

The BFE*

* BASE FLOOD ELEVATION

2025 Spring Technical Update

Brandon Claborn PE, CFM - OFMA Conference Co-Chair

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The Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association (OFMA) has a long-standing reputation for organizing exceptional conferences and workshops, and this year's Spring Technical Workshop was no exception. Held on April 3, 2025, at the River Spirit Casino, the event centered around the theme "Protecting Our Communities."

The workshop commenced with a warm welcome, invocation, and the National Anthem, followed by updates from key figures: Jesse Beck, EI, CFM, OFMA Chair; John Dean from ODEMHS; Jon Phillips, CFM, State NFIP Coordinator, OWRB; and Kenneth Schwab, who provided a ONE Water Update.

The morning plenary session delved straight into the workshop theme. John Dean and Greg Eaton from ODEMHS presented on "Preparing for Flood Recovery". John Ferry from the City of Claremore shared an insightful and moving account of "The City of Claremore's Response to a Natural Disaster" highlighting the challenges.

Attendees enjoyed a plated lunch, providing ample time for networking.

The afternoon featured breakout sessions across three tracks: Using Data to Protect, Tools that Protect, and Creative Solutions. The following presentations were delivered:

- Keith Byrne from Freese and Nichols presented "Flowing Beyond the Model: Resilience, Restoration, and Floodplains - Part 1" and "Part 2."
- Alan Dennis, PE, CFM, from Garver Engineers discussed "Atlas 15 - Building Resilience to the Impact of Extreme Precipitation."
- Larry Curtis, CFM, from the City of Bartlesville shared insights on "AI Assistance in Flood Warning Systems."
- Chris Hill from WSB presented on "GIS Tools for Hazard Mitigation Planning and Floodplain Management."
- Ron DeVaux from Watershed Geo discussed "Stormwater Infrastructure Erosion Projection Technology Options."
- Rachael Cooper, PE, CFM, from Cross Timbers presented "Old School and New School Meet at a Drop Basin."
- Austin Dugger, PE, CFM, from Freese and Nichols shared "Stephens Park - When the Rockets Don't Ship... We Keep It!"
- Dr. Carrie Evenson, PE, CFM, from Midwest City highlighted the "Value of Community Partnerships."
- Kenny Schwab and Patrick Wilson from the City of Broken Arrow concluded the day with discussions on "Case Study: When Development Isn't Working... You Must Work Harder" and "Case Study: Implementing OKR10 under Difficult Circumstances."
- A special thank you goes to Vice Chair Kenny Schwab and everyone who contributed to making this year's workshop a success.

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Letter from the Chair

Jesse Beck EI, CFM | Chair |
Assistant City Engineer and GIS Manager | City of Ponca City

A message from OFMA's Chair

Jesse Beck is the Assistant City Engineer and GIS Manager for the City of Ponca City. He is also the City's CRS coordinator and recently successfully defended the City's status as a CRS Class 5 Community. Jesse started school at the University of Missouri–Rolla in Civil Engineering but completed a degree in Geology and Geophysics – the first in a series of interesting life choices. Fifteen years of working in the environmental realm exposed him to GIS work, which he fell in love with, and he finally took a full time job managing Ponca City's GIS. When the Assistant City Engineer job later became available, he saw a chance to set an old wrong to right and at age 41 relearned how to factor a polynomial and passed the FE exam.

His day-to-day work includes designing and managing road and drainage construction projects, reviewing proposed developments, addressing floodplain inquiries, seeing to the varied demands of the CRS, maintaining the City's GIS, and discovering ways to integrate new data and share the system with City users.

Welcome to another installment of the BFE!

Listen, you're busy and I'm busy, so I'll keep this brief. I want to thank everyone who made our Spring Technical Conference the biggest yet. It was exciting (and yes, a little terrifying) to see so many faces, both familiar and new, in the crowd. As always, it was a team effort, and OFMA has the best team around for getting things done. We might overthink it. We might wait until the last possible second. We might even panic a little. But we get it done with style and class every. Single. Time. I also want to thank those of you who heard my plea to get more involved and have reached out. There's still plenty of room for your voice at our table, so please, if you're on the fence about coming to a meeting, give me or someone else on the Board a call and let's make that happen!

