

Floodplain Resilience Plan

Reducing future flood risk while protecting salmon and steelhead

Portland is a river city, susceptible to periodic flooding that threatens lives and property. Climate change is increasing the types of severe weather events that cause flooding, so managing the risk of flooding is a priority for the City of Portland.

Improving river and floodplain health and resilience is essential to our communities and our economy, as well as the recovery of ecologically and culturally irreplaceable salmon and steelhead.

As a part of the settlement of a lawsuit brought by Audubon Society of Portland, National Wildlife Federation, Northwest Environmental Defense Center, and the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a Biological Opinion (BiOp) in 2016 stating that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) implementation of the National Flood Insurance Program in Oregon negatively impacts protected salmon and steelhead by encouraging development that reduces floodplain habitat. FEMA worