

# The BFE\*

\* BASE FLOOD ELEVATION

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## What will 2021 mean for OFMA?

Brandon Claborn, PE, CFM | Past Chair

None of us will have a problem letting 2020 go it seems! As a group of dedicated professionals, it is clear that our emphasis on planning for the future has had a new challenge – floodplain management during a pandemic! How have we reacted?

We are committed to our membership and its professional status. We had to cancel the spring conference when the shutdown occurred one week earlier. That will not happen again because our Stormwater committee showed us how a virtual conference is done! In July we were able to provide eight hours of training to more than 200 people! Then in September we provided 16 hours of training in our virtual Fall Conference to nearly 300 participants. We awarded the J. Gavin Brady Floodplain Manager of the Year to Carrie Evenson for her leadership during the Stormwater Conference and elected her to become our next Vice-Chair.

*Continued on Page 3...*





## Words from the Chair

Ron Johnson, CFM | OFMA Chair

### Congratulations to OFMA's new Chair

Ron Johnson serves as the Director for McClain County Emergency Management. Additionally he is the Floodplain Administrator and Safety Director for McClain County. As the Director of Emergency Management, Ron has a variety of responsibilities such as preparing the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan, regulating the floodplain throughout the unincorporated areas of the county and responding to hazardous materials spills and all large incidents that occur in McClain County.

2020! Crazy, extreme, unpredictable, and chaotic. These are all words on how to describe the year of 2020. The great thing is, we as humans learn to adapt and overcome the obstacles in our lives.

On behalf of the Oklahoma Floodplain Manager's Association, I want to thank all of you that attended the 2020 Annual Conference that was held virtually. The OFMA Board and Conference committee spent many hours planning for this virtual conference, knowing that this would be a conference like OFMA had never seen. With so many different companies and government agencies not allowing their employees to travel or to even be able to meet with other individuals in person, your participation made this virtual conference a huge success.

The conference theme was "Are we ready for the next flood?" We covered a number of topics during the conference such as Disaster Recovery Reform Act to Fundamentals of Code Inspections. OFMA will continue to provide you with the most up to date training, through our conferences, advanced training workshops, email communications, and special events. We continue to develop new advanced training classes and are always looking for new individuals

that would like to assist or attend the Board meetings.

The OFMA Board held its Annual Strategic Retreat on October 21 – 23 in Broken Arrow. At the retreat, the Board discussed What is OFMA? We reviewed the objectives, vision, mission and what are we currently doing to meet them? We also focused on issues such as publicity, the Turn Around Don't Drown program, and membership.

Planning is underway for next year's conferences. The date of the 2021 Spring Technical Workshop is April 1, 2021 at the Hard Rock Hotel in Catoosa. More information on the theme and request for presentations will be emailed out in the winter. There will also be a Stormwater Conference on July 14, 2021 at the Moore-Norman Tech Center. Please save the dates!

And as mentioned before, All OFMA members are welcome at the monthly Board of Directors meetings. Each month, our board members and committee chairs dedicate their time to doing the business necessary to keep the Association moving forward. There is no shortage of opportunities for new members to get involved.

## 2021

...Continued from Page 1

The good news is that we learned a lot. It is much easier to get speakers with national experience and advice if we allow a virtual presentation, either in an in-person conference or a virtual setting. While we all miss the camaraderie, we can still meet our training goals and provide assistance to our membership via Zoom or Teams.

We held a hybrid Strategic Planning Session, with in-person social distancing, in October at the Stoney Creek Resort Hotel in Broken Arrow. Virtual attendance was available for a few participants because of agency requirements and health concerns. We reviewed "Who We Are", our Vision, our Mission and evaluated whether we were currently meeting the tenets set forward by previous leaders and members. We identified areas where our efforts are not meeting our goals and actions we can take to improve our focus.

In reviewing our membership, we noticed we have a number of groups that play an important role in floodplain management who are under-represented, such as real estate agents and insurance agents. We plan on doing targeted outreach to them explaining the importance of knowing flood risk and explaining flood insurance as a means of hazard mitigation.

We again acknowledged the lack of coordination following a flooding disaster between FEMA, the local emergency managers, the local floodplain managers, and the non-profits that come in to help with debris removal. Fortunately, our new chair, Ron Johnson,

is both the emergency manager and the floodplain manager for McClain County and can help guide us through our outreach efforts. All of these groups provide a great service to the public and need to understand the substantial damage requirements the NFIP requires.

