

## NeDNR Hosts Third Annual Nebraska Floodplain Conference

By Erin Wendt

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources' Floodplain Management Division hosted their third annual Floodplain Conference on January 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Attendees from across the state traveled to NeDNR's office in Lincoln, Nebraska, to attend the free two-day workshop and conference. Featured speakers included NeDNR's Floodplain Management team, Nebraska Silver Jackets, the National Weather Service (NWS), Region 7 of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Nebraska Emergency Management Association (NEMA), Nebraska Department of Economic Development, local floodplain administrators, and others. Day one of the conference featured NeDNR's "Basic Floodplain

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## New Model Ordinance

By Elijah Kaufman

Nebraska's model floodplain management ordinance is officially receiving an update! The Nebraska Model Floodplain Development Ordinance contains suggested provisions that meet Nebraska's and FEMA's minimum standards for floodplain development and can be used by communities as a basis for drafting their local regulations. The NeDNR Floodplain Management team has provided communities with a model ordinance since 1997, with updates to the model occurring in 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2017.

As with previous updates, a model ordinance review committee has been organized consisting of FEMA staff, NeDNR staff, the Nebraska League of Municipalities, local floodplain administrators, zoning officials, emergency managers, and community planners. The committee has met on three occasions; once to review the

existing model, once to review the first draft of the new model, and again to provide a last round of comments before the final draft is sent to FEMA for approval.

This iteration of Nebraska's model ordinance will include many quality-of-life improvements, making the model easier to use, navigate, and customize to your community's needs. In total, over 250 changes have been made to the old model ranging from small typo fixes to the complete rewriting of language. The most notable changes are summarized below:

- The front page of the model now includes a version number that will be updated any time a change is made. This will help ensure that old copies of the model are not used by mistake when drafting new regulations.
- A "Table of Contents" will be located at the start of the document to help users find the regulatory language they are looking for.
- The "Drafting Instructions" page has been completely revised to include clearer guidance for communities to follow, including an all new substantial improvement have been combined into one section allowing for

- See [Ordinance](#) cont. on page 3.



Panel of Floodplain Administrators (left to right) Travis Beaves of Wahoo, Mike Palm of Waverly, Robert Laroco of Omaha, and Ann Chytka of Burt County, answered questions from fellow floodplain administrators and gave their experience on common issues within floodplain management. Photo by Isabella Bialas.

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Management Workshop” in the morning. This workshop introduced the fundamentals of floodplain management, ranging from statutory authority, the administrative process, how to enforce your regulations, and more. Next, a panel of local floodplain administrators from Waverly, Wahoo, Burt County, and Omaha discussed their struggles and successes in the field of floodplain management. After

Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Nebraska Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

The afternoon on day two was filled with a tabletop exercise for some hands-on learning. The tabletop exercise was a simulated flood scenario in Fairbury based on historical events in the area and attendees were invited to share their

## **Class Offer: LO273 “Managing Floodplain Development Through the National Flood Insurance Program”**

By Elijah Kaufman

From February 24-27, 2025, NeDNR and FEMA Region 7 are providing LO273, “Managing Floodplain Development Through the National Flood Insurance Program.” The FREE 4-day floodplain management course will be hosted in our very own Fallbrook office. The course is tailored to Floodplain Managers, and community planners and elected officials, specifically those officials with less than 3 years of floodplain management experience. Attendees will learn about the NFIP and concepts of floodplain management, floodplain maps and studies, ordinance administration, post-disaster responsibilities, and the relationship between floodplain management and flood insurance. Register now, as there are only a few spots left: <https://dnr.nebraska.gov/floodplain/training-and-workshops>.

The following Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, NeDNR will host a virtual Question and Answer session for anyone who wants to chat directly with a floodplain expert. Attendees to the LO273 course that are interested in taking the CFM exam are encouraged to attend this Q&A session and to bring their last-minute questions before their exam time! Please note that there will not be a scheduled CFM exam hosted by NeDNR, as the exam is now entirely hosted online by ASFPM. For more information about the exam, visit <https://www.floods.org/certification-program-cfm/getting-certified/>. ■



Outreach Coordinators Erin Wendt and Anna Crist presenting the first session of the conference “Basics of Floodplain Management.” A recorded session of the class can be found at [nednr.gov/floodplain/trainings-and-materials](https://nednr.gov/floodplain/trainings-and-materials). Photo by Isabella Bialas.

the panel, NeDNR’s Elijah Kaufman discussed flood insurance myths, facts, and resources. The day finished off with an introduction to the new NeDNR Floodplain Management Model Ordinance, with an expected roll-out in early 2025 for use.

There were a variety of presentations throughout day two of the conference:

- National Weather Service shared their spring flood forecast
- FEMA Region 7 on the new Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS)
- Nebraska Silver Jackets discussed their work and how they help communities
- The Nebraska Department of Economic Development gave a presentation on the Community Development Block Grant –

thoughts and plans in small groups. In the past, NeDNR has hosted their annual Floodplain Conference in Broken Bow and Lexington. NeDNR’s Basic Floodplain Management workshop has been a staple at the conference, allowing the opportunity for new floodplain administrators to learn an overview of their roles and responsibilities, as well as allowing seasoned floodplain administrators to gain a refresher on some knowledge they may not come across often. The conference and workshop have been a great way for floodplain administrators in the state to network and connect with others, while also learning and expanding their knowledge of floodplain management. If your community would like to host next year’s Floodplain Conference, reach out to Michele York at [michele.york@nebraska.gov](mailto:michele.york@nebraska.gov). ■

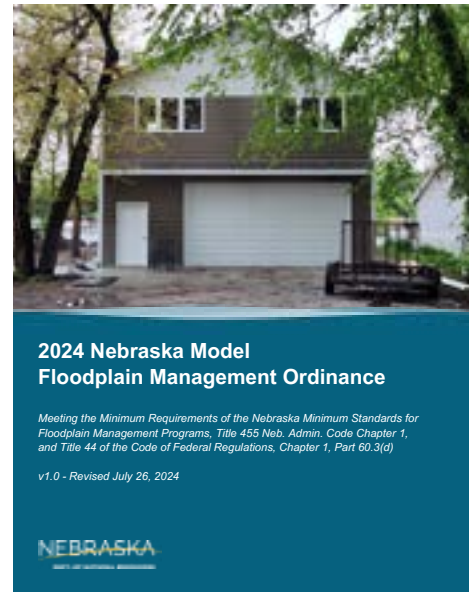
**Ordinance** continued from page 1.

- “drafting checklist” to help users create a complete first draft.
- All optional and higher standards have now been separated into the all-new “Guide to Optional or Higher Standards for Floodplain Administration”, and are no longer embedded in the model ordinance language. This allowed the team to write clear explanations of what each optional or higher standard intends to accomplish.
- New optional and higher standards have been added for communities to adopt.
- Statute and code references will now be included at the end of every paragraph, helping floodplain administrators find the federal or state regulations that the language originates from.
- The paragraphs pertaining to substantial damage and substantial improvement have been combined into one section allowing for easier referencing. These sections have also been expanded to include the full administrative procedures for reviewing repair or improvement proposals.
- Regulations related to the community’s Flood Insurance Rate Maps, Flood Insurance Study, and flood data have now been consolidated into one section.
- Added procedures for obtaining Base Flood Elevation data.

- The “Duties of the Floodplain Administrator” section has been expanded to include post-disaster responsibilities.
- The “Violations and Enforcement” section has been expanded and reorganized with additional procedures for providing notices and issuing penalties.
- Variance conditions and procedures have been relocated towards the back of the document to prioritize permitting procedures.
- The model now better aligns with Nebraska’s zoning regulations.
- And much more!

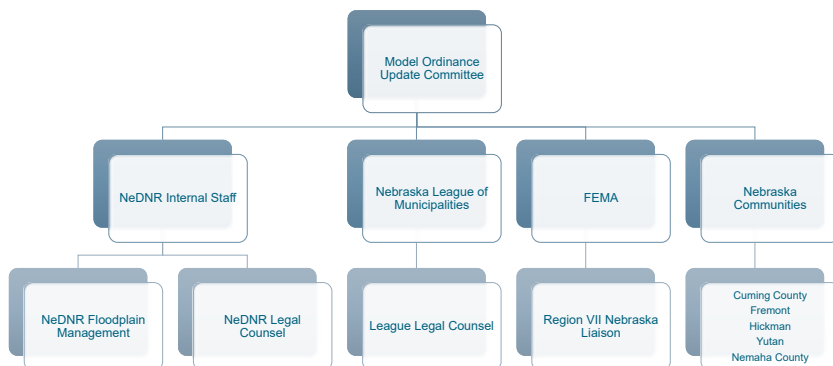
Besides these specific changes, the entire model has been rewritten from start to finish to improve the structure, formatting, and verbiage of each section. Additionally, all language has been reviewed and updated as needed to improve alignment with both federal and state requirements. These alignments include the addition of previously missing definitions, and improvements to the wording of any previously listed definitions.

This new model will be released around February 2025, and will be sent by email to Nebraska’s flood administrators via GovDelivery. NeDNR will then provide trainings to communities on how to use the new model, including a one-hour virtual class in May 2025. Please note that



The new model ordinance will be available for download from [nednr.gov/floodplain/digital-desk-reference](https://nednr.gov/floodplain/digital-desk-reference) after the initial email release to floodplain managers.

the release of a new model ordinance will not require communities to update their current regulations, as state and federal floodplain management standards have not changed since the last model ordinance release. ■



Structure of the Model Update Committee. Committee members were chosen from multiple levels and areas of government to receive the widest range of feedback and opinions on the new model ordinance.

