

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Ph: 406.444.6656

### **Preliminary Flood Map Appeal Period Begins**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has initiated a formal 90-day appeal period for filing appeals, protests and comments regarding the preliminary digital flood insurance rate map (DFIRM), commonly referred to as floodplain maps. The draft DFIRM identifies areas associated with high, moderate or low risk of inundation by a 100-year (one-percent) flood. Properties in high risk areas must be covered by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to be eligible for federally-insured mortgages and other federally-funded programs.

The City of Helena, City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County flood hazard map is being updated in conjunction with a nationwide effort to modernize floodplain maps for floodprone communities. The map modernization project, begun by FEMA in 2004, utilizes recent research and improved computer programs to identify flood risks. Because the new flood hazard maps are digital, the more accurate flood risk information will also be more easily-accessible for both communities and individual properties.

The 90-day appeal period will run from December 19, 2008 through March 19, 2009. Appeals, protests and comments may be submitted by the City, County, individual property owners, or other concerned parties. The City of Helena, City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County points of contact are:

City of East Helena

Bill Casey  
Floodplain Manager  
P.O. Box 1170  
East Helena, MT 59635  
406.227.5321

City of Helena

Brandt Salo  
Floodplain Manager  
316 N Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59623  
406.447.8437

Lewis and Clark County

Paul Spengler  
Floodplain Manager  
221 Breckenridge Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601-4230  
406.447.8285

FEMA will have an indeterminate amount of time to respond to and resolve any issues following the appeal period. According to the state map modernization coordinator Celinda Adair, "The state will review all submittals and provide comments and feedback to FEMA."

If significant changes are made to the preliminary DFIRM in response to issues raised during the appeal period, a new map will be prepared and the review and adoption process will start over again. If no changes or only minor changes result from the appeal process, FEMA will finalize the DFIRM. Once FEMA finalizes the map, the City of Helena, the City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County will have a six-month period to update local floodplain management ordinances. The State of Montana will also

adopt the map after it is finalized by FEMA. The DFIRM will go into effect six months after FEMA finalizes the map.

Following the release of the preliminary DFIRM at the end of September, FEMA and the State of Montana DNRC worked with Lewis and Clark County, the City of Helena, and the City of East Helena to hold a public open house on November 18, 2008. Attendees were informed regarding how the proposed map was developed, the review and adoption process, and how to file appeals, protests and comments about the DFIRM with FEMA and the State of Montana.

The preliminary DFIRMs are available for viewing online at [www.montanadfirms.com](http://www.montanadfirms.com) (these are large PDF files and may take some time to download.) To view hard copies of the Preliminary DFIRM's for Lewis and Clark County please contact Paul Spengler, the Lewis & Clark County Floodplain Administrator, at 406-447-8285. To view the Preliminary DFIRM's for the City of Helena please contact Brandt Salo, City of Helena Floodplain Administrator at 406-447-8437. The Preliminary DFIRM's for the City of East Helena will be on display at the City Hall building, located at 306 East Main.

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