



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

SAVE
THE
DATE

4th Annual massFM Conference

October 26, 2023 8:30 AM-4:00 PM
College of the Holy Cross • Hogan Campus Ballroom
1 College Street Worcester, MA



REGISTRATION IS OPEN

for the

2023 massFM Annual Conference!

Register for the 4th annual massFM here:
[CONFERENCE REGISTRATION](#)

Watch for more information about the conference on the [massFM website](#) as more information about the agenda, schedule, and presentations will be forthcoming!

Call for Sponsors!

If you are interested in becoming a 2023 massFM Conference sponsor, please email massfloodplain@gmail.com.

Massachusetts Association for Floodplain Management (massFM)

We educate, promote, & inform on practices related to floodplain management.

We welcome and encourage readers to send us notices of training and other events, articles or other contributions to share with others in our community.

Please visit our website at www.massFM.org for additional articles and resources, and to sign up to receive future editions via email.

Contact: massfloodplain@gmail.com

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massFM Lunch and Learn

[Register Now](#) for our *September Lunch & Learn*

Thursday, September 7

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm.

You will be prompted to enter your Member ID.

Event will be held virtually through Zoom.

This month's topic is *Pollinate Now: Bioregional Strategy for Habitat Restoration in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed*

Presented by: Evan Abramson, MSc, Landscape Interactions

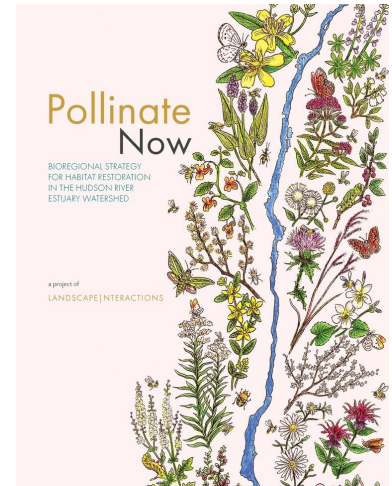
Pollinate Now is a comprehensive plan for creating and maintaining habitat on a wide range of landscapes, to support at-risk bees, butterflies and moths in the Hudson River Estuary watershed. While the designs, plant lists and management guidelines are based on the prevalent landscape conditions in the Hudson Valley, their relevance stretches far beyond the boundaries of a single property, town or watershed. The product of a year-long collaboration between designers, planners, scientists, activists, educators and citizens, this project endeavors to make pollinator habitat creation easy, exciting and aesthetically pleasing — and inspire landowners to view their properties as integral parts of a network of ecosystems that stretches throughout the watershed and beyond, into surrounding communities and across the wider bioregion.

Evan Abramson, MSc is a results-driven designer and planner on a mission to rebuild biologically diverse ecosystems through pollinator-plant interactions. As Founder and Principal of **Landscape Interactions**, he works closely with project partners along every step of the process, from conception through design, implementation and maintenance. Since 2019, Landscape Interactions has been responsible for over 300 acres of habitat installed in the Northeast, specifically targeting at-risk bee and lepidoptera species for each project location. He holds a Master of Science in Ecological Design from the Conway School of Landscape Design, Certificates in Permaculture Design and Biodynamic Gardening, and is the author of numerous publications, including *Pollinate Now*; Lincoln Pollinator Action Plan; Egremont Pollinator Pathway; and Great Barrington Pollinator Action Plan.

Registered attendees can earn 1 CEC.

Register now!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pcuytqzguEt3-dsE5g4uTq4KiQNXrTz7P#/registration>



ASFPM Annual Conference Highlights

Written by Joy Duperault, CFM



Some of you may have had the opportunity to attend the national Association of Floodplain Manager's (**ASFPM**) 47th annual conference in Raleigh in May; for those of you who didn't, here's a few highlights I encountered...

Jody Springer (Data Analytics Section Chief, FEMA HMA Mitigation) shared a lot of information about recent improvements in Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) methods, including:

The Office of Management & Budget has proposed to allow a reduced discount rate of around 3% for grants coming out in 2023—this means that many more projects will reach a cost-effective determination and be eligible for federal funding.

People who attend the T-MAC meetings (FEMA's Technical Map Advisory Committee) shared that FEMA is investigating how to add a map layer showing future conditions so that designers can more easily implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. (learn more here: **FFRMS**) FEMA won't be able to add this map layer without significant Congressional investment, so don't hold your breath on this one.

Some great examples of excellence in floodplain management around the country included:

Colorado's Mile-High Flood District Urban Stream Planning & Design manages flooding through projects that include intensive public engagement and are well accepted by their population. Watch a 9-minute video: **MHFD**

Robert S. Young, PhD, professor of geology at Western Carolina University recently published a paper titled "Oceanfront Retreat" that calculated the cost of keeping structures on the beach over time. He found that it's more expensive to continue beach nourishment rather than to remove structures in danger of coastal erosion damage. Visit the WCU Beach Nourishment Viewer: **BEACH NOURISHMENT** to find out more about a beach near you.

