



Naturally Resilient Communities Project

What is the goal of this project?

The Naturally Resilient Communities project aims to provide county and municipal leaders – elected and professional staff – with the tools necessary to envision how natural or nature-based flood reduction strategies may work in their community and the information to help them understand the benefits of and the reasons for using nature-based solutions to flood reduction.

Why was the Naturally Resilient Communities project started?

As coastal and riverine flooding has become more frequent and rainstorms have become more intense in recent years, communities across the country are confronting the challenge of addressing these flooding threats while also making themselves more resilient in the face of future challenges and thinking about issues of economic development and community wellbeing. Nature-based approaches to flood control can help on all of those fronts by reducing flooding while also providing economic, ecological, public health, and social benefits.

What is the Naturally Resilient Communities project doing?

We are developing an online, interactive resource that will help county and municipal leaders and their staff understand the benefits of natural approaches to flood control and what options might work in their communities. This resource will be composed of two major components – an interactive siting guide and a set of real-world case studies:

Interactive Siting Guide

The online siting guide will allow users to learn about the benefits of nature-based solutions, explore which solutions might address their particular flooding concerns, and provide some initial guidance on implementation and next steps.

Case Studies of Natural Infrastructure

These case studies will use a catalogue of successful nature-based projects that communities around the country have used to reduce their flood risk to focus on the array of co-benefits – economic, ecological, public health, social – that such projects can provide to a community. We will also be developing some funding and performance-related case studies to help demonstrate how such approaches can move from ideas to plans to action. The case studies will be connected to the siting guide, allowing users to see real world examples of strategies that they may be considering for their own community.

Who is a part of the Naturally Resilient Communities project?

This partnership includes the National Association of Counties, American Planning Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, Association of State Floodplain Managers, Sasaki Associates, and the Nature Conservancy.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Nature-Based Flood Solutions

Below are some frequently asked questions that we've gotten about this topic. If you can't find an answer to your question here, please reach out using the contact info on the reverse side.

What do you mean when you say “nature-based” flood solutions?

The phrase “nature-based solutions” represents a large collection of approaches to flood control that are all partly or entirely reliant on working with natural processes to address flooding issues. Tidal wetlands and mangroves can absorb coastal storm waters, setting levees back to allow rivers to use more of their natural floodplain reduces flood stages, and bioswales and rain gardens can absorb rainwater back in to the ground. While each of these approaches uses nature in different ways, they are all designed to reduce the impacts of flood and storm events and can be as effective as more traditional built infrastructure approaches or can be used in combination with more traditional approaches for a more hybridized solution.

Are nature-based flood solutions more expensive?

As with traditional flood control infrastructure, costs for nature-based solutions can vary considerably based on the particular type of solution that is being used and the flooding issue it is addressing. Importantly, unlike traditional flood control measures, nature-based solutions are capable of providing additional benefits beyond just flood control, such as recreational opportunities or improved water quality.

Are nature-based flood solutions approved by federal agencies like FEMA or the Army Corps?

Yes. FEMA, the Army Corps, the EPA, and HUD have all approved, funded, or implemented projects using nature-based solutions in the past and they are becoming a larger part of each agencies portfolio as the benefits become better understood.

Where can these nature-based solutions work?

As with all flood control solutions, the community context is very important in determining what is feasible and what would be most effective in addressing locally specific problems. There are nature-based solutions that can be applied in nearly any situation, though there are some approaches that are more appropriate for urban areas and others that are more appropriate in rural areas, as well as approaches that work along coasts, along rivers, or even to address stormwater. Understanding the regional context of your community and the nature of the flooding issues can go a long way to helping identify which kinds of solutions may work for you.

Will nature-based flood solutions affect our insurance rates?

The National Flood Insurance Program, through its Community Rating System, does recognize some nature-based solutions and will offer discounts on flood premiums if certain requirements are met.

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