Riverine Flooding is the nation’s 3rd costliest natural disaster.

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## Floodplain Administrator Spotlight: Leann Sato of Scottsbluff

By Anna Crist

In a niche field like floodplain management, connecting with peers can be extremely valuable in providing support and new perspectives. This is one of the many concepts Leann Sato learned during her time as the Floodplain Administrator for the City of Scottsbluff. Taking on the position in 2021, she has dedicated her time to learning the regulations, building policies, and most importantly, making connections with others. Leann informed us that she will be stepping down from the position in the upcoming year, but before she passes the torch, we asked Leann to reflect on her time in floodplain management and share some advice for incoming or novice Floodplain Administrators. This is what she had to share:

### **What parts of the job have you found to be most rewarding or interesting?**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and Community Rating System (CRS) programs I found to be convoluted, honestly, so one of the most rewarding things for me is that I can finally start answering questions with more confidence. It has taken a while to really learn that. The interesting thing is that CRS, coming from a communications standpoint, is it is structured like a videogame with the points and incentive system there. That is something I find really interesting, but it makes it really difficult to figure out how to implement that and realizing the work that goes behind that for the amount of collaborations and patterns that have to go into that to make it effective.

### **How was your community affected, if at all, by the 2019 flooding? Are there any lessons learned you would like to pass-on to other FPAs?**

The vast majority of everything was on the east end of the state. We are fortunate to not have any repeat

substantial damage facilities and have not had any major flooding events. I wasn't Floodplain Administrator in 2019. Our floodplain management was under region 22 Emergency Management System. It wasn't until that got moved and restructured that I took it on for the city. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR) has been absolutely wonderful with answering questions and providing mentorship. I can't say enough good things about Chuck Chase and his patience for answering questions and Elijah, stepping into that roll. Getting to know a few of the engineers for the mapping and explaining how that process works. I can't say enough about their availability and being able to just ask questions, making the job much easier.

I have been lucky as a Floodplain Administrator to not have to deal with any major floodplain events. I would have loved to have been able to get more of our emergency management procedures together. We had worked with the North Platte Natural Resources District hazard mitigation plan, so I would have loved to have built more on that. Built more community. We had looked vaguely at our 500-year floodplain where our emergency facilities are located and just making sure those are going to be accessible should we have a 500-year event. Preparedness work was really what I wanted to focus on.

### **What is your greatest success in achieving flood resiliency in your community?**

It's a slow process and all behind the scenes work but getting policies in place to make us more resilient is probably the biggest accomplishment I have seen. We did pass a new ordinance in 2022, which has really helped standardize permitting. Knowing where all of the regulations come from, that the ordinance is based heavily on the federal and state statutes almost verbatim makes it really easy to explain to community members. Its helps in future planning for the city. We can consider if we want to make more open space and recreation only areas. It helps us with

strategic community planning overall.

I was also able to get my community up one rank in CRS. My goal was to get to a 7, we were really close, but we are currently at an 8.

### **What has been the most challenging aspect of the role and how do you handle the challenges?**

For me, after I became a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) we got more questions about floodplain management. It became one third of my job. I was doing stormwater management for 3 communities plus floodplain management. Balancing all of the responsibilities and the constant learning have been the biggest challenges. That is where having the ability to call and converse directly with NeDNR and have the coordinators right there is huge.

### **What advice do you have for novice floodplain administrators?**

Don't be intimidated, NeDNR is your friend. Get to know them. As departments go, they are very accessible. They make a point to make a trip to the western part of the state at least once a year including education events. To me, they are one of the few that will travel across the state to do that, and I have a lot of respect for that.

### **Thank You.**

We thank Leann for her four years of commitment to floodplain management within Scottsbluff and wish her well in her future endeavors!



Leanne Sato.

## Training and Events

### 02.05 ■ Substantial Damage Estimate (SDE) 3.0

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Carter County Courthouse  
1122 Main Street  
Van Buren, MO

Join the Missouri Floodplain Management Section for a workshop that will overview the SDE 3.0 tool. When structures located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) are improved or damaged, an inspection by the Floodplain Administrator must be made. FEMA has developed an excellent software tool – SDE 3.0 – to assist local officials. This workshop is approved for 6.5 hours of CFM CECs. For more information visit this [link](#).

