



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Special Environmental Resource Concerns

Floodplain Management

Clean Air Act
Criteria Pollutants

Clean Air Act
Regional Visibility
Degradation

Clean Water Act

Coastal Zone
Management
Areas

Coral Reefs

Cultural
Resources

Endangered
and Threatened
Species

Environmental
Justice

Essential Fish
Habitat

Floodplain
Management

Invasive
Species

Migratory Birds

Prime and
Unique
Farmlands

Riparian Areas

Wetlands

Wild and Scenic
Rivers

Floodplain Management

Executive Order (E.O.) 11988, Floodplain Management, was signed by President Jimmy Carter on May 24, 1977. NRCS policy on floodplains (190-GM, Part 410, Subpart B, Section 410.25) reflects the requirement of the E.O. that decisions by Federal agencies must recognize that floodplains have unique and significant public values.

What is it?

Floodplains are defined as lowlands or relatively flat areas adjoining inland or coastal waters, including at a minimum areas subject to a chance of flooding of 1 percent or greater in any given year. The “base” floodplain is set equal to the “100-year” floodplain (the so-called “1-percent chance floodplain”). The “critical action” floodplain is defined as the 500-year floodplain (the “0.2-percent chance floodplain”) where certain facilities are present, such as a school, hospital, nursing home, utility, or a facility producing volatile, toxic, or water-reactive materials. Floodplains may be shown on maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and on NRCS watershed plans and floodplain management studies.

Why is it important?

The objectives of E.O. 11988 are to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development where there is a practical alternative.

What can be done about it?

Through proper planning, floodplains can be managed to reduce the threat to human life, health and property in ways that are environmentally sensitive. Most floodplains contain areas with valuable assets that sustain and enhance human existence. Some of these assets are agricultural and forest lands, food and fiber, fish and wildlife, temporary floodwater storage, parks and recreation, and environmental values. NRCS provides leadership and takes actions where practicable to conserve, preserve, and restore existing natural and beneficial functions and values in base (100-year) floodplains as part of the technical and financial assistance program that it administers.

Floodplain Management at a Glance

Problems / Indicators - Potential negative impacts to floodplains	
Causes	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use changes/conversions in floodplain • Ground-disturbing project within floodplain • Infrastructure development in floodplain • Activities requiring a NPDES permit • Construction of flood walls, dikes, etc., for purpose of flood control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult HUD/FEMA flood insurance maps and/or other available floodplain data • Mitigation to eliminate potential impacts during planning process • Incorporate conservation/mitigation measures into project specifications, as needed • Establish monitoring protocols

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