



Floodplain Outreach

The City of Augusta is located along the mighty Savannah River and its floodplain in east-central Georgia. In addition to the Savannah's floodplain, there are many other areas that lie adjacent to, or near, the low, naturally flat land beside many of the community's creeks and streams. This low flat natural landscape is most often the area known as the "**floodplain**" (or in government speak terms as the "**Special Flood Hazard Area**") and has the potential to flood (become inundated with water) when channel capacity of the river, creek or stream is exceeded and overtopping of the channel occurs. This risk, or vulnerability, for flood becomes greater during any long periods of moderate rainfall, or during higher volume, short duration rainfalls. Along sections of Beaver Dam Ditch, Butler Creek, Crane Creek, No Name Creek, Oates Creek, Raes Creek, Rock Creek, Rocky Creek, Spirit Creek and their associated tributaries and branches, exist floodplains - which are low lying areas that are prone to flooding during periods of prolonged or heavy rain. There are also some areas within the City that are designated as **areas protected by the Augusta Levee** and they have a flood risk, as well.

Close to twenty percent of Augusta's land mass is in an identified floodplain (100-year or 1% annual chance; or 500-year or 0.2% annual chance) all put at a higher risk for flooding due the ever-changing **effects of the climate** – namely more violent storms, higher temperatures and changes in precipitation. These changes are expected to continue, or worsen, in the foreseeable future based on expert analysis.

Augusta has been affected by **24 flood events since 1996**, and has had two Disaster Declarations from severe flooding in the same period of time – one in 1990 (DD 880) and one in 1998 (DD 1209). Cumulative flood losses since 1978 when Augusta came into the National Flood Insurance Program have exceeded 3.2 million dollars. Future flood events will remain a threat in Augusta, GA – especially unpredictable events such as flash flooding and negative impacts from storm water runoff from heavy rainfall events. Floods affect people, property and the local economy.

The City has as a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, a flood buyout program of repetitively flooded structures, and ongoing efforts in conjunction with development related City departments to lessen or reduce the impacts from flooding. Augusta's goal within their **Floodplain Management Program** is to achieve the wise use of our community's floodplains. "Wise use" means both reduced flood losses and protection of the natural resources and function of floodplains.

Floodplains are natural areas that store floodwaters, convey floodwaters while reducing floodwater velocities, protect water quality, and recharge the groundwater. Floodplains also have other environmental, social and economic benefits, as well.

If your home is within a floodplain, it is important to **take steps to protect your property** from flooding. It is important to know how water flows around your home or business and plan accordingly. If your home or business is susceptible to flooding, you could raise your home or business on piers or columns,

so that the lowest floor is above the anticipated flood level. Additionally, you could install flood openings under the finished floor to keep pressure from building up on the foundation of the structure. Accessory buildings should be anchored to the ground to prevent floatation or lateral movement and anything built within the area that could be flooded should be built of flood-resistant materials. Property owners can also raise electrical and HVAC systems so that they are above the anticipated flood level. If there is a propane or other fuel tank on your property, they should be properly anchored into the ground so they cannot float away in flood waters and cause damage to nearby structures. In addition to outside damages, heavy rains can cause sewage to back up into basements of homes, even in areas outside of the floodplain. A floor drain plug, standpipe, or sewer backup valve can prevent sewer backup flooding from occurring in your home or business. A sump pump can be installed in the basement to remove seeping water or flood waters.

One of the most important steps that can be taken to protect your home or business, and your belongings (your contents), is to purchase **Flood Insurance**. Homeowner insurance policies do not cover damages from flooding (rising water) and an additional flood insurance policy needs to be purchased to protect your home or business from the costly negative impacts of flooding. The City of Augusta participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP); therefore, everyone can purchase a separate flood insurance policy backed by the Federal government, even if their property has flooded before. Some people have purchased flood insurance because it was required by the bank when they got a mortgage or home improvement loan, but these policies usually just cover the building's structure and not the contents. Under most circumstances, there is a 30-day waiting period before a flood insurance policy goes into effect; so, planning well in advance of storm season, is essential for proper flood protection.

More information on flood insurance is available at <http://www.FloodSmart.gov>.

Residents can also **help prevent localized flooding** by keeping the ditches, culverts, storm drains, and shallow stream-beds of our City's stormwater system, clear of yard waste, leaves, trash, limbs, foliage and vegetation, and other debris. These types of materials being present in the storm drainage system during a rain event could potentially impede the flow of storm water, clog the storm drainage system and cause flooding – these simple actions done by property owners can make a big difference in how well our storm water system functions. Remember, “Only rain down the drain”! You can report blocked storm drains or illegal dumping through 311. Do your part to protect our floodplains and keep Augusta safe!

Finally, know your **Flood Warning** terms. A Flood Watch means to be on the lookout for flooding. During a **Flood Watch**, there is a high likelihood that flooding will occur and you need to be prepared, at a moment's notice, if it does. A **Flood Warning** means that flooding is occurring, either City-wide, in certain areas, or along the river or certain creeks or streams. Stay informed during any rain event. Follow evacuation orders when issued by the local authority. Move to higher ground if you do not feel safe or if you are in an area subject to flooding. Never attempt to walk, drive or swim through moving flood waters or flooded areas. Just 6 inches of fast moving water can knock a person off of their feet, and less than 2 feet of swiftly moving water can sweep away heavy cars and trucks. Remember, if you can't see the pavement underneath, do not drive through a flooded area. Be Safe! **“Turn Around, Don't Drown”!**

Let's all do our part – it's easy to **be a good steward of our community's floodplains**. If you need more information on how to do that, contact your Floodplain Manager at (706) 821-1796 or your CRS Coordinator at (706) 821-1157.