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AMFM 17th Annual Conference Recap

By Larry Schock, AMFM Executive Director

The 17th annual Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) conference was held this year at Fairmont Hot Springs and it was our best attended conference yet! We had a full agenda of timely and interesting presentations and some great opportunities for networking at our evening socials. I hope that all of you attendees had a great experience and walked away from the conference with a little more information and a few more friends and contacts in the floodplain world.

As the Executive Director of the AMFM I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all of the AMFM Board members and DNRC employees who helped organize and run the conference. Your hard work greatly contributed to its success. I would also like to thank our sponsors for their generous support, along with the numerous organizations who had booths and displays. Without all of you folks this conference would not be possible.

After reviewing the evaluations from this year's conference (Yes, we actually do read them.) I would like to address a few items that were mentioned in the evaluations. The two comments that we have been receiving the most of for a couple of years now basically boil down to; the engineers want more technical presentations; and the nontechnical attendees want more basic presentations.

I will begin my response to these comments with a question of my own. Did you attend one of our Pre-conference Basic or Technical sessions listed on the agenda? Every year on the Tuesday morning before the official start of the conference we put on 4 hour long workshops covering basic floodplain concepts and technical topics. These separate sessions offer an excellent oppor-

tunity to enhance your conference experience, and I would encourage you to attend one of these sessions next year.

Other common comments that we receive concern people wanting more presentations and offering concurrent sessions. The AMFM would love to offer more presentations and to offer concurrent sessions. However the reality of the situation is that we simply do not receive enough presentations from you, our members, when we request them. Every year the AMFM must come up with 20-25 presentations to fill our agenda.

I would like to take this opportunity to challenge each one of you to do a presentation. If you have never given a presentation and are hesitant to do one for whatever reason, I feel that the AMFM conference is an ideal situation for your first one. We have a great group of folks that attend our conferences and relating whatever topic/situation that is important or unique to you or your area would be well received.

In closing I would like to paraphrase one of our more famous US Presidents. Ask not what the AMFM can do for you, but what you can do for the AMFM. I am the last of the original seven (7) founding members of the AMFM from 18 years ago. (It makes me feel old just to say that.), and our Board members have been on the board an average of about 6 years. In order to continue to offer these great conferences, learning opportunities, and to make a difference in the floodplain field we must continue to grow and revitalize ourselves as an organization. While our membership ranks have swollen, our internal support and organization has not. We need your involvement! When the torch is passed, will you be there to take it, or will you be the one standing by watching as it is dropped?

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AMFM Website Update

From AMFM Chair Lisa Oedewaldt

So many great things came out of the 2016 AMFM Floodplain Conference, but I'd like to talk about the Website. This was our first year using the new web host (wild apricot) that has so many options we still have not explored.

I urge our members to go and peruse the site, www.mtfloods.org, and look at the options. We are still building it as we learn the modules, but what we have right now is worth a look.

Our newest addition, to the standard conference, education & links, we have had for years are the COMMITTEES Page (<http://amfm.wildapricot.org/Committees>) and the FORUMS (<http://amfm.wildapricot.org/page-1834441>).

The Committee Page was created to get more involvement with our members. Some have stepped up to the plate to take over as Chair of some committees, which takes the board members and makes them moderators. So if you are interested in getting involved, please check out the committee's page and see where you belong.

The Forums were created to give a place for the local Floodplain Administrators to "Sound-Off" ask questions and see what else is happening in communities around them.

Don't forget to check out the Sponsor Page and see who helped make the 2016 Conference a possibility!!

If anyone has any comments, suggestions, edits, etc... for the website – shoot me an email at mtfloods@mtfloods.org, and lets make this better each and every year!!



GET READY—2017 AMFM CONFERENCE IN MISSOULA

EXACT DATES TBD

AND MARK YOUR CALENDERS FOR THE DNRC FLOODPLAIN RESOURCE SEMINAR:

8th Annual Montana DNRC
FLOODPLAIN RESOURCE SEMINAR
July 19-22 2016 | UM Helena College

This is a great opportunity to learn about issues affecting floodplain management in Montana. A few of the topics include Letters of Map Change updates, funding opportunities, and an overview of USGS StreamStats 4.0.

MEET THE NEW STATE FLOODPLAIN ENGINEER

Walt Ludlow comes to DNRC from MDT, where he has spent the last 15 years working in the Hydraulics Section in Helena, leading the Butte District projects. He received his B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Utah in 1994, and spent 6-1/2 years in consulting prior to working at MDT.



From Walt:

I'm from Utah, graduated from Park City High School and did a lot of skiing back in the day.

I have always had a major interest in water, from watching how it flows in a stream to creating hydraulic models of major flood events. In many ways water is everything yet it can also be very dangerous and destructive.

Goals: Support our local communities and continue working on efforts to bring the state's floodplain mapping into the digital age.