OFMA will have a greater role in the next Oklahoma Hazard Mitigation Plan (HM) by working closely with Oklahoma Emergency Management and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. There are too many expired HMPs in the state that limit our ability to obtain FEMA grants for mitigation planning and projects. That will have to be addressed over the next year.

We can always use more active members willing to help us meet our goals. We can use more participation on our committees, attending board meetings and involvement in special projects like the calendar competition. I look forward to the coming year working with our membership to make a difference in our communities. Everyone agrees that OFMA is a well-run organization that functions better than almost all groups our size and we owe all of our success to those who commit their time, talents and resources to OFMA. Thanks to all who have contributed and to those who plan to do more in the coming year. I hope to see you soon.

## 2021 SAVE THE DATES

### 2021 Spring Technical Workshop

April 1, 2021  
Hard Rock Hotel and Casino  
777 W. Cherokee St.  
Catoosa, OK

### 2021 Stormwater Quality Technical Workshop

July 14, 2021  
Moore-Norman Technology Center  
4701 12th Ave. NW  
Norman, OK 73069

### 2021 OFMA Annual Conference

September 20-22, 2021  
Embassy Suites Norman Hotel & Conference Center  
2501 Conference Drive  
Norman, OK 73069

More information about 2021 events coming soon!





## Professional Development Certification

Joe Remondini PE, CFM | OFMA PDCC Chair

Your Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) status was due for renewal by the end of September. However we will allow renewal without penalty through the end of October.

As most of you know all OFMA and OWRB training was suspended this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic. However there have been numerous training opportunities on line as well as our hugely successful annual virtual conference in September. FEMA and ASFPM continue to offer virtual training opportunities as well. Hopefully we can get back to in person training next year.

As a reminder a CFM is required to get 16 hourly CECs in a 2 year period (from 1 October through 30 September). There is a minimum of 4 CECs required in a year and a maximum of 12 counted.

Due to the circumstances this year if you could not get

CECs we will evaluate your situation on a case by case method. Please contact us through our website or by calling me or Carolyn Schultz.

In other news the CFM Exam is moving towards a digital format. I participate on the Paper to Digital (P2D) team led by ASFPM. We are still developing guidelines for that process which is scheduled to be implemented by the end of the year. ASFPM has already contracted with "Scantron Corporation" to manage the digital exam. We at OFMA expect to still independently evaluate applicants and manage renewals for the CFM program. The exam cost will likely increase and at least at the beginning we will still proctor the paper exam as an option. Scantron has 3 testing centers in Oklahoma or an option could be to take the exam on your personal computer. In a future BFE newsletter I will provide more details as this develops.

## On-Demand Access to the ASFPM Virtual Conference Now Available



If you didn't get a chance to join us for the 2020 ASFPM Virtual Conference, you can now access the entire program on-demand. That's three plenary presentations and 54 concurrent sessions for a total of more than 150 presentations dedicated to all aspects of flooding and floodplain management. Certified Floodplain Managers will earn one continuing education credit (CEC) for each session watched, up to 12 CECs.

In commenting on the breadth of content delivered, one attendee said: "The program was broad to cover several tracks to accommodate all people attending. Everyone could get new information for their specialized area or learn about another area!" Registration for the on-demand conference is \$300, which includes access to the entire program until Jan. 31, 2021.

[Go here to register.](#)

## The Growing Focus on Building Codes

Tom Leatherbee, CFM | Legislative Director



With COVID having shortened last year's legislative session and raising many questions for the upcoming year, it will be more important than ever for OFMA to remain watchful for legislative and administrative actions that could impact our members and the floodplain and stormwater management industry.

Outside of the State Capitol, OFMA watches for trends in the overall industry, and particularly at the state and federal government levels. One trend that merits mention is an increased focus on building codes and standards.

The NFIP has been linked directly to building codes since the inception of the International Code Series, which were developed to be the first consolidated construction codes for the United States. Numerous studies have shown that adopting and enforcing hazard resistant building codes reduce the frequency and severity of flood losses.

The International Codes, including the International Building Code and the International Residential Code, contain all of the NFIP minimum standards found in 44 CFR 60.3. Now, the focus is going beyond basics, looking to administration, enforcement and higher standards.

Perhaps the biggest overall development in the industry is the rollout of the BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) grant. BRIC represents a tremendous opportunity for communities to transform themselves by becoming more prepared for future disasters. Along these lines, the BRIC program can provide funding for evaluation of existing codes, adopting enhanced codes or higher standards, and development of code enforcement capabilities. Project evaluation for BRIC applications includes a requirement for code compliance and requires that the applicant have been evaluated through the Building Code Effectiveness Grading Scale (BCEGS) program.

