

**FINAL NOTICE AND PUBLIC EXPLANATION
OF A PROPOSED ACTIVITY IN A 100-YEAR FLOODPLAIN**

To: All Interested Agencies, Groups & Individuals

This is to give notice that the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NCEM) on behalf of the Responsible Entity, the North Carolina Department of Commerce (NCDOC), has conducted an evaluation as required by Executive Order 11988, in accordance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management, to determine the potential affect that its proposed activities in the 100-year floodplain (hereinafter referred to as the floodplain) for Hurricane Matthew Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Homeowner Recovery and Rental Programs under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL 93-383) will have on the human environment.

In accordance with that process, the state has made a final determination that locating the proposed activity in the floodplain is the best alternative as summarized in this notice. This notice satisfies 24 CFR Part 55.20 (g), Step 7 of the eight-step decision-making process.

Proposed Activity in the Floodplain

Proposed activities for single-family housing under the Homeowner Recovery and Rental Programs include: repair/rehabilitation; elevation; reconstruction; and reimbursement of repair costs incurred by homeowners within one-year of Hurricane Matthew. All homes reconstructed within a floodplain will be constructed on the same footprint and elevated.

While the process of confirming house locations within Cumberland County is currently in progress, some of the potential applications are anticipated to be located within the floodplain. There are approximately 36,480 acres of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapped floodplain within Cumberland County based on the current Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) available at <http://fris.nc.gov/fris/>.

Reasons Why the Activity Must be Located in the Floodplain

The Hurricane Matthew CDBG-DR Homeowner Recovery and Rental Programs will provide funding to repair/rehabilitate, elevate, and reconstruct single-family housing (1 to 4 residential units, including mobile homes) affected by Hurricane Matthew in Cumberland County. In addition, these programs will reimburse property owners for costs incurred for repair of their homes within one year of Hurricane Matthew. The best available data suggest that 507 homes in Cumberland County sustained damage due to Hurricane Matthew and may seek funding through these programs. Some of the potential applications are anticipated to be located within the floodplain.

As a result of the proposed activity, there will be no increase in density or change in land use since all work will be conducted within existing building footprints. Homes will be elevated thereby improving the functionality of the floodplain. Elevation of homes, implementation of flood mitigation measures, and the requirement to maintain flood insurance on the property into perpetuity will serve to minimize the threat to life and property from future storms and flooding, thereby providing resiliency to individuals and Cumberland County as a whole. These actions will provide safe, disaster resistant, and affordable housing for residents impacted by Hurricane Matthew that is crucial to the long-term safety and stability of Cumberland County.

List of the Alternatives Considered

Two alternatives to locating the proposed activity in the floodplain were considered: “No Action”; and “Home Buyout”.

No Action

The “No Action” alternative would mean that residential property owners whose homes are located in the floodplain and were substantially-damaged (i.e., repair costs exceed 50 percent of the structure’s pre-disaster market value) as a result of Hurricane Matthew would not receive financial assistance for needed repairs/rehabilitation, elevation, or reconstruction; and comprehensive building standards that incorporate flood mitigation measures would not be implemented. Without financial assistance, the cost of these activities will likely be overly burdensome for the majority of property owners, and these property owners may not be able to recover and have safe, disaster resistant, and affordable housing. Without financial assistance to elevate their homes, their homes would be more vulnerable to future storms and floods with continued risk to both life and property, and their property’s functionality as a floodplain would not be improved. Furthermore, Cumberland County would not recover from the impacts of Hurricane Matthew, and the County would lack the long-term resiliency needed to minimize impacts from future storms. The “No Action” alternative would not address the County’s need for safe, disaster resistant, and affordable housing; and it would not contribute to the long-term recovery and economic revitalization of the County.

The “No Action” alternative would not provide reimbursement assistance to property owners who incurred costs to implement emergency and necessary repairs to their homes within one year of Hurricane Matthew. Lack of reimbursement assistance would result in a negative effect on the individuals and the local economy. Homeowners in future storm events may be dissuaded and financially incapable of making immediate and necessary repairs to their homes and property, and homes would be allowed to deteriorate. Additionally, these property owners may not have elevated their homes or implemented flood mitigation measures as part of the implemented repairs due to the significant expense of these additional activities. Without financial assistance, these homes would not be adequately protected against the impacts of future storms and flooding, and there would be no improvements to the floodplain.