He can be reached at:
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A Word from your Regional Directors

The Pros and Cons of Elevating Garage Slabs

Todd Klietz, RS, CFM – Western Regional Director

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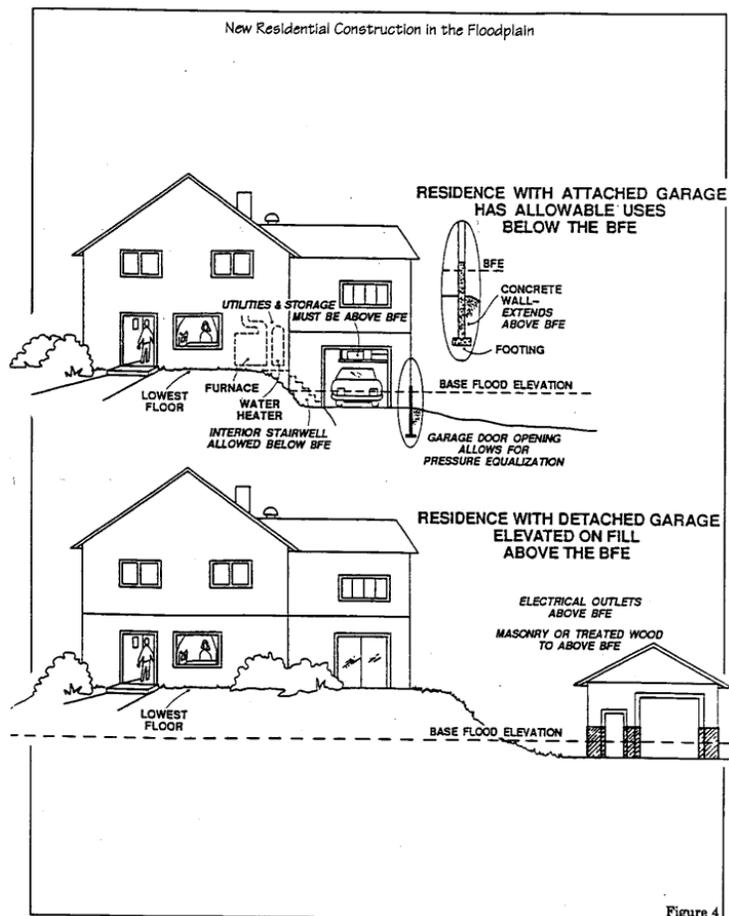
The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) allows attached garage slabs constructed at existing grade - beneath the base flood elevation - provided they are properly flood vented as per FEMA Technical Bulletin TB-1 and constructed with flood-resistant materials as per FEMA Technical Bulletin TB-2.

The word “garage” is not referenced in State Law per the Montana Floodplain and Floodway Management Act (MCA 76.5) nor in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM36.15). In 1992, DNRC published their Floodplain Management Guidebook For Local Administrators that states:

For new or substantially improved homes, apartments or other residential structures, the lowest floor – including the basement – must be elevated 2 or more feet above the base flood elevation. (The lowest floor of structures is illustrated in Figure 4.)

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A Word from your Regional Directors (Continued)

The diagram shows an attached garage at native grade with concrete stemwalls extending above the BFE with storage authorized above the vehicle. **“RESIDENCE WITH ATTACHED GARAGE HAS ALLOWABLE USES BELOW THE BFE”** is stated in bold caps. The diagram published by DNRC was produced in compliance with State Law and Administrative Rules that have not been amended in this regard since before the diagram was published. The only portion of this diagram not compatible with FEMA’s current requirements is that garage doors themselves can no longer be utilized for flood venting (although flood vents may be installed in garage doors).

DNRC recently began requiring Montana’s communities and counties to adopt floodplain regulations requiring attached garage slabs 2’ above the base flood elevation. When one Western County refused, DNRC indicated at the Commissioner’s adoption hearing that their proposed floodplain regulations would not be approved by the State and that the County would then be subject to sanctioning by FEMA. Without the benefit of statute or rule behind them – and in contrast to their 1992 direction - why would DNRC now require this? “Because we see attached garages converted into bedrooms or different rooms” was the response.

Unfortunately, *some* property owners do conduct prohibited activities and of course, Montana isn’t the only place this happens. Solutions employed by other communities in the National Flood Insurance Program include filing non-conversion declarations with the deed when approving such construction – that DNRC has subsequently refused to allow.

Until such time that the Montana Legislature and/or the DNRC amends Statute or Administrative Rule through a publicly vetted process that clearly states that attached garages must be 2’ above the base flood elevation, is it appropriate for the State to mandate local communities require property owners further obstruct the floodplain with increased fill displacing additional floodwaters onto neighboring properties, increasing development costs across the entire State – as a result of a few miscreants within local jurisdictions who apparently refuse to enforce their floodplain regulations?



ASSOCIATION OF
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MANAGERS

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To Protect People Today From What They Can't See Tomorrow

Save the Date's

G318 Local Mitigation Planning Workshop

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services will be hosting the FEMA G318 Local Mitigation Planning Workshop. This workshop will provide guidance on developing or updating local hazard mitigation plans. Participants will learn practical approaches and examples for how communities can engage in effective planning to reduce long-term risk from natural hazards and disasters.

Special topics during the workshop:

- *Drought Initiatives
- *Integrating Risk MAP into Mitigation planning
- *Incorporating Climate Change into your Risk Assessment

8:30 am to 4 pm July 21, 2016

8:30 am to 3 pm July 22, 2016

In conjunction with The DNRC resource seminar; Helena, MT

Helena College of Technology

Contact : Nadene Wadsworth

Deputy State Hazard Mitigation Officer

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Please call or email to reserve your seat or if you have any questions.

Hope to see you there!!!!



FEMA

