

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR PUBLIC REVIEW OF A PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (PEA) FOR WATERSHED RESILIENCY PROJECTS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is providing notice that a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate proposed watershed resiliency projects in the State of South Dakota is available for public review and comment. We issue this notice to provide the opportunity for other Federal and State agencies, Native American tribes, non-governmental organizations, and the public to comment on the proposed PEA. These actions are part of our effort to comply with the general provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NEPA regulations; other Federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders; and our policies for compliance with those laws and regulations including 44 C.F.R. Part 9 and FEMA Directive 108-1 & Instruction 108-1-1.

The PEA focuses on a variety of comprehensive watershed resiliency actions in South Dakota that require river restoration, bank stabilization, demolition, relocation, or alteration of buildings and infrastructure, and hydraulic capacity mitigation measures for restoring watershed function. Projects may be funded through FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program for damages sustained during disaster events, through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs, as well as other FEMA grant programs. Other Federal agencies may adopt the PEA under their own authorities in accordance with the Unified Federal Review (UFR) process.

The recurring flood events in South Dakota have resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in damage due to the inundation of facilities, including roads, utilities, land, and homes. In an effort to restore these facilities or mitigate from future events, FEMA and other agencies may provide funds for restoration and upgrades of watershed hydraulic capacity and floodplain function. The purpose of the PEA is to provide an assessment of the expected environmental impacts associated with implementing these types of projects. It addresses the purpose and need of the proposed projects, project alternatives considered, affected environment, environmental consequences, and impact of mitigation measures. The PEA would not address site-specific impacts, which would be evaluated on a project-specific basis. All Federally funded projects will be completed in compliance with applicable Federal, tribal, state, and local laws, regulations, Executive Orders, etc. Some specific items of work may include, but are limited to:

- Nature-based and biologically inspired mitigation measures such as bank stabilization using natural materials and re-vegetation in combination with hard armoring, referred to as bioengineering;
- Multi-objective project design of hydraulic control elements such as fish-passage friendly drop structures, energy dissipating fish ladders or the creation of recreational open space to preserve watershed functions;
- Demolition, relocation, or transfer of function for structures, including public utilities and roads, that currently impede or threaten to impede watershed functions; and

- Watershed restoration and mitigation including channel shaping or re-profiling, floodplain construction, overflow channel construction, riparian re-vegetation, and in-stream habitat improvement.

The comment period for the draft PEA will remain open for thirty days following publication of this notice. After gathering public comments, the draft PEA will become final in accordance with FEMA Directive 108-1 & Instruction 108-1-1, FEMA's implementing procedures for NEPA.

You can provide comments or obtain more detailed information about the proposed PEA by contacting Richard Myers, FEMA Region VIII, Deputy Regional Environmental Officer at richard.myers2@fema.gov.