You've heard about a lot of uncertainty lately. Changes at FEMA and other agencies have us all wondering how federal dollars will circulate in the future. Regulations and priorities are shifting and that leaves us wondering if the laws and guidelines we use today will still be in place tomorrow. And AI is waiting in the aisle to change everything that's not being changed by man. It's a weird time to be alive, for sure.

But one thing that's nice about our field is that it's unlikely any government, computer program, or person is going to change evaporation, condensation, and gravity. It's still going to rain. That rain is still going to go downhill. And people will still need to be cautious of floodwater. Oklahomans have died in floods in the past month, tragic in its needlessness. This just underscores the challenge we all face and gives real meaning and urgency to our jobs regardless of outside changes. Help get us energized!

Call me at 580.761.0021 and tell me how you want to save a life today.

Jesse

Oklahoma MS4s Prepare for TMDL Implementation

Morgan Lozoya PE, CFM | OFMA Stormwater Chair | WSB H&H Project Engineer



MS4s across Oklahoma are preparing for the rollout of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements for various streams, bringing with it a wave of new monitoring and reporting obligations. Under the 2021 OKR04 permit, which took effect on June 1, 2021, a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) must be in place before any sampling can begin.

For many communities, especially smaller ones with limited staff, this has proven to be a major challenge. A QAPP not only requires review and approval by a qualified third-party reviewer before sampling begins, but also mandates that any significant changes throughout the life of the plan go through the same review process. On top of that, each QAPP must be overseen by a Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) who cannot directly report to the MS4 program manager, leaving many small teams scrambling to meet the requirements.

However, there's some relief on the horizon. ODEQ has confirmed that the QAPP requirement will only apply if an MS4 wants to use its sampling data to revise or remove a TMDL designation. Furthermore, ODEQ has indicated they plan to serve as the third-party reviewer for QAPPs, helping ease the burden on communities wishing to have a QAPP and trying to stay compliant. Join us at the Stormwater Quality Technical Workshop to hear from agency representatives and learn more about the changing requirements and upcoming OKR04 permit changes.

2025 SAVE THE DATES

Stormwater Quality Technical Workshop

July 17, 2024

Gaillardia Country Club
5300 Gaillardia Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73142

Annual Conference

September 21-24, 2025

Reed Conference Center
5750 Will Rogers Rd.
Midwest City, OK 73110

Congratulations to the winners of our Turn Around Don't Drown® Flood Safety Poster Contest

OFMA appreciates all the hard work of teachers, parents, and many others who supported this year's poster contest.

The students who entered also deserve our thanks.

We hope that by working together to spread the Turn Around Don't Drown® message. Floodwaters will harm fewer people in Oklahoma.

This year, more than 207 participants submitted their beautiful artwork.