Harris County TX spends about \$1 billion/year to keep their flood maps updated. Their MAAPnext program serves 6 million people from 34 communities and they cover more than 2,500 miles of water conveyed between 1.5 million structures. (FEMA has mapped less than half of their stream miles.) Check it out: **MAAPnext**

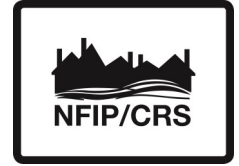
ASFPM has dozens of resources for floodplain managers! Guides for local officials, legal guides, training modules and a fantastic library of publications about flooding, mapping, mitigation and more. Explore these resources by starting at <https://www.floods.org/>

*Next year's annual conference will be in Salt Lake City, Utah June 23-27, 2024 (**ASFPM Events**). This event is always the best place to sharpen your floodplain management skills and learn from others in the USA and around the world. Plan now to attend!*

Joy is the Massachusetts NFIP coordinator.

Community Rating System Corner

A Handy Place to Stay Current on CRS Matters



Written by Shannon Hulst, CFM

Activity 520: Acquisition and Relocation

Activity 520 does not fall in the low-lying fruit category. To my knowledge, only two communities in Massachusetts get this credit. Acquiring and relocating properties is a substantial task to which many municipalities are not able to devote the necessary resources. However, if your community or residents in your community are considering any acquisitions or relocations, don't forget to look into earning CRS credit for them!

When a structure is demolished or relocated off of a floodplain parcel, the parcel must be maintained as open space in perpetuity. For CRS credit, the parcel can be managed by either the community or another entity like a land trust. (Note that the latter may not be the case for properties acquired through FEMA funding.)

While these removals are typically pursued using FEMA funding, this limits the amount of CRS credit a community can earn to 25% of the available points. But this is one of those activities where CRS credit should absolutely not be the motivator for pursuing a flood resilience activity: this category rewards communities for a great flood risk reduction tool, but does not bestow a large amount of credit because each action protects only the one structure in question.

Repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss properties earn more credit than other structures here. They may also be more competitive in the grant process if that's the direction a community would like to go, so it's worth looking into whether a property falls into one of these categories and prioritizing those.

As floodplain managers know, removal from the floodplain through relocation or demolition is the best way to reduce the risk of flood damage to a structure and to limit a community's flood exposure: the fewer structures there are in the floodplain, the less recovery the community must engage in after a flood.

For more information, see section 520 of the CRS Coordinators Manual.

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary program within the National Flood Insurance Program that offers discounts on flood insurance in exchange for actions taken within a community that improve flood resilience. More information can be found at www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/community-rating-system and crsresources.org.

Shannon is the CRS & Floodplain Coordinator for Barnstable County through the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension & Woods Hole Sea Grant.

HUD FFRMS Rule

Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands

Written by Joe Rossi, ANFI, CFM

In an era of increasing climate change impacts and more frequent extreme weather events, the protection of floodplains has become paramount to ensuring the safety and sustainability of communities across the country. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has recently proposed a groundbreaking rule known as the Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands - Minimum Property Standards for Flood Hazard (HUD FFRMS) to address these critical issues and align their standards with executive orders in the past that establish the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS). The rule strengthens floodplain management standards by requiring higher elevations for new or substantially improved multi-family structures. To do this, it expands the floodplain for building elevation requirements and strongly suggests flood insurance in non-regulated areas. However, it has also brought concern from stakeholders about the cost to affordable housing to comply with the proposed requirements along with other concerns.

The HUD FFRMS rule aims to modernize and strengthen the existing floodplain management standards to better align with current flood risk assessments. To do this, HUD, in the proposed rule, suggests that they will expand the floodplain by requiring developers to follow three approaches to determine if a project must comply with new HUD elevation standards:

Climate Informed Science Approach (CISA), which uses yet to be determined mapping tools and/or maps to determine the floodplain based on climate science.

0.2 Percent-Annual-Chance Flood Approach (500-year Floodplain Approach): For non-critical HUD actions, where CISA maps or other types of CISA analysis are not available, but FEMA has defined the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain, the FFRMS floodplain would be defined as those areas that FEMA has designated as within the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

Freeboard Value Approach (FVA): If neither CISA nor FEMA-mapped 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain data is available, for HUD non-critical actions, the FFRMS floodplain would be defined as those areas that result from adding an additional two feet to the base flood elevation as established by the effective FEMA FIRM or FIS.

