

The BFE*

* BASE FLOOD ELEVATION

2026 Stormwater Quality Workshop Update

by Brandon Claborn WSB, Conference Co-chair

On July 15, stormwater professionals from across Oklahoma gathered at Gaillardia Country Club in Oklahoma City for the annual Stormwater Quality Technical Workshop. Now in its third year at the venue, the workshop again drew strong attendance from industry experts and offered informative presentations, excellent facilities, and valuable opportunities to connect.

The event started with an opening plenary and a warm welcome from OFMA Chair, Kenneth Schwab, PE, SE, CFM who stressed the importance of including stormwater quality as part of our work in floodplain management.

Kathryn Perdue from Green County Stormwater Alliance (GCSA) and Cailyn Prather from Central Oklahoma Stormwater Alliance (COSWA) began with an introduction to their respective agencies and the support they provide. Then, Gabriel Stevens from ODEQ updated us on what is new at the department including OKR04 updates while introducing the new ODEQ MS4 Program Coordinator, Thomas Fuentes.

Craig Fairbaugh with Contech Engineered Solutions provided twenty years of insight on stormwater filtration media, including best practices and lessons learned from years of actual field experience. We closed out the morning session with an update from Dr. Jason Vogel, PE, with the University of Oklahoma and Dr. Jamie Schussler, with Oklahoma State University. They followed up their 2025 presentation introducing the mission of the Great Plains Stormwater Center of Excellence, with an update on the program.

After a networking lunch, attendees joined breakout sessions focused on General Topics, Inspections and Reporting, and Research Topics.

- The General Topics session was moderated by Patrick Wilson from the City of Broken Arrow. Julianna Monnot from the City of Sand Springs presented on MS4 and stormwater outreach opportunities, Chris Franks from the City of Stillwater discussed FOG programs, and Brian Lewis from the City of Tulsa concluded the session with a presentation on the Joe Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project.

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Words from the Chair

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

Well, it is that time of year again. Our annual conference is just around the corner. Hard to believe that a year has passed so quickly! It seems like yesterday that we were all in Midwest City enjoying a great conference and discussing our future as an organization. As for the OFMA Board, we've made a lot of progress behind the scenes over the past year, yet there is still more to do.

The Board met in October at its annual Strategic Planning Retreat. Under the leadership of Past-Chair, Jesse Beck, the Board accepted the challenge and made it a mission this year to accomplish several important initiatives. The most critical aspect of this mission was determining how we can make OFMA more resilient in its leadership and more accessible to our young professionals. These challenges are of the utmost importance to our organization. I'm pleased to share that we've already taken meaningful steps to address these challenges, and we continue to make steady progress on several others.

OFMA implemented an expanded organizational structure which included several honorary officers. The goal was to include the committee chairs as honorary officers of OFMA. In addition, we created a few new voting officers. One of the most important additions was the creation of the Young Professional Officer position on the Board. Embracing our young professionals within the organization and including them in the future direction is imperative to our future success. I am excited to see this aspect unfold.

Maybe the most important steps of all include establishing a Search Committee for an Executive Director. Although we have not completed this effort, it is ongoing, and we have started the process. The Executive Director is crucial for the organization as we continue to grow and embrace more stormwater aspects within the state. Likewise, the Board has

created a new position, Assistant Treasurer, to help ensure that the organization has the proper checks and balances in place plus added redundancy regarding our finances. It is overwhelming to think that OFMA has had only one treasurer over our 37-year history! That is mindboggling. We absolutely had to get others involved in this aspect. I am excited to report that this has now been accomplished, and the learning process has begun.

We have more to do! We need to support and transition the Professional Development and Certification Committee Officer to another member. The position is much like the Treasurer in the sense that it has been performed by one person for decades! Now we need to ensure we have the people in place to transition that leadership role within the organization. We plan to do something similar to what we did with the Assistant Treasurer's position. Create an understudy, if you will, to allow time to train and learn the ropes. If you are interested, please seek out a Board member at the upcoming conference.

