

The BFE*

* BASE FLOOD ELEVATION

2023 Annual Conference Update

Brandon Claborn PE, CFM - OFMA Conference Co-Chair

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The 2023 conference at the River Spirit Resort and Casino, Tulsa, was a resounding success. Thanks to everyone who worked hard to make it happen; the OFMA Board, speakers, sponsors, and attendees all play a crucial role in having a successful conference. I hope the educational content was valuable and everyone enjoyed the networking opportunities. This conference set a record with 270 attendees!

The conference began with a welcome from Bobby Howard, who serves as the Emergency Management Director for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and included a performance of the National Anthem in the Creek language and a color guard presentation. Dr. Daniel Kaniewski, Managing Director at Marsh McLennan and the visionary behind FEMA's pivotal disaster resilience programs, shared about the challenge of flood resilience in Oklahoma. We wrapped up the first morning with a panel discussion on the current state and future of floodplain management in Oklahoma, led by our current Vice-Chair Annie Vest, FNI, followed by a presentation on mitigating historic flooding at the River Spirit Casino. Back by popular demand, we had another panel discussion on various topics concerning the "Current and Future State of Floodplain Management" in the state of Oklahoma. Thanks to Annie for moderating as well as the CFM's joining me on the panel: Ellen Stevens, Rachael Cooper, Tom Leatherbee and Kenny Schwab.

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Words from the Chair

Annie Vest CFM | Mitigation and Disaster Planning Lead | Freese and Nichols

Annie is the Mitigation and Disaster Planning Lead at Freese and Nichols, and the Vice President of the National Hazard Mitigation Association. She currently serves as a Subject Matter Expert to the Department of Homeland Security CISA, Resilient Investment Planning, and Development Working Group. Annie is the former State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) for Oklahoma. She has extensive, real-world experience in hazard mitigation, pre and post-disaster, and emergency management. As SHMO, Annie was directly responsible for \$130 million in Federal Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) funds and the review and approval of Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. In 2016 she received the FEMA Region VI Regional Administrators Award for streamlining Hazard Mitigation and Hazard Mitigation Planning throughout FEMA Region VI.

Happy holidays to all our OFMA members! It's hard to believe how fast this year has gone, and as we near the end, I'm excited for what the new year brings. There's always something refreshing about starting anew – new beginnings, new chances. To me it seems 2023 happened in the blink of an eye, and here we are, contemplating resolutions again. As I write this in my role as the OFMA Chair, it feels somewhat surreal. It doesn't seem long ago that I was a young planner working for Ron Flanagan, and now, here I am. Realizing how quickly the past years have passed, I'm reminded time is fleeting. Personally, I prefer to take things one day at a time rather than setting resolutions. When I think of resolutions, I often think of the challenges, but perhaps it's more about embracing these changes and preparing for the future.

When I think about OFMA, I see several changes ahead that we must prepare for now while we have time. We've welcomed new board members and are seeking ways to integrate stormwater management more effectively into our organization. We're witnessing changes in familiar faces, with some retiring and new professionals joining. Our field is evolving rapidly with technological advancements, and we're facing increasing challenges with disasters and flood losses. All these things require us to evaluate the impact on OFMA organizationally. We need to learn

from the past and grow forward into the future.

Looking back at my own start with OFMA, I'll never forget working for Ron Flanagan and him bringing me to a Floodplain 101 class in Norman back in 2012 followed by lunch with Ken Morris and Gavin Brady. I appreciate how these early moments as a young fly on the wall shaped my career. The opportunity to learn from individuals like Ron Flanagan, Janet Meshek, Ann Patton, Paul Zachary, Tim Lovell, and Albert Ashwood and many others throughout the years has been remarkable. Listening and learning from Ron's discussions at his breakroom table, such as those with Charles Hardt, Tulsa's former Public Works Director, about the city's flood history, were more important than I realized at the time.

The 2023 fall conference, themed "Sharing the Challenge of Flood and Stormwater Management," showcased the collaborative spirit of our organization. I hope those who attended found it insightful and growth oriented. The record turnout was a highlight. I encourage you all to seek out and learn from professionals across various fields. The unique perspectives and lessons learned from such interactions can lead to truly innovative and practical solutions.

Our recent strategic planning retreat in Tulsa ignited a wealth of creative ideas, particularly

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around attracting new members and young professionals, and re-engaging our membership. We plan to boost engagement through our committees and regional representatives. If you're thinking about a role on the board, I'm more than happy to share the experiences and the connections I've made in this position.