Building codes continue to be a focus of the Community Rating System (CRS) program. Enforcing building codes, as shown by a BCEGS score of 5/5 for a Class 6 or 4/4 for a Class 4, is a prerequisite for attaining flood insurance discounts through the CRS.

OFMA has developed a training class that addresses the flood related provisions in the International Code Series. The OFMA Training Cadre regularly presents this class at Advanced Training Workshops and is happy to teach it on demand for interested communities.

As always, please contact [legislative@okflood.org](mailto:legislative@okflood.org) with any questions or concerns.





## Tips for Rural Floodplain Administrators

Johnny Barron | OFMA Region 4 Representative

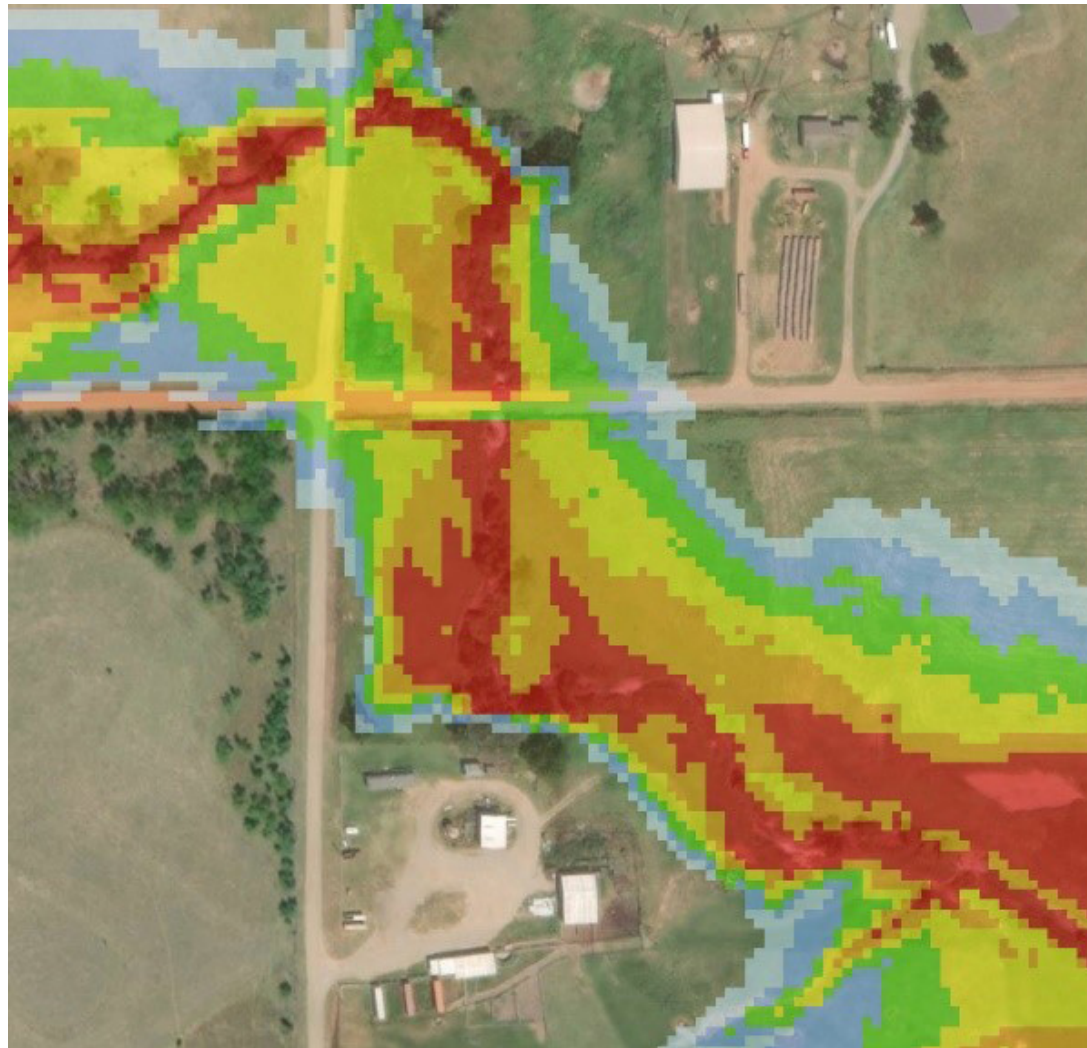
For communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), they must comply with minimum NFIP standards. Participating communities must have a Floodplain Administrator (FPA) whose job it is to review proposed development in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). However, most rural counties do not require building permits for new development. Without the structure of a permitting system, the rural Floodplain Administrator is often on his/her own to try to learn about new developments and make sure they comply with NFIP requirements and local ordinances. This can be challenging.

