

Fairfax County Flood Risk Reduction Policy

Adopted October 14, 2025

A. Statement of Policy

Managing flood risk is a shared responsibility among the County, residents, and businesses. The intent of Fairfax County's Flood Risk Reduction Policy is to establish a framework of programs, projects, and regulations to conserve floodplains and manage stormwater with the goal of reducing adverse flooding impacts within the established level of service, as defined below. Not all flood risk can be managed, but Fairfax County can reduce the incidence of adverse flood impacts to life and property, within limits.

B. Application

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

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

C. Level of Service Established

The County will pursue a level of service that seeks to reduce adverse flood impacts. Adverse flood impacts are defined by the following criteria:

- Actions that cause or exacerbate flooding of habitable structures during a 100-year storm;
- Actions that create or worsen erosive velocities during a 2-year storm event;
- Designated channels, pipes, and related appurtenances that do not contain the 10-year storm event or that worsen the exceedance; and,

- Post-development flows for 2-year and 10-year storm events that exceed pre-development flows.

The level of service will not account for adverse flood impacts from events greater than the criteria established in this policy. The criteria established in this policy may include an additional margin of safety to account for the impacts of a changing climate. This level of service will be achieved through the adoption of regulations and by the implementation of programs and projects.

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 by permit from the appropriate authorities (i.e., roadway culverts and bridges).
2. Provide for the ongoing delineation of the 100-year floodplain and any margin of safety 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.
7. Provide for safe direct access to structures above the 100-year storm elevation. In the case of existing roads that do not meet this criterion, provide for safe direct access to structures, within County control.
8. Preserve the natural character and function of land within the 100-year floodplain.

E. Prioritization of Capital Projects

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

1. Projects that are mandated by court order, state regulation, or federal regulation for immediate implementation, or projects that address critical safety issues.
 - a. This includes remedial repairs to County-owned dams to ensure the stability and integrity of County dams in conformance with applicable regulations.
 - b. This includes projects to improve water quality as required by federal and state regulations and local requirements.
2. Projects that alleviate adverse flood impacts to existing, habitable structures up to the stated level of service.
 - a. This does not include groundwater infiltration to structures.
 - b. Projects that reduce risk for vulnerable residents will be prioritized, with greater weight given to projects addressing:
 - i. Risk to human life;
 - ii. High-frequency or high-severity flood events;
 - iii. Multiple at-risk structures or residential units; and
 - iv. Disproportionate impacts on communities with limited capacity to mitigate risk independently.

After adverse flood risks to existing, habitable structures have been addressed, the County will then prioritize projects that alleviate flood impacts on roads maintained by the County and then projects that alleviate yard flooding. The County will not prioritize projects that address groundwater impacts to yards as those are the landowner's responsibility.

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 voluntary federal Community

Rating System 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 properties to reduce the adverse impacts of flooding. The County will support grant programs as funding is available to empower residents to manage flood risk.
4. Prioritize equity in delivering programs consistent with One Fairfax to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to reduce adverse flood impacts.