As the year comes to an end, I remain hopeful that my time as Chair will inspire you to explore new ways to engage with OFMA. Consider this an open invitation to reach out for advice or just to connect. I'm always here to talk. Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve as your OFMA chair.

Looking forward to the next time I see you all again.

Wishing you all safety, wellness, and a joyful holiday season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Annie Vest, CFM

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Monday afternoon included fifteen different presentations in three tracts on topics including Transportation Funding, BRIC funding, Innovative Solutions for Funding Dam Safety Programs, Flood Decision Support Toolbox, BCA for Flood Mitigation Customized Approach, Holistic Stormwater Management, Urban and Suburban Floodplain Issues, H&H Case Studies in Norman, the City of Tulsa's Tupelo Creek project, Oklahoma County Triple X Road Relocation and Bank Stabilization project.

Monday evening included a gathering for new OFMA members, followed by the always popular Monday Night Vendor Social. Meshek sponsored a cornhole tournament and adult beverages, while OFMA provided a catered buffet-style meal at Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville.

Tuesday brought an early morning discussion of OFMA Legislative and Policy issues over coffee led by Tom Leatherbee and followed by committee and regional representative meetings.

Our 2024-2025 Regional Representatives are:

- Region 1 — Mike Kimbro PE, CFM, ODOT
- Region 2 — Patrick Wilson PE, CFM, City of Broken Arrow
- Region 3 — Dennis Yochum, LeFlore County
- Region 4 — Johnny Barron, City of Altus
- Region 5 — Travis Small PE, CFM, City of Stillwater

We continued with plenary sessions, including a FEMA Region VI update and ASFPM Policy Discussion led by Chad Berginnis – Executive Director of ASFPM. It was an honor to have Chad join us at the conference this year. We had another round of breakout sessions before lunch: Innovative Approaches to Inform Design Decisions, Reintroducing the Community Rating System, and the Challenge of Trust in Floodplain Data Broken. Our annual business meeting was conducted during lunch. Lincoln Irvine called the meeting to order as OFMA chair and announced that Annie Vest would take over as OFMA chair, and Jessie Beck was elected as the Vice-Chair. Monica Cardin will fill in as past chair, and we wish Lincoln Irvine all the best in his new position in Utah.

Our education sessions continued through the afternoon with six different presentations highlighting successful flood mitigation projects, FEMA's BRIC program Dam Safety, development related issues, and LOMR request tips from a FEMA reviewer's perspective.

Freese & Nichols, Inc. hosted our second-ever Young Professionals social at the end of the day.

Tuesday evening was our annual awards banquet, which I was honored to emcee. The awards given by OFMA are critical to the growth and recognition of our members and others providing, leadership and support to issues critical to our success. Here's a list of those recognized at the banquet:

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Calendar Contest Winners

1st Place – Reagan Stamile – School of St Mary
2nd Place – Levi McReynolds – Pond Creek-Hunter
3rd Place – Hannah Armbrister – Roosa Elementary
Honorable Mention – Anny Jiron Mention – ASTEC Elementary

Scholarship Winners

Brooklyn Scott
Okmulgee High School

Reagan Cardin
Choctaw High School

Silver Scoop Award

Bobby Howard
Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Special Recognition Award

Michael Hawkins, CFM
City of Lawton

Outstanding Recognition Award

Morgan Lozoya, PE
Meshek & Associates, LLC

Stormwater Innovator Award

Raymond Melton
City of Oklahoma City

Vernon Seamon
INCOG

R.D Flanagan Gold Project Award

City of Broken Arrow
Natural Rehabilitation of Stormwater Detention Park on Florence 2nd Subdivision

R.D Flanagan Platinum Project Award

Oklahoma City Water Utilities Trust
Oklahoma Conservation Commission
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
Atoka Reservoir Dam Rehabilitation

FEMA Region VI and USGS

Base Level Engineering Tools and Resources



Chairman's Award

Michael Kimbro, P.E.
Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Shanene Thomas
FEMA Region VI

Ben Frizzel Media Award

Mike Grogan
Fox23 Weather, Tulsa

Excellence in Hazard Mitigation

Annie Vest, CFM
Freese and Nichols, Inc.