As you can see, the Board has had a very busy and active year. I am excited about the steps we have taken as an organization and even more excited that we are poised for new leadership to join us within the organization. As I have stated before, the strength of the organization is its leadership. The leaders help grow the power of the members and help guide us as one united voice. We have had a great history of tremendous leadership. I believe there are new and exciting opportunities for others within this organization. Leadership starts with you!

In closing, I encourage you to get involved within OFMA and become a part of the leadership team. You need us, and we need you! I look forward to working with you.

Kenneth D. Schwab

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- The Inspections and Reporting session was moderated by Morgan Lozoya from WSB. Cailyn Prather from the City of Yukon opened with a presentation on construction site compliance for Phase I and II MS4s. Michele Loudenback and Michelle Chao from the City of Norman then led a construction inspection role-playing activity. The session concluded with Morgan Lozoya from WSB, Josh Martin, and Brett Callahan from Rogers County sharing IDDE lessons learned.
- The Research Topics session was moderated by Dr. Jason Vogel from the University of Oklahoma and Dr. Jaime Schussler from Oklahoma State University. The session highlighted stormwater management research presented by University of Oklahoma students Nitu Adhikari, Ian Erwin, and Jennifer Albert; Oklahoma State University students Holly Schnettler, Mamata Pandey, and Connor Bailey; and East Central University student Adrian Odhiambo.

The afternoon plenary featured Allison Whitsitt with WSB, who explained the connection between stormwater solutions and the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS). A highly engaging panel on stormwater utility fees followed, moderated by Brandon Claborn with WSB. Panelists included Sophia West from the City of McAlester, Zack Henson from the City of Stillwater, Kenneth Schwab from the City of Broken Arrow, and Carrie Evenson from Midwest City.

A special thank you goes to SWQ Chair, Morgan Lozoya, and those who helped make this year's workshop successful.

Register Today for the Annual Conference in Tulsa

September 21-23, 2026
Osage Casino Hotel
951 West 36th Street North
Tulsa OK

[Register Today](#)

Calling Grade School Artists!

Turn Around Don't Drown Flood Safety Poster Contest

Each year more deaths occur due to flooding than any other thunderstorm-related hazard. Why? The main reason is people underestimate the force and power of water. Many of the deaths occur in automobiles that are swept downstream. Many drownings are preventable, but too many people continue to drive around the barriers that warn you that the road is flooded and Turn Around Don't Drown. Participation in the Turn Around Don't Drown Flood Safety Poster Contest helps children learn and inform their parents about flooding hazards. A particularly timely subject given last year's record flooding. Plus, students and their teachers could win cash prizes. If this is something your local school (third through fifth graders) would like to participate in, please contact your Region Representative (contact information on Page 9) to receive calendar contest guidelines. Calendar requests deadline April 1, 2027.



Preparing for Oklahoma's New Camp Safety Law: Understanding House Bill 1675B

By Keli Cain, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management

In Oklahoma, we know that planning ahead for flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, and other hazards is an important part of keeping people safe. Now a new law establishes emergency preparedness and safety requirements for youth camps, camp facilities, outdoor programs, and recreational campgrounds, helping camp operators be ready to protect campers and staff when emergencies occur.

House Bill 1675, authored by Rep. Josh Cantrell (R-Kingston) and Sen. Ally Seifried (R-Claremore), takes effect on November 1, 2026, with an initial compliance deadline of January 1, 2027. To ensure compliance, camp operators and local jurisdictions must understand their specific statutory requirements.

Who is Affected?

The Act applies to all camp facilities, youth camps, and outdoor programs operating in Oklahoma. This includes day, overnight, seasonal, and specialty camps serving individuals under 18. Programs operated exclusively by parents for their own children and certain single-day programs are exempt. Recreational Campgrounds are also included in the law but have different requirements. More information is provided below.

Requirements for Youth Camps and Outdoor Programs

By January 1, 2027, camps and outdoor programs must complete two safety documents and submit them to their county emergency management director, with updates every three years.

