

1 **(DRAFT) Fairfax County Flood Risk Reduction Policy**

2 June 4, 2025

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4 **A. Statement of Policy**

5 The intent of Fairfax County's flood risk reduction policy is to establish a framework of
6 programs, projects, and regulations to conserve floodplains and manage stormwater
7 with the goal of eliminating adverse flooding impacts within the established level of
8 service, as defined below. Not all flood risk can be managed, but Fairfax County can
9 reduce the incidence of adverse flood impacts to life and property, within limits.
10 Managing flood risk is a shared responsibility among the County, residents, and
11 businesses.

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13 **B. Application**

14 This policy will be used to promulgate regulations on land development through the
15 Fairfax County Code and County policies, prioritize the selection of capital projects to be
16 implemented by the County, and guide the implementation of programs that enable
17 residents and businesses to reduce their flood risk based on the level of service.

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19 This policy replaces the existing "County Policy Regarding Criteria and Procedures for
20 Establishing Stormwater Control Project Priorities for Funding Consideration
21 (Countywide)" approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on April 28, 1997.

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23 **C. Level of Service Established**

24 The County will pursue a level of service that aims to eliminate the flooding of habitable
25 structures during the 100-year storm event with a margin of safety to account for the
26 impacts of a changing climate, by adopting regulations and implementing programs and
27 projects. Future development, through continued revisions to County regulations, will
28 seek to provide adequate drainage control to safely convey the 100-year storm event.
29 The level of service will not account for adverse flood impacts caused by events greater
30 than the 100-year storm.

Adverse flood impacts for this policy are defined by the following criteria:

- Causes or exacerbates structural flooding during a 100-year storm.
- Creates or worsens erosive velocities during a 2-year storm event as defined by Chapter 124.1.
- Designated channels, pipes, and related appurtenances do not contain the 10-year storm event or the exceedance worsens.
- Post-development flows for 2-year and 10-year storm events exceed pre-development flows.

Storm events larger than those listed above exceed the County's level of service established in this policy. The County does not prioritize alleviating erosion during storm events exceeding a 2-year storm, nor water accumulation on roadways or in yards during storm events exceeding a 25-year storm.

D. Objectives of Land Development Regulations

Regulations on the development and redevelopment of land will, to the extent permissible by law:

1. Ensure that the obstruction of waterways is prohibited unless expressly authorized (i.e., roadway culverts and bridges).
2. Provide for the determination of the 100-year floodplain to the stated level of service.
3. Require demonstration of sufficient capacity to safely convey the design flood up to the stated level of service.
4. Not result in additional adverse flooding impacts on other property.
5. Not result in additional erosion impacts on other property.
6. Ensure that structures erected in areas prone to flooding are designed and constructed to resist the effects of flood hazards to include flood-proofing as appropriate.

- 61 7. Provide for safe direct access to structures above the 100-year storm elevation.
62 In the case of existing roads that do not meet this criterion, provide for safe direct
63 access to structures, within County control.
64 8. Preserve the natural character and function of land within the 100-year
65 floodplain.
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67 **E. Prioritization of Capital Projects**

68 As funding and staffing are available and approved by the Board of Supervisors,
69 DPWES will plan and construct projects in pursuit of the level of service. Those projects
70 undertaken by the County will be prioritized in this order:

- 71 1. Projects that are mandated by court order, state regulation, or federal regulation
72 for immediate implementation, or projects that address critical safety issues.
73 a. This includes remedial repairs to County-owned dams to ensure the
74 stability and integrity of County dams in conformance with applicable
75 regulations.
76 b. This includes projects to improve water quality as required by federal and
77 state regulations and local requirements.
78 2. Projects that alleviate adverse flood impacts to existing, habitable structures up
79 to the stated level of service.
80 a. This does not include groundwater infiltration to structures.
81 b. Projects that reduce risk for vulnerable residents will be prioritized, with
82 greater weight given to projects addressing:
83 i. Risk to human life;
84 ii. High-frequency or high-severity flood events;
85 iii. Multiple at-risk structures or residential units; and
86 iv. Disproportionate impacts on communities with limited capacity to
87 mitigate risk independently.
88 3. Projects that alleviate flood impacts on roads maintained by the County.
89 4. Projects that alleviate yard flooding, excluding projects addressing groundwater
90 impacts to yards, which are the landowner's responsibility.
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F. Guidance for Programs to Reduce Flood Risks

The County will provide a suite of programs that:

1. Support the participation of residents and businesses in national flood insurance programs. The County will continue participation in federal Community Rating System voluntary programs to encourage floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program.
2. Provide information for residents and businesses to better understand their risk of flooding. The County will continue public outreach and education.
3. Encourage residents and businesses to take action on their own property to reduce adverse impacts of flooding. The County will support grant programs as funding is available to empower residents to manage flood risk.
4. Prioritizes equity in delivering programs consistent with One Fairfax to ensure all residents have the opportunity to reduce adverse flood impacts.