Leatherbee – Robinson Award for Education/ Outreach

Brock Long
Hagerty Consulting

Charles Don Ellison Award

Brandon Claborn PE, CFM
Meshek & Associates, LLC

Public Official of the Year

Principal Chief David Hill
Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Floodplain Manager of the Year Award

Rachael Cooper PE, CFM
Wagoner County

Wednesday began with an engaging presentation by Brock Long of Hagerty Consulting, who shared his experiences working as the FEMA Administrator in Washington, D.C., for the Trump Administration. Dr. Jason Vogel shared his thoughts and experiences on the Nexus of Stormwater and Floodplain Management. Our final session included a panel of industry experts sharing Oklahoma's water planning challenges.

Thanks again to all who participated. We look forward to seeing you in Durant in 2024. If you have suggestions that can help make our conference better, please share them with me. bclaborn@meshekengr.com



Kenneth Schwab, PE, SE, CFM | Assistant City Manager
City of Broken Arrow



Stormwater Management: Please Define The Meaning

We had a great annual conference in September, followed by an excellent Post-Conference Board meeting and the annual Board Retreat in late October. Without question, stormwater, and more specifically, stormwater management, was a major topic of discussion. One of the biggest takeaways from the conference was that the Board needed to define stormwater management better or, at a bare minimum, clarify its intent. In today's society, the moment one mentions stormwater management, the overwhelming majority of people think stormwater quality. While stormwater quality is one aspect of the overarching concept of stormwater management, it is not the sole component. In fact, in most of our daily jobs in this profession of floodplain and stormwater, stormwater quality probably is a very small fraction of the job; yet, it is a part of the overall effort. So, with that said, I wanted to take an opportunity to help define what the Board has embraced and, at a minimum, hopefully help clarify its intent.

Straight up, floodplain management is the core of this organization. It always will be the core. Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association (OFMA) was established to promote measures to save lives and reduce property damages with respect to flooding. The organization will never stray from that mission. But in conjunction with that mission, there is so much more that we already embrace and that we can continue to expand upon and enhance that is truly stormwater management. This is the effort and focus the Board wants to incorporate into its purpose and mission. So, what is the Board's definition or meaning of stormwater management?

Well, first you must examine the professional makeup of our organization to help answer the question. We have stormwater professionals who work in the public sector as well as the private sector. Within the public sector, we have federal, state, and local government professionals. Each level of level of government truly has a different mission and purpose. On the federal level, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), United States Geological Survey (USGS), and United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), to name a few, these agencies are generally focused upon the establishment of the programs for stormwater or floodplain management, the rules governing these programs, and the grant funding that may exist. Entities like the USACE are obviously directly involved with the function and operations of the federally jurisdictional waterways and dams, like the Arkansas River and Keystone Dam, for example. Without a doubt, they have many other responsibilities and obligations, but in general, they fit in or alongside the categories identified.

At the state level, agencies like the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB), Oklahoma Emergency Management Agency (OEMA), and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) are focused on establishing and implementing state regulations and code requirements directly associated with certain federal programs that have been distributed to the state, as well as state programs enact at the state level. In addition, they provide enforcement of the programs but also assistance to local governments. Some of these programs regarding stormwater and floodplain management include the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the state Comprehensive Water Plan, which incorporates the state Flood Plan. Likewise, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) oversees a Flood Control Program geared toward building small flood control dams on tributaries upstream from rivers or large streams to serve as regional detention facilities and reduce downstream flooding effects. Of course, the Department of Environmental Quality also oversees stormwater management, but its purview of authority is generally with respect to the quality of the stormwater.

County governments have varying degrees of stormwater management, but most of their authority deals with the local stormwater aspects directly associated with its public roadway networks. Many have floodplain management aspects as well.

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However, at the local government level, say a municipality like a city or a town, stormwater management extends well beyond the regulatory floodplain. In a local government, stormwater management can include a host of activities, such as: planning of municipality-wide stormwater management efforts; review of public and private developments specializing on the stormwater and floodplain aspects; municipal capital improvement programs for both stormwater related issues and flood control matters; stormwater code enforcement efforts; illicit discharge investigations; construction inspections specifically regarding runoff, erosion, and sediment control associated with construction activities in direct compliance with the state General Permit OKR10; stormwater convey system mapping, monitoring, repairs, and performance oversight; permit efforts associated with earth modification activities, site drainage, and floodplain protection; coordination of environmental constraints and restrictions specifically with federal Clean Water Act, Sections 402 and 404; hazard mitigation efforts directly associated with stormwater and floodplain infrastructure; Community Rating System (CRS) oversight; National Flood Insurance Program oversight; floodplain management; oversight of the best practices requirements regulated through the state General Permit OKR04 for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System; oversight of the requirements for industrial stormwater activities as regulated through the state General Permit OKR05 for Industrial Stormwater requirements; stormwater utility fee program management; fee-in-lieu-of on-site detention program requirements; and above all, interactions with the municipality's administration and governing bodies couples with addressing the public concerns with most generally stormwater related issues.