1. Site-Specific Hazard Assessment: Identify applicable severe weather hazards, such as flooding, tornadoes, high winds, wildfires, or extreme temperatures, proximity to hazard exposure zones, building vulnerabilities, evacuation routes, and shelter-in-place locations.

2. Emergency Action Plan (EAP): Maintain a written plan addressing severe weather monitoring, decision-making authority, evacuation versus sheltering criteria, accountability, and post-event communication and reunification.

Youth camps or outdoor programs held at a separate camp facility must use the facility's hazard assessment and EAP rather than creating their own.

Additionally, camps and programs must maintain two independent weather alert methods (one non-cellular), an internal communication system, and parent notification procedures and must provide access to storm shelters. Staff must receive annual training on hazard recognition, and camps must conduct periodic drills and maintain training records. Prior to participation, camps must provide a written disclosure of severe weather hazards and obtain an acknowledgment of receipt from participants (or parents/guardians, if the participant is a minor).

Recreational Campgrounds

Under Section 10 of the Act, recreational campgrounds are authorized to design and maintain campgrounds for flood and weather protection. They must develop written EAPs identifying location-specific hazards, evacuation routes, and warning systems. Campground operators must review plans annually and file them with the emergency management director for their jurisdiction by January 1 of each year.

Local Authority & Resources

The County Emergency Management Director serves as the regulating authority under the Act. County directors are responsible for reviewing and filing assessments and plans, adopting local rules (including variance procedures), inspecting training records, and carrying out necessary enforcement. Camp operators are encouraged to contact their county emergency management director soon as they prepare to meet the new requirements.

OEM also recommends counties and municipalities consult their district attorney or other legal representative for guidance on their authority and adopting rules or ordinances.

Floodplain managers can also be a valuable resource as camp operators identify flood hazards, understand local flood risk, and consider appropriate evacuation and warning procedures for camp facilities.

In July, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) hosted an introductory meeting to bring together associations and agencies impacted by the new law or who may provide resources for compliance. Attendees included OFMA, the American Camp Association, Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma (ACCO), Oklahoma Municipal League (OML), Oklahoma Emergency Management Association

(OEMA), Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB), and others. The meeting was convened to help share the specifics of the new law, raise overall awareness, and connect organizations with resources.

With the new requirements taking effect this fall, now is the time for camp operators and local jurisdictions to start preparing. Implementing these requirements now will help camps be ready for a safe and fun 2027 camp season.



Find more information online, including emergency management contacts, EAP template resources, an implementation checklist, and more online at [Oklahoma.gov/oem/campsafety](https://oklahoma.gov/oem/campsafety).

The Money's Back, But Rules Are Changing

WHAT BRIC, FMA, AND SWIFT CURRENT LOOK LIKE IN 2026, AND HOW TO GET READY

By Wendi Lemons, WSB

After more than a year of stops, starts, and lawsuits, federal hazard mitigation dollars are moving again. FEMA reopened the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and released a new Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) funding cycle - good news for Oklahoma communities that have been sitting on mitigation projects while waiting for a funding source.

However, the programs that came back are not the same programs that left. This article walks through what has changed and what jurisdictions should be doing right now, before the next Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) drops.

What's Different This Time

Several changes have shown up across BRIC and FMA this year, and floodplain managers should expect them to carry forward into future cycles:

Shovel-ready projects score dramatically better. BRIC's scoring now awards up to 30 points for projects at 90 to 100 percent design, compared to roughly half that for a project at the 30 percent design minimum. A well-developed concept is

no longer enough to be competitive.

Phased projects are effectively gone. FEMA discouraged, and in practice eliminated, the multi-phase approach that allowed communities to spread a large project across several funding cycles. The maximum BRIC performance period also dropped from 48 months to 36 months, so applicants need a realistic plan to go from award to construction inside a shorter window.

Planning and scoping money is drying up. Hazard mitigation plans are no longer an eligible BRIC activity, and FEMA removed project scoping as an eligible expense under FMA Swift Current. Capability- and capacity-building funds must now tie directly to a specific infrastructure project or building code adoption effort rather than general planning.