Should a structure fall into the new floodplain as defined above, HUD would require the structure to be elevated at or above the newly determined flood elevation or the FEMA BFE, whichever is higher. Additionally, the structure would have to comply with existing building codes and regulations which may have even higher standards.

The main goals of the HUD FFRMS standard are to reduce flooding to structures and reduce flood insurance costs. Currently, the rule “strongly suggests” flood insurance be purchased in non-regulated areas but does not go as far as to require it in the FFRMS that is not regulated by the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

There are concerns from stakeholders around the rules affordability and multifamily vulnerability. In one comment letter, it is noted, “Raising FHA’s standard by two feet would conflict with 46 state freeboard decisions, discourage some code improvements or mitigation investments, and create a particular hardship for homeowners who recently retrofitted to a lower standard.”

Continued on page 7

HUD FFRMS Rule (Cont.)

Some commenters don't think the FFRMS rule goes far enough with one comment saying, "New construction that would be impacted by flooding and require funds for rehabilitation and repair – likely more than once – should be avoided."

The HUD FFRMS proposed rule signifies a significant step forward in enhancing floodplain management to safeguard communities from the devastating impacts of flooding. By updating standards, HUD aims to build a more resilient and sustainable future for the nation. However, achieving these goals will require collaboration, flexibility, and continued innovation to address the challenges posed by climate change, affordability, and its effects on flood hazards. As the rule advances, stakeholders must work together to strike a balance between development and environmental conservation to ensure the well-being of present and future generations.

Joe is the Chair of the MA Coastal Coalition.



FEMA Success Stories

Written by Lori Watson

We want to share your recent Hazard Mitigation Planning Success Stories! FEMA hosts a collection of [Mitigation Best Practices](#) on their website and is in search of new stories.

If you have recently updated your hazard mitigation plan and you went above and beyond the minimum FEMA requirements, or you have some innovative ideas please tell

us all about it! I am particularly interested to hear about what planners are doing differently to comply with FEMA's updated policy guidance around creating an equitable planning process and encouraging whole community participation during the planning process. This type of sharing is helpful to your peers and could be a great model for communities across the nation.

Check out the stories we've completed on the [Mitigation Planning Success Stories story map](#). It highlights success stories on plan implementation, plan integration, outreach, engagement and equity.

I am a Senior Planner with Michael Baker International and working as a FEMA contractor supporting this national project. If you have a success story to share or need more information, please email me at lori.watson@mbakerintl.com.

Lori is a new member to massFM and has joined the Communications Committee.

Job Postings, Notices, and Announcements



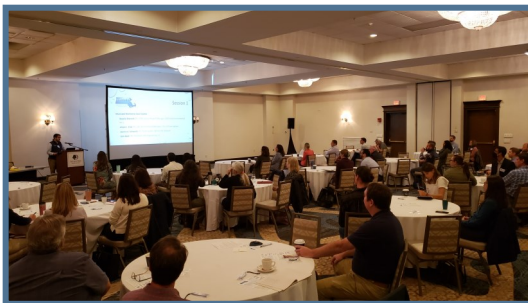
Congratulations to Jason Heyer on passing the CFM exam !

Jason Heyer currently works at Bracken Engineering, Inc. in Buzzards Bay, MA as an Engineering Project Designer with more than six years of experience focusing on residential and commercial floodplain development projects. He is a registered Certified Floodplain Manager and recently completed the Certified Floodplain Surveyor course administered by the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS). He is also an FAA Part 107 licensed Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) remote pilot and frequently utilizes drone photogrammetry to assist in project surveys. He holds memberships with the Massachusetts Association for Floodplain Management (massFM), the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) and the Massachusetts Association of Land Surveyors and Civil Engineers (MALSCE).

We've Got What You Need - CECs

Looking to earn more Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) Continuing Education Credits (CECs)? Here are a few upcoming opportunities:

- ◆ Sign up for the next free members only Lunch & Learn planned for September and you could earn 1 CEC. (see *massFM Lunch and Learn* on page 3, above). Keep checking the [massFM.org Events page](https://www.massfm.org/events) for other future Lunch & Learn meetings.



- ◆ Attend the massFM annual conference on October 2023 at Holy Cross in Worcester, MA (see page 1) and earn even more CECs!

For more information, contact: Shannon Hulst, Membership Chair at shannon.hulst@barnstablecounty.org

The Neponset River Watershed Association seeking to hire a Part-Time Green Infrastructure Specialist / Environmental Scientist!

- ◆ Please see the [Employment page](#) on their website for information about this position.

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Our mission at massFM is to create a forum for the exchange of local knowledge about floodplain management, to share that knowledge with the public, to inform municipal and statewide policies and procedures, and to improve the Commonwealth's ability to mitigate flood hazards now and in the future. massFM strives to be inclusive across multiple disciplines, regardless of means. We welcome you to join us.