I know some people refer to all aspects of runoff as floodplain management because it incorporates all of the various aspects of non-regulatory and regulatory floodplains. And it is. Other people just consider the runoff effects outside of the regulatory floodplain as local drainage. And they're right as well. But, in my opinion, all effort associated with runoff outside of the regulatory floodplain is significantly better defined and much easier to communicate to the public, who most likely is not as well-versed in these matters as the stormwater professional, as simply stormwater management.

For me, this is the concept that the Board voted to embrace more fully, with a specific focus on enhancing and expanding the organization's sphere of influence within the state of Oklahoma. The Board wants the organization to be the "one-stop-shop," if you will, for all things stormwater. The Board wants the organization to present a united voice on all stormwater matters within our state. Again, for me, this makes perfect sense. Above all, I hope this helps clarify the discussions at the conference and provides some background on what the Board has investigated and considered over the past year.



FEMA Region VI Engages Rural Communities Receiving New Digital Flood Maps

Dustin Busse, Communications and Outreach | Risk Analysis Branch | Mitigation Division | FEMA – Region VI

Recently, FEMA Region VI kicked off its first Base Level Engineering to Flood Insurance Rate Map (BLE-to-FIRM) mapping coordination meetings in rural communities of Texas and Oklahoma. The BLE-to-FIRM meetings transform how new flood risk information based on BLE data is shared. They are part of FEMA's Paper Inventory Reduction (PIR) studies. These meetings inform communities that only have paper flood maps, or no maps at all, that they are about to receive new digital flood maps. Communities with the most current flood risk data can make more informed decisions, leading to a more resilient community.

During the B2F meetings, FEMA showed the capabilities of the Estimated Base Flood Elevation Viewer and the BLE-to-FIRM Viewer. Both tools supply community-specific flood risk data. These interactive meetings bridge the gap between locally observed flooding, what is currently on the paper map, and what areas the new BLE data identifies as at risk of flooding. Afterward, local officials felt more informed about the project's timeline, early adoption of BLE data and its uses and next steps.

After each meeting, FEMA conducted two surveys. The first survey was the Risk MAP Pilot Customer Experience survey. This gauged the effectiveness of the BLE-to-FIRM mapping coordination meeting. The second asked local officials about the effectiveness of the PIR Toolkit materials – a compilation of helpful resources that describe, in plain language, what BLE is and how it can be used and adopted early. FEMA will use the survey results to refine outreach materials and improve Risk MAP meetings.



Photo Caption: Local officials attend a BLE-to-FIRM meeting in Pushmataha County, Oklahoma.

To learn more about BLE, visit Region VI's BLE Resource Library on FEMA.gov. You can also reach out to Dustin Busse at dustin.busse@fema.dhs.gov.

FEMA's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)

FEMA has released a new notice regarding FEMA's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that will impact projects funded by FEMA programs.

The requirements of this rule would apply to grants for projects funding the new construction, substantial improvement, or repair of substantial damage under FEMA programs such as Individual Assistance (IA), Public Assistance (PA), Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) programs, and grants processed by FEMA's Grants Programs Directorate (GPD) (involving grants for preparedness activities).

The proposed [regulation](#) and companion [policy](#) may be viewed at the imbedded links.

2024 SAVE THE DATES

2024 Spring Technical Workshop

April 9, 2024

River Spirit Casino Tulsa
8330 Riverside Pkwy
Tulsa, OK 74137

2024 Stormwater Quality Technical Workshop

July 17, 2024

Gaillardia Country Club
5300 Gaillardia Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73142

2024 OFMA Annual Conference

September 15-18, 2024

Choctaw Casino Resort - Durant
4216 S. Hwy 69/75
Durant, OK 74701

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, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association publishes the BFE, 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:

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