Application windows are short, and state deadlines are shorter. FMA's federal window ran roughly ten weeks. States and pass-through entities are setting internal pre-application deadlines well ahead of FEMA's own deadline, which means the effective window for a local jurisdiction to pull together a full application is often just a few weeks.

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Other scoring and policy shifts. FEMA eliminated the BRIC National Review Panel scoring step, reduced emphasis on Justice40 and disadvantaged community designations, rescinded the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, and removed climate change references from Hazard Mitigation Assistance guidance. Meanwhile, adopting the 2021 or 2024 editions of the International Building Code (IBC) now carries a scoring advantage.

What Jurisdictions Should Do Now

With shorter windows and a strong preference for ready-to-go projects, the work that wins a grant now happens mostly before the NOFO is ever published. A few practical steps:

- Review hazard mitigation plans, participate in plan update processes, and take the necessary steps to keep plans from expiring.
- Identify and rank candidate projects today. Do not wait for a funding announcement to decide what you would even apply for.
- Advance design on your top projects. Since design maturity now drives a large share of the score, moving a project from a rough concept toward 30 percent design, and ideally further, pays off directly.
- Start the benefit-cost analysis (BCA) early. FEMA's BCA process takes real time to document properly, and having a completed BCA in hand before a NOFO opens removes one of the biggest bottlenecks to submitting on time.
- Get environmental and historic preservation review moving. These reviews are frequently the longest pole in the tent and can be started well before a funding source is identified.
- Procure grant writing, engineering, and grant management support ahead of the NOFO, not after. Short application windows do not leave time to run a normal RFQ or RFP once the clock starts. Consider an on-call or pre-qualified consultant contract so support is already in place when a NOFO drops.
- Check your building code adoption status. Adopting the current IBC edition is a low-cost step that improves competitiveness on multiple programs.

- Line up local match and council or board approval in advance. Cost-share obligations have not gone away, and internal budget approvals often take longer than the application window allows if they are not started early.
- Stay in contact with your State Hazard Mitigation Officer. State pass-through deadlines are typically earlier than FEMA's, and state staff are the first to know when a new NOFO is coming.

Don't Overlook State Financing: OWRB

Federal mitigation grants get most of the attention, but the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) has been active this year too, and its programs can help with local match, complementary drainage work, or projects that do not fit neatly into a FEMA category.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). OWRB's SFY 2027 Intended Use Plan makes roughly \$272.5 million available for below-market-rate financing, at approximately 40 percent below typical municipal rates, for projects including stormwater retrofits, green infrastructure, streambank stabilization, riparian protection, and other non-point source activities. Eligible communities in OWRB's affordability tiers can receive principal forgiveness of 25 percent on a portion of their loan, and non-point source projects can qualify for up to \$1 million in forgiveness annually. For a community trying to fund the local match on a BRIC or FMA award, or to finance a stormwater component that FEMA will not cover, CWSRF is worth a call to OWRB's Financial Assistance Division early in project planning.

New state water infrastructure funding. In June 2026, the Oklahoma Legislature approved roughly \$73 million in additional water and wastewater infrastructure funding administered through OWRB, including a new \$35 million Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Investment Program and \$10 million in additional Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) grants, alongside continued Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and emergency grant funding. Most of this is aimed at drinking water and wastewater systems rather than flood control specifically, but it is a reminder that OWRB is a moving target worth checking regularly, particularly for communities

pairing a flood mitigation project with broader utility or drainage upgrades.

The Bottom Line

Federal funding is tentatively flowing again, which is welcome news after a year of uncertainty. State tools like OWRB's financing programs are a useful complement to it. But the programs that reopened reward jurisdictions that treat project readiness as an ongoing effort rather than a scramble that starts the day a NOFO is published. Communities that use this quieter period between cycles to identify projects, advance design, and line up technical and financial support will be in a far stronger position the next time BRIC, FMA, Swift Current,

or another mitigation program opens its doors.

For More Information

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants: [fema.gov/grants/mitigation](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation)

FEMA Notices of Funding Opportunities: [fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/notice-funding-opportunities](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/notice-funding-opportunities)

FEMA Swift Current: [fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/flood-mitigation-assistance/swift-current](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/flood-mitigation-assistance/swift-current)

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Mitigation Section: oklahoma.gov/oem

Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Financing Programs: oklahoma.gov/owrb/financing.html



OKLAHOMA
Water Resources Board

FY'27 Floodplain Administrator Accreditation Renewal

A New Accreditation Year Is Underway!

The new Floodplain Administrator (FPA) accreditation year officially began **July 1, 2026**, and there is an important change for the FY'27 accreditation year: **all FPAs renewing their accreditation are now required to submit a renewal application to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB).**

Whether you are working toward completing your annual requirements or are ready to renew, now is the time to get started. **Renewal applications are required for every FPA seeking to renew their accreditation for FY'27.** Be sure to complete your required training and submit your renewal application to maintain your accreditation.

Still Need Training? We Have Opportunities Remaining!

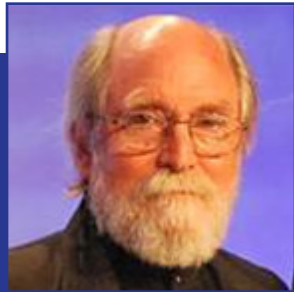
There are still several in-person Floodplain Management training opportunities available across the state:

- September 15 – Ponca City
- October 13 – Ardmore
- November 3 – McAlester

These remaining classes provide an excellent opportunity to complete your training requirements before submitting your FY'27 renewal application.

Don't wait until the end of the accreditation year! Review your requirements, register for an upcoming class if needed, and remember to submit your **FY'27 renewal application**. Renewal applications are now a required part of the accreditation process for all FPAs renewing their accreditation.

For questions about FY'27 accreditation, renewal applications, or training opportunities, contact the OWRB Floodplain Management team.



OFMA DRT Corner

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

How Far Have We Come??

This week we lost a historic member of the OFMA Family. Harold Springer was involved in OFMA, OWRB, and Dept of Agriculture, but was always involved in the lives of those who were in need after a disaster. I was blessed to have known Harold most of my career on and off. I still have some of his files that he gave me when he decided to clean out his home. He will be sorely missed, but always in our hearts.

So that brings me to the point of my opinion today. Those of us in this watershed/stormwater/floodplain business seem to be getting fewer and fewer and the baton needs to be handed down. It is up to each of us to promote future career paths for the rain will not stop, the storms will continue to pass through and flooding will be forever. Remember “It will Rain Again, It will Flood Again.” It happens all the time in some parts of the world every day almost, as we see on the TV news. And the storms are becoming more devastating, higher intensity and more frequent – even during a period of drought.

I find myself having to teach, and re-teach, and re-teach what stormwater runoff is all about, what floodplain management is all about, how to prepare and file a Floodplain Development Permit, or properly complete an Elevation Certificate, or share the regulations of elevating a structure at or above the BFE and the methods that can be used successfully. It’s now

been almost 60 years since the NFIP was authorized and FEMA was created as a manner in which to not only provide flood insurance but also to regulate development, and more and more to respond to a disaster – flood, fire, strong winds, tornado, earthquake, and hail.

We as community leaders are now being asked to step up even more for disaster response – FEMA, in whatever form it is shaping into, is not going to be the knight in shining armor – coming to rescue the damsel in distress. It is we, the communities (State and Local) that will have to provide the method and funding mechanism for future disaster response and future mitigation measures. And it all starts with proper development.

The number of disaster claims within the SFHA is reducing, but the areas on the fringe and outside (0.2%) and greater are the ones being hit the hardest.

We all need to do our best to make certain that future generations who are going to take our place are knowledgeable, experienced, and dedicated to our professions. So, I ask that you support the young people you know or work with by mentoring, identifying possible future engineers or planners or career opportunities in our fields of hydrology, hydraulics, water quality, stormwater management, floodplain management, construction, environmental science, etc.

It is our responsibility to secure the future.

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