Many people living in rural areas will not respond favorably to an attempt to regulate what and where they build. This mentality is often shared by elected officials who don't have the stomach for enforcing NFIP requirements. Telling a farmer that he cannot build his barn where he wants to may be politically unpopular.

One way to overcome these obstacles is through public outreach to communicate risk. If the farmer (and County Commissioners) have an accurate understanding

of the risk, he is much more likely to welcome input from the FPA. The farmer is likely to voluntarily choose to relocate his barn to a lower risk area. Likewise, the politicians are more likely to view floodplain management as providing a service to constituents.

Another obstacle is that rural areas are less likely to have flood studies and AE Zones. Approximate A Zones are more challenging to work with when



reviewing proposed development. Fortunately, we have never had more tools at our disposal for understanding flood risks. Base Level Engineering has been completed for about half of Oklahoma. This mapping tool shows 1% chance flood depths by color.

These images are from the same area in western Washita County. FEMA has not printed a FIRM panel and the National Flood Hazard Layer shows this to be

a Zone X Area of Minimal Flood Hazard. However, Base Level Engineering shows a modeled floodplain with flood waters as deep as 5 feet (red).

Showing this data to the farmers who own this land will go along way. Most farmers won't want to have to repair the barn or replace the livestock lost by a flood event.



Rather than coming across as the heavy handed government telling them what they can't do, this can be presented in a way to show property owners that we are trying to help them protect their property and livestock. Most people will comply when they see the financial benefit of doing so.

BLE mapping covers many areas not previously studied and can be reliably used as "best available data."

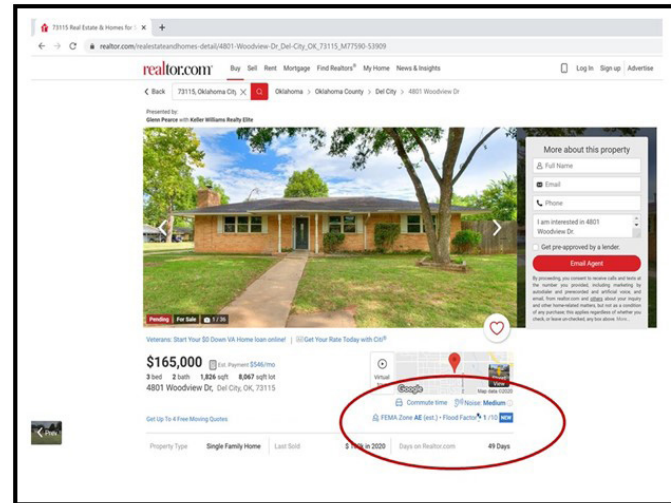
Base Level Engineering maps can be viewed at: <https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/>





## New Tools Increase Consumer Focus on Flood Risk... But May Lead to Unintended Consequences

Tom Leatherbee, CFM | Legislative Director



Federal regulations require purchase of flood insurance for any property located in the special flood hazard area that is secured by a mortgage held by a federally regulated lender. This mandatory purchase requirement is often the primary interaction that average citizens have with the National Flood Insurance Program. For many years, real estate agents and purchasers have relied on (often inaccurate) seller disclosures to determine whether a property is located in a high-risk area, and mortgage lenders have relied on (often inaccurate) third party flood determination companies to ensure compliance with the mandatory purchase regulations. Only rarely do the parties involved in a real estate transaction seek out more accurate or detailed flood hazard data, whether by accessing the FEMA Map Service Center, viewing the National Flood Hazard Layer or contacting the local floodplain administrator.

In recent months, new tools have emerged that purport to help make flood risk data more accessible as part of the real estate shopping process. Most of these tools are based not on effective NFIP regulatory products, but on information produced by the First Street Foundation. The First Street Foundation states its identity as a “non-profit research and technology group defining America’s Flood Risk” ([www.firststreet.org/mission](http://www.firststreet.org/mission)).