CONTEST WINNERS

1st Place - Skylar Girty, Maryetta Schools

2nd Place - Zuri Rossman, MacArthur Elementary

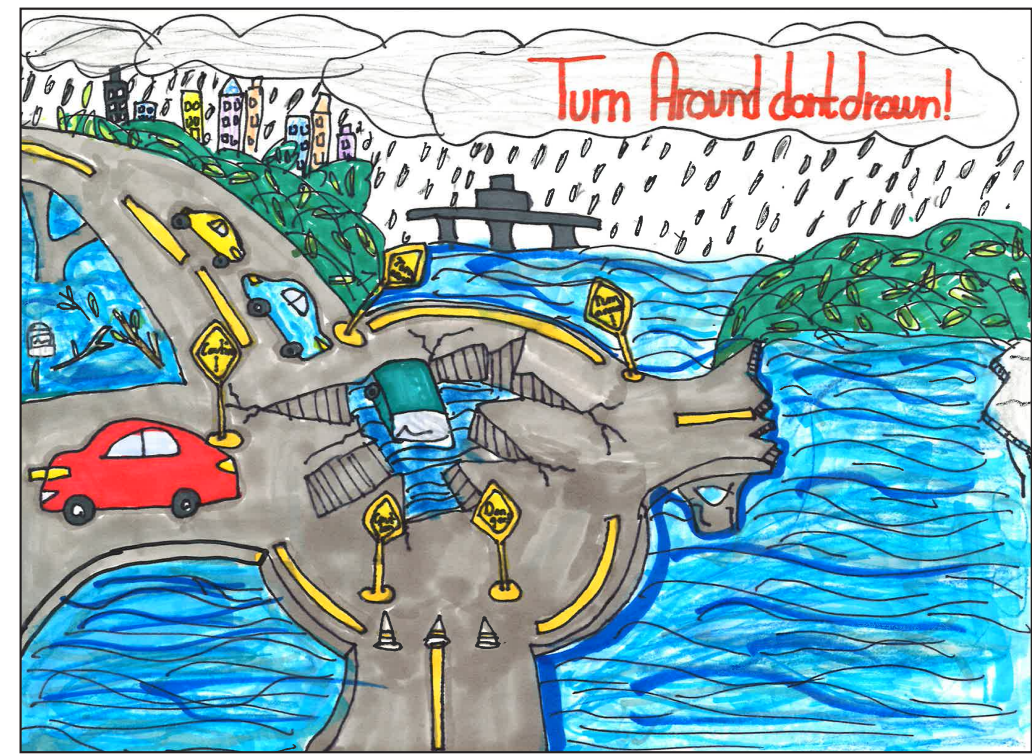
3rd Place - Paisley Mote, Bridge Creek Intermediate

Honorable Mention - Aiyana Woods, Bridge Creek Intermediate

First, second and third place winners receive cash awards in the amount of \$150, \$100, and \$50, respectively. The top 13 posters in the state are published in the OFMA Turn Around Don't Drown® calendar. Each student participant is awarded a certificate of participation. Teachers receive a letter of appreciation.

Thank you to the following schools for supporting student participation in this year's program:

- Adair Public Schools
- Bearden Elementary
- Bridge Creek Intermediate
- Canton Elementary
- Catalayah Elementary
- Hilldale Elementary
- Kiefer Public Schools
- Lincoln Elementary
- MacArthur Elementary
- Maryetta School
- Pernel Elementary
- Stone Canyon Elementary



1st Place - Skylar Girty, Maryetta Schools



2nd Place - Zuri Rossman, MacArthur Elementary



3rd Place - Paisley Mote, Bridge Creek Intermediate



Honorable Mention - Aiyana Woods, Bridge Creek Intermediate



Be the Calm in the Chaos – Navigating the Current World of Federal Grants

Wendi Lemons MEP | WSB | Sr. Planning and Grants Project Manager
Certification Committee, Community Planning & Econ. Dev.

Whether you are a municipality who relies on Federal Grant Funding for infrastructure repairs and equipment purchases or a consultant who writes grants for a living, the current federal grants environment feels a bit like guiding a small boat through rough seas. Constant changes in funding priorities, guidance updates, and evolving program requirements can make even the most seasoned professionals feel like they will never reach shore. In this environment, it's easy to feel caught between the pressure to stay compliant and the urgency to serve our communities effectively. This chaos, however, provides a unique opportunity to lead with clarity and purpose. It's up to us to seize it.

Remaining informed is one of the most effective ways to maintain control and confidence. Whether you're drafting proposals, managing awards, or supporting policy implementation, being proactive about updates from federal agencies, OMB guidance, and relevant training opportunities can help cut through the noise. Proactive information gathering can help you chart a more stable course.