Home Buyout

The “Home Buyout” alternative would involve the purchase of properties inside the floodplain that were substantially-damaged by Hurricane Matthew. Once acquired for buyout, the single-family homes would be demolished, and the vacant land would revert to its natural state. Sellers would be moved to newly-constructed homes at new sites outside the floodplain, or sellers would be free to utilize the sale proceeds to purchase pre-existing homes outside the floodplain. The “Home Buyout” alternative would result in the social and financial ruin of many of the communities in Cumberland County since there is currently an inadequate supply of safe, decent, and affordable housing in those communities and in the County as a whole to accommodate the vast number of property owners that would be looking for pre-existing homes or new home sites outside the floodplain to which they could relocate. This would result in a large number of residents moving out of Cumberland County which would adversely impact the stability of the County’s economy. Many property owners would not be willing to sell their homes because they do not want to leave their communities. Their damaged homes would remain unrepaired (often in conditions that are unsafe) and would not be elevated or modified to incorporate flood mitigation measures; therefore, the

potential for adverse impacts associated with future storms and floods would not be adequately mitigated.

Although the “Home Buyout” alternative returns the floodplain to its natural state and is most protective to the individual since it results in them being relocated outside the floodplain, these benefits come at additional cost. Savings avoided by not elevating the homes, implementing flood mitigation measures, and paying for flood insurance would be more than offset by costs associated with demolition and removal of debris, the purchase price of the old home, possible buyout incentives, gap assistance between the price at which the state acquired the old home and the cost of the new home outside the floodplain, and administrative costs.

Mitigation Measures to be Taken to Minimize Adverse Impacts and Preserve Natural and Beneficial Values

Floodplains are areas adjacent to rivers, ponds, and lakes that are periodically flooded at different points in time. Floodplains are hydrologically important, environmentally sensitive, and ecologically productive areas that perform many natural functions. Floodplains are beneficial for wildlife by creating a variety of habitats for fish and other animals. In addition, floodplains are important because of storage and conveyance, protection of water quality, and recharge of groundwater.

Under the Hurricane Matthew CDBG-DR Homeowner Recovery and Rental Programs, all single-family homes that were substantially-damaged by Hurricane Matthew, are located in the floodplain, and receive financial assistance will be elevated and will include flood mitigation measures to avoid future flood damage. Elevation of homes within the floodplain will serve to minimize the threat to life and property, minimize losses from flooding events, benefit floodplain values, and promote long-term resiliency. Fund recipients will be required to maintain flood insurance on the property in accordance with the National Flood Insurance Program into perpetuity to minimize adverse impacts to life and property as a result of future storm events. All activities will be conducted in compliance with state and local floodplain protection procedures.

Conclusion and Public Comment

The state has reevaluated the alternatives to building in the floodplain and has determined that it has no practicable alternative. Environmental files that document compliance with steps 3 through 6 of Executive Order 11988 are available for public inspection, review and copying upon request at the times and location delineated in the last paragraph of this notice for receipt of comments.

There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in floodplains and those who have an interest in the protection of the natural environment should be given an opportunity to express their concerns and provide information about these areas. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information and request for public comment about floodplains can facilitate and enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks and impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas. Third, as a matter of fairness, when the Federal government determines it will participate in actions taking place in floodplains, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

All interested persons, groups, and agencies are invited to submit written comments regarding the proposed use of federal funds to support the proposed activity in a floodplain. NCEM will accept written

comments during the hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM delivered to: Michael Gagner, Deputy Chief of Resilience, NCEM, Attention: Disaster Recovery Comments, 4238 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4238. Alternatively, comments may be emailed to CDBGDR.Environment@ncdps.gov with "Attention: Disaster Recovery Comments" in the subject line. The minimum 7 calendar day comment period will begin the day after publication and end on the 8th day after publication. All comments must be received on or before July 12, 2018 to receive consideration. Further information can be found at the program website <https://rebuild.nc.gov/>, or by contacting NCEM at 919-825-2500.