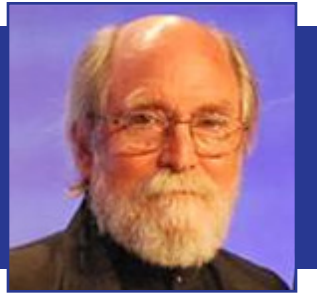
The First Street Foundation’s proprietary tool for visualizing flood risk is known as “FloodFactor™”, which they describe as “a free, online tool that makes it easy to learn if a property has flooded from major events in the past, is currently at risk, and how that risk changes over time” ([www.firststreet.org/flood-factor/](http://www.firststreet.org/flood-factor/)).

The National Association of Realtors® has implemented this tool in its Realtor.com website and app. When browsing properties for sale on Realtor.com, the Flood Factor score and a link to more details (including multiple links to marketing partners) are prominently displayed for each property. Following a single link can display detailed flood hazard information for a property and the

surrounding area. It is important to note, however, that this mapping does not necessarily match the effective regulatory FIRM, issued nonregulatory products or the data contained in the National Flood Hazard Layer.

## OFMA DRT Corner

Rev. W. B. “Bill” Smith, PE, CFM | OFMA DRT Coordinator



The 2019 summer tornadoes and floods brought numerous requests for the OFMA Disaster Response Team (DRT). This year we were not called to assist. First, I want to thank all of the volunteers who still participate in the OFMA DRT Program to assist our neighboring communities, and extend an invitation to new members or old members who would like to assist in future events. Send me an email.

The DRT will be preparing for the Spring 2021 Flood season over the winter. A detailed inventory of supplies has been performed we are in good shape if we are called. We do have additional kits for new volunteers along with jackets and shirts.

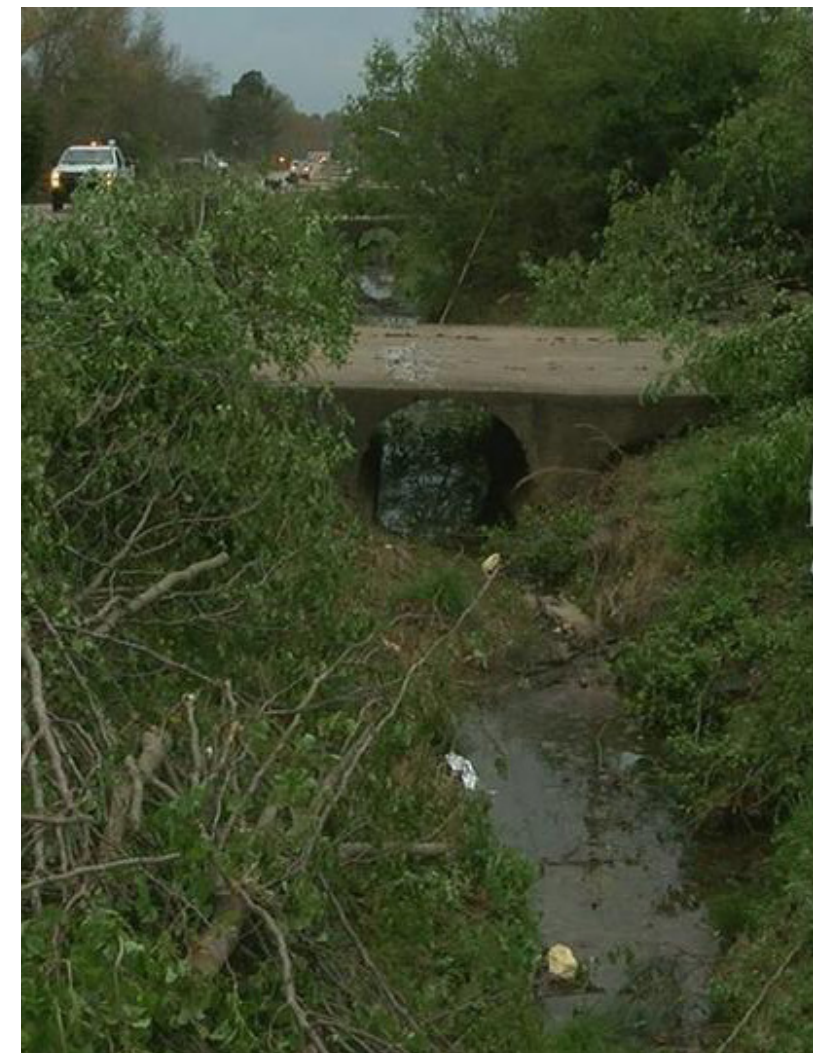
We did not have any training program during the OFMA Spring Technical Workshop or Annual Conference due to the COVID-19 Pandemic for DRT volunteers. I hope to have a basic training at the Spring Technical Workshop for not only volunteers but also community FPAs and their staff. Please sign up for this training when registering for the Spring Workshop or please notify Bill Smith, P.E. CFM, DRT Coordinator by e-mail if you intend to participate in the training.