Tuning into trusted sources, engaging with peers, and keeping a close eye on updates from federal agencies can empower you to make clear-headed decisions. Staying grounded in facts, rather than speculation, helps to replace anxiety with action. Even small habits, like setting aside time each week to review updates or attend a webinar, can make a big difference.

Building habits of regular communication—within teams, with funders, and across departments—creates a culture of awareness and preparedness. Staying current doesn't mean absorbing every headline, but rather focusing on what's relevant, timely, and actionable for your work.

Most importantly, remain calm and stay your course. Right your ship to regain stability if you must. The turbulence we see today won't last forever, and maintaining a steady mindset will help you lead with clarity and resilience. Your mission doesn't change just because the environment does—and your commitment to community impact, equity, and service will carry you through. Amidst all the noise, there is still meaningful work to be done, and by staying informed and focused, you'll be in a strong position to keep moving forward, even when the path is uncertain.



May is Flood Awareness Month in Oklahoma

Cheyenne Reynolds CFM | Oklahoma Water Resource Board |
CTP Coordinator



During May, Oklahoma's "Flood Awareness Month," the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB), the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association, and Governor Kevin Stitt are calling on all Oklahomans to be flood prepared.

While much of Oklahoma continues to face drought conditions, it is important to remember that when the ground is hard, floods can and do occur quickly even during otherwise dry conditions – a reality that helps make flash flooding the most common natural disaster in the U.S.

Before a flood, Oklahomans should determine if they live in or near a floodplain, check their flood insurance status, learn the flood warning system in their community, and find the safest route from their home to higher ground. Other preparations include the following:

- Make a list of your possessions. You should itemize your personal property, such as clothing, furnishings, and other valuables. Photos of your property are also helpful. Make copies of important documents.
- Keep a battery-operated radio and flashlight ready and in good working order.
- Have emergency food, water, and medical supplies on hand.
- Keep valuables, legal documents, and insurance policies safe.

During a flood, water levels and flow can quickly change. Remain aware and monitor local radio and television outlets. Avoid floodwater on foot or by vehicle at all costs. Evacuate immediately when water starts to rise. Other factors to be considered during a flood include the following:

- Don't walk through floodwater. It only takes 6 inches of moving water to knock you off your feet. Floodwater may hide submerged electric lines, waste/chemicals, or other harmful debris.
- If you are trapped by moving water, move to the highest possible point and call 911.
- Turn Around Don't Drown! Do NOT drive into flooded roadways or around a barricade. 12 inches of water can float a car or small SUV, and 18 inches can carry away large vehicles.

After a flood, Oklahomans should stay tuned to local news for updated information on road conditions, water quality issues, and other public directives regarding the flood disaster area. Here are some additional things to consider following a flood:

- Ensure water is safe to drink, cook, or clean with after a flood. Authorities may ask you to boil water for a while after a flood. If you have a domestic water use well that was flooded, a water quality test is strongly encouraged.
- Heed "Road Closed" signs and other traffic control measures and do not visit disaster areas. Your presence may hamper rescue and other emergency operations.
- Do not enter a flood damaged home or building until you are given the "all clear" by authorities. Before entering, make sure the electrical system has been turned off.
- Have the power company or a qualified electrician fix wires. Contact your insurance agent to discuss property damage. If you have a generator, follow proper safety procedures.

For more information, visit: <http://www.oklahoma.gov/owrb> OR <https://www.floodsmart.gov/>.



OKLAHOMA Water Resources Board

Below are some upcoming training opportunities. The **OFMA Special Topics** course is hosted by OFMA staff and features a wide array of speakers and topics. Some of covered topics include floodplain management ethics, stormwater management, flood resilience, hazard mitigation planning, post disaster event and rural floodplain management.

If you have questions please contact Cheyenne Reynolds, cheyenne.reynolds@owrb.ok.gov

OWRB-Floodplain Management 202	May 7	OHP Training Center 3600 N. MLK Blvd., OKC, OK 73111
OFMA Special Topics	May 7	OHP Training Center 3600 N. MLK Blvd., OKC, OK 73111
OWRB-Floodplain Management 101	August 12	OHP Training Center 3600 N. MLK Blvd., OKC, OK 73111
OFMA Special Topics	August 12	OHP Training Center 3600 N. MLK Blvd., OKC, OK 73111
OWRB-Floodplain Management 101	August 19	Central Park Main 1500 S Main, Broken Arrow, OK
OFMA Special Topics	August 19	Central Park Main 1500 S Main, Broken Arrow, OK
OWRB-Floodplain Management 101	September 9	GRDA GRDA Eco Center. 420 HWY 28. Langley, OK 74350

OFMA DRT Corner

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



Each year in this BFE, I always tell you to get ready for Spring Floods. Over the winter, you should have cleaned out the bar ditches and culverts of trees and underbrush, and removed debris so the spring runoff will have a place to flow without overtopping banks of the creeks, potentially causing flooded roadways and structures.

I also recommend that your community pre-register with the OFMA DRT so if you do have any type of natural disaster in the Special Flood Hazard Area and you need to have Substantial Damage Assessments performed you can just call and not have to go through emergency procedures to allow the DRT to volunteers come and help your community. Call or email me if you don't know what I am referring to. So, I again give you this reminder.

But I also want to give you my 2 cents on the action that was taken on Friday April 4th by the current Federal Administration. FEMA has announced it is terminating the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and canceling all BRIC grant applications from Fiscal Years 2020–2023. Any undisbursed funds will be returned to the Disaster Relief Fund or the U.S. Treasury.

ASFPM Executive Director Chad Berginnis responded to the decision, stating:

On Friday, FEMA announced that it is ending the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and canceling all BRIC applications from Fiscal Years 2020-2023. If grant funds have not been distributed to states, tribes, territories and local communities, funds will be immediately returned either to the Disaster Relief Fund or the U.S. Treasury. It has also canceled the fiscal year 2024 notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), where \$750 million in grants was to be allocated.

"The decision to dismantle FEMA's largest pre-disaster mitigation program is beyond reckless," said ASFPM Executive Director Chad Berginnis. "Although ASFPM has had some qualms about how FEMA's BRIC program was implemented, it was still a cornerstone of our nation's hazard mitigation strategy, and the agency has worked to make improvements each year. Eliminating it entirely — mid-award cycle, no less — defies common sense. Cutting funding from projects already underway will leave states and communities scrambling, increasing disaster risk to families and businesses instead of reducing it. The impact of this decision will be felt for decades to come."

Continuous updates are coming out, including guidance on next steps for outstanding BRIC projects impacted by these changes, which was released on April 16th, 2025. To find the latest FEMA advisories visit: [Newsroom | FEMA.gov](#). To read the full article and view ASFPM's resources, visit: [FEMA Ends BRIC Program, Leaving States in the Lurch](#).

Many of our communities have relied upon FEMA BRIC, FMA, PMA, HMGP and other grants over the years to mitigate flood damage which allows our communities to be more resilient to future flood damage. The dismantling of FEMA is wrong in my opinion. The Administration wants the states to take over disaster response and FEMA responsibilities. However, if the purpose of dismantling FEMA is to use those funds for other issues, then that money would likely not go to the states to create 52 mini-FEMAs. The states are responsible but building up a mini-FEMA program for Disaster response, like FEMA provided will take time and \$\$\$\$\$\$.

I suggest that you write to your Congressmen and Senators and express your opinions. ASFPM has a sample letter. If you are not an ASFPM member you cannot download it, but I can and will and send it to you. Follow updates from FEMA and continue to rely on reputable sources for guidance when making decisions. If you have BRIC/FMA grants, review the dashboard ([Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities and Flood Mitigation Assistance Obligations Dashboard: National](#)) to see how these changes impact your community.

Be careful out there this spring. We already have had very early flooding so this may be a bad springtime.

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