** The Final Watershed Plan – Environmental Impact Statement was completed in May 2007. Project implementation began in the summer of 2009.

The floodplain consists of a narrow stream bounded on both sides by steep mountains that limits the amount of level land for homes, roads, and utilities. Communities are clustered along the stream where there is room for buildings and infrastructure.

State and local sponsors are providing 10 percent of the funding for the project. Properties acquired through the buyout are placed in public ownership with the Fayette County Commission and the City of Mount Hope. USDA maintains a floodplain easement on each tract.

Partners

- Fayette County Commission
- Southern Conservation District
- West Virginia Conservation Committee
- Dunloup Creek Watershed Association
- Raleigh County Commission
- City of Mount Hope



Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout Project is located in Fayette and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia.

Approximately 290 properties and associated infrastructure have suffered repeated flooding, with two devastating floods in 2001 and 2004. Flooding inundates homes and undercuts foundations risking life and property.



Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout



Flood damages will be reduced by 100% for those property owners that participate in the voluntary buyout and relocate outside of the floodplain.

Environmental Benefits

Environmental benefits include:

- Aesthetic values of the floodplain will be restored.
- Natural floodplain functions will be restored as homesteads are returned to riparian stream habitat and natural floodplain vegetation.
- Water quality will be improved with the removal of homes, some with failing or non-existent septic systems.
- Streambank erosion will be reduced as areas along the stream are converted from mowed yards to natural streambank vegetation. Streambank stability will improve.
- Fish and wildlife resources will gradually improve as development in the floodplain is removed and natural conditions are restored.
- Fishery habitat will be improved along Dunloup Creek.
- Riparian areas will be restored in the project area.
- Wetland improvement is anticipated as potential wetlands are restored to natural floodplain conditions.

Economic Benefits

Flood damages will be reduced by 100% for those property owners that participate in the voluntary buyout and relocate outside of the floodplain. There are incalculable benefits to reducing risk to life and property, improving the quality of life to a distressed community.

The Dunloup Creek Watershed meets the criteria for a disadvantaged community. Participants in the program receive a buyout offer that allows them to seek quality housing outside the floodplain. Participants have expressed a desire to relocate as close to their existing communities as possible but out of danger from repeated floods. Housing values in the Dunloup Creek Watershed are below county, state, and national average values.

- Additional housing needed by voluntary relocation of affected homeowners will result in stimulating the housing market and potentially providing new housing construction jobs.
- Human health and safety will be

greatly improved for residents who relocate from the floodplain. Risks to life and property associated with flooding will be removed for participating individuals.

- There will be reduced costs for debris removal, rescue operations, and emergency services that must currently be provided to residents when a flood occurs.

Employment in the watershed has historically been dominated by the coal industry and subject to the boom-bust cycles of this industry. The Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout project is being implemented using local contracts for property surveys, appraisals, legal services, demolition, and site restoration

Recreation is currently the most important industry in the area, providing employment and income directly and indirectly to residents. Tourism is also a significant employer in the area. Dunloup Creek is located within the watershed of the New River Gorge National River.

Streambank erosion will be reduced as areas along the stream are converted from mowed yards to natural streambank vegetation.



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There are incalculable benefits to reducing risk to life and property, improving the quality of life to a distressed community, and restoring environmental integrity to the natural floodplain of Dunloup Creek.

Thousands of whitewater rafters and hiking enthusiasts travel through the communities along Dunloup Creek on their way to access sites on the New River. In its present state, Dunloup Creek has limited recreation potential due to high bacterial contamination and limited public access.

Status

In Summer 2009, 198 landowners made application to the program, which is about 80% of the eligible landowners. There were at least 128 primary homeowners who signed up

Recent Flood Events

- September 19, 2004
- July 22-26, 2004*
- May 28, 2004*
- November 12 and 19, 2003*
- March 2003*
- May 2002*
- July 8, 26, and 29, 2001*
- January 19, 1996
- Mid-Spring 1995
- March 4, 1993
- May 1987
- Spring 1986

*Disaster Declarations

to relocate. Applications were also received from churches, businesses, renters, and vacant building and vacant lot owners. After the signup period closed, NRCS continued to take applications from at least another 50 residents.

As of July 2012, 59 homes have been purchased and removed from the floodplain. Offers are pending on another 12 homes. The average acquisition cost per house is \$66,400. Applicants receive a \$30,000 relocation incentive in addition to the appraised value of their home. The project is planned for completion by December 2014.

The floodplain consists of a narrow stream bounded on both sides by steep mountains that limit the amount of level land for homes, roads, and utilities.



For More Information

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<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/watershed/dunloup/dunloup.html>



Natural floodplain functions will be restored.

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