We continue to work on the data base to send the “contract letter” for communities to “pre-enroll” in the event that your community needs the assistance of the DRT.

HINTS for the Winter - Again:

Does your community have a plan for “cleaning ditches, drainage channels, and culverts” this winter in preparation for the spring rains?? If not, it’s not too late – remember that accumulated debris will cause debris to catch and cause higher water surface elevations on the upstream areas **that could flood structures.**

Don’t forget to “permit yourself” for any modifications to the drainage conveyance structures – channels, culverts, etc.



## Funding Acknowledgment

Funds to produce The BFE come in part from the National Flood Insurance Program and State Support Services Element of the Community Assistance Program, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The BFE is published by the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association, Inc. Information and opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Directors. Items for publication and other editorial matters should be directed to:

Editor, The BFE | PO Box 8101 | Tulsa, OK 74101

### Chair

Ron Johnson, CFM  
McClain County  
102 E. Center Road  
Goldsby, OK 73093  
405.288.2064  
mcclain.em@gmail.com

### Region I Representative

Lincoln Irvine, PE, CFM  
14000 Quail Springs  
Parkway  
No. 500  
Oklahoma City, OK 73134  
405.242.6277  
lincoln.irvine@benham.com

### Region V Representative

David Smith, CFM  
City of Woodward  
1009 Ninth St.  
Woodward, OK 73801  
580.254.8522  
dsmith@cityofwoodward.com

### Ex Officio

Julie Cunningham  
Executive Director  
OWRB  
3800 N. Classen Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73118  
405.530.8800

### Vice Chair

Carrie Evenson, PhD, PE, CFM  
City of Norman  
201A W. Gray  
PO Box 370  
Norman OK 73069  
405.366.5453  
carrie.evenson@normanok.gov

### Region II Representative

Joseph Remondini, PE, CFM  
Corps of Engineers—*Retired*  
3225 S. Detroit  
Tulsa, OK 74105  
918.361.8636  
jremondini@aol.com

### State NFIP Coordinator

Yohanes Sugeng, PE, CFM  
OWRB  
3800 N. Classen Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73118  
405.530.8800  
yohanes.sugeng@owrb.ok.gov

### Honorary Board Member

Ken Morris  
OWRB—*Retired*  
5400 E. Tecumseh Road  
Norman, OK 73026  
405.573.7990

### Secretary

Rachael Cooper, PE, CFM  
Wagoner County  
307 E. Cherokee St.  
Wagoner, OK 74467  
918.485.7979  
rcooper@wagonercounty.ok.gov

### Region III Representative

James Kuykendall  
Town of Kingston  
PO Box 638  
Kingston, OK 73439  
903.814.2839  
kingstonfd@hotmail.com

### Past Chair

Brandon Claborn, PE, CFM  
Meshek & Associates  
No. 1550  
1437 S. Boulder Ave.  
Tulsa, OK 74119  
918.392.5620 ext. 207  
bclaborn@meshekengr.com

### Honorary Board Member

Ronald D. Flanagan, CFM  
R.D. Flanagan & Associates  
3015 E. Skelly Drive  
No. 270  
Tulsa, OK 74105  
918.749.2696  
rdflanagan@rdflanagan.com

### Treasurer

Carolyn Schultz, CFM  
Corps of Engineers—*Retired*  
3527 S. 401st W. Ave.  
Mannford, OK 74044  
918.906.3922  
cschultz@cimtel.net

### Region IV Representative

Johnny A. Barron, PE, CFM  
City of Altus  
509 S. Main  
Altus, OK 73521  
580.481.3518  
jbarron@altusok.gov

### PDCC Chair / Honorary Board Member

Joseph Remondini, PE, CFM  
Corps of Engineers—*Retired*  
3225 S. Detroit  
Tulsa, OK 74105  
918.361.8636  
jremondini@aol.com

### BFE Editor

Janet K. Meshek, PE, CFM,  
SR/WA  
Meshek & Associates  
1437 S. Boulder Ave.  
No. 1550  
Tulsa, OK 74119  
918.392.5620  
jmeshek@meshekengr.com