



Impact of CFPF Funding on Scottsville, VA

The town of Scottsville applied for, and received a grant from the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) Grant Program. The town received \$123,346 from the fund in order to conduct hydraulic and hydrologic studies. The award was announced Dec. 22, 2021.

No Stranger to Flooding

Scottsville, a small, moderate-low income town situated on the James River, is no stranger to flooding. The downtown area sits below the James' northernmost loop, which will flood the town in the case of heavy rains. The first seat of Albemarle County, the town rose to prominence in the slave trade during the mid 19th century. Post industrialization, the town's primary commercial outlet was a tire cord factory that closed in 2009 due to the recession. In 1988, an Army Corps of Engineers completed a levee project to protect the historic downtown district. The factory commissioned a privately maintained levee that is similar to the one that protects the historic district.

The problem statements outlined in the CFPF application relate to the town's public safety and economic well-being. First, the factory is incorrectly labeled as a floodplain, which can be solved through a FEMA Letter of Map Revision (LOMR). The second problem relates to flash flood risk, and the proposed solution is to update hydraulic models and mapping. The situation with the factory is mildly unusual given that it is located outside of the bounds of the levee. The goal for the factory post-closure is adaptive reuse into an apartment complex.

Toward Resilience

Timmons Group is the engineering firm chosen to conduct the study. Timmons has vast experience with mapping, hydrology, and FEMA's regulatory processes, as well as experience working within the town of Scottsville. Additional factors that were considered in the initial scoring matrix for project development include the town's social vulnerability, low-income community, small budget, and history of hurricanes and other serious weather events. The proposed uses of funding are hydrologic and hydraulic studies of Mink Creek and James River flooding, and an infrastructure study of the levee at the factory site (Scottsville CFPF).

As of January 2023, the project was approximately two-thirds complete. The primary change from the application that resulted in fast-paced results is that FEMA had already begun the process of floodplain mapping in Scottsville. Given that the agency was already involved, the town had less regulatory hoops to jump through for the LOMR, and hence could focus on more specific local survey work. The town council is working diligently on adaptive reuse of the old tire cord factory. Current roadblocks involve rezoning and technical questions from relevant parties (Fire and Rescue, Energy, Environmental Management, etc.) As the project progresses into the more concrete stages of revamping the factory district, concerns still hang around the factory levee's efficacy and level of investment in the project.

Matthew Lawless, Scottsville Town Administrator, noted the high level of state funds being directed towards resilience projects during this current climate. Given that much of the current flood mitigation infrastructure is built for the climate of 50 years ago, municipalities need to be creative with how to update these through creative, sustainable, and resilient methods. In the case of Scottsville, Mr. Lawless explained that the floodplain improved because of high levels of reforestation along the James, and this is just one measure that they can continue to improve on.

Looking back at the problem statements outlined in the CFPF application, the FEMA LOMR has gone even more smoothly than imagined. Any issues with regulatory hoops, butting heads, or bureaucratic processes have not arisen, and the stakeholders are confident that the map revision will be done soon.

On the other hand, adaptive reuse of the factory and flash flooding mitigation in the historic district yielded much broader answers from Mr. Lawless and the representative from Timmons. The town is focused on the factory issue, hoping that it will boost the town's economy, but will likely require further hydrologic and hydraulic studies. The road ahead is long, but Mr. Lawless seems optimistic about the project as a whole and continued support from the Virginia DCR.

State law requires that the town update their Hazard Mitigation Plan through the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission as well as the Town of Scottsville Comprehensive Plan every five years. The newest updates will be released in 2023, and a draft for the Hazard Mitigation Plan has already been submitted (TJPDC). Redeveloping the old tire factory was one of the five key objectives in 2018, so its importance is assumed to be paramount for the 2023 version (Scottsville Comprehensive Plan). These documents will likely not include any major changes, but will include updates to flood risk infrastructure, factory adaptive reuse, zoning, and urban planning that relates to this CFPF project and future projects.

Bibliography:

Scottsville Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund Grant Program Application. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-floodplains/document/CFPF-21-02-01-CID510007-Scottsville-CFPF.pdf>

Scottsville Comprehensive Plan
<https://www.scottsville.org/comprehensive-plan-updated/>

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Hazard Mitigation Plan
<https://tjpd.org/our-work/hazard-mitigation/>

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