### 02.20 □ Violations and Enforcement of your Floodplain Ordinance

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Virtual

Join staff from the NeDNR for an informative 2-hour virtual class on the fundamentals of enforcing floodplain regulations and tips for preventing violations. This class is suitable for both novice and seasoned floodplain administrators and community officials. CECs are approved for CFMs and for Treasurers of Nebraska counties and municipalities that participate in the NFIP. For more information visit this [link](#).

### 02.11 □ Making Mitigation Work: Examining Rural Places, Disability and Underserved populations in Disaster

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Virtual

The Natural Hazards Center is working with FEMA to put on this webinar series. These one-hour seminars will have guest speakers and will highlight processes in mitigation policy, practice and research. Visit this [link](#) for more information.

### 02.24-27 ■ L0273: Managing Floodplain Development Through the NFIP

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
245 Fallbrook Blvd., Lincoln, NE

Offered by NeDNR every two years, the purpose of this FEMA course is to prepare participants to understand and perform the roles and responsibilities of the local Floodplain Administrator. This course is strongly recommended for those wishing to obtain the Certified Floodplain Manager certification. The target audience for this course includes floodplain administrators and others who need basic instruction in floodplain management. For more information visit this [link](#).

### 02.12 ■ Grants Training Workshop

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
Manhattan, KS

Kansas Department of Agriculture is working with JEO Consulting Group to conduct a one-day in-person Grants Training Workshop. Please join them to learn about various federal grant funding opportunities available and how to apply. This workshop is in-person and limited to 25 participants. Lunch will be provided. Additional details such as address location, parking, etc. will be provided upon successful registration. Register at this [link](#).

### 03.03 □ Virtual Office Hours: Floodplain Q&A

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM  
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Virtual

Mark your calendar now to bring your lunch and join NeDNR floodplain staff for an open discussion, to ask questions, and receive resources regarding floodplain and NFIP topics of your choice. We will particularly focus on questions related to becoming certified by taking the CFM exam, but we will welcome all questions from the very basic to the most advanced! Feel free to join us to just listen in on topics of interest from others. For more information, visit this [link](#).

**Training and Events Continued:**

**03.13** □  
**Before and After Disaster Strikes: Substantial Damage 101**

TBD  
 Virtual

Join NeDNR staff for an informative 2-hour virtual after hour class on what to do before and after a flood, fire, tornado or other disaster strikes in your SFHA. This free class is suitable for anyone involved with floodplain management. This class is approved for CECs for CFMs and for Nebraska county/municipality Treasurers of communities that participate in the NFIP. Save the date! Registration will open soon on our [website](#).

**On-Demand** □  
**NFIP 101: Introduction to Floodplain Management**

Virtual

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) offers an on-demand introduction to floodplain management. This course is free and does not require ASFPM membership. It is divided into nine units. It can be taken over the course of days, weeks or even months. Up to 12 CECs are available for Certified Floodplain Managers. To learn more, visit this [link](#).

**03.25** □  
**Before and After Disaster Strikes: Substantial Damage 101 - After Hours!**

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
 Virtual

Join NeDNR staff for an informative 2-hour virtual after hour class on what to do before and after a flood, fire, tornado or other disaster strikes in your SFHA. This free class is suitable for anyone involved with floodplain management. This class is approved for CECs for CFMs and for Nebraska county/municipality Treasurers of communities that participate in the NFIP. For more information visit this [link](#).

**On-Demand** □  
**IS-1119: Letters of Map Amendment and Letters of Map Revision-Based on Fill**

Virtual

Brought to you by EMI, this course gives information to people interested in LOMCs. It focuses on LOMAs, LOMR-Fs, Conditional LOMAs, and Conditional LOMR-Fs. It explains the LOMC processes at the applicant, community floodplain administrator, licensed professional, and FEMA levels. This course takes about three hours to complete. To learn more and register, visit this [link](#).

**04.17** □  
**Pack. Prepare. Beware. How to Increase Flood Awareness in your Community**

TBD  
 Virtual

Join NeDNR staff for a virtual class discussing how to engage your community in floodplain management and to inform them of the flood risks and hazards they face locally. Learn of DNR's new campaign, Nebraska Ready - 4% of Nebraska homes are in the floodplain, are you one of them? This course is suitable for both new and seasoned floodplain administrators and community officials. A class time will be determined closer to the date. For more information visit this [link](#).

**On-Demand** □  
**IS-285: Substantial Damage Estimation for Floodplain Administrators**

Virtual

Brought to you by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) this training helps state, local and tribal officials create SDEs using the FEMA SDE software. These SDEs comply with the NFIP. This course takes about eight hours to complete. To learn more and register, visit this [link](#).

**February**

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**April**

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# ARE YOU IN THE 4%?

4% of Nebraska homes are at a higher risk of flooding because they're built in a floodplain. Don't wait until flooding impacts you to take action. Check our interactive map and see if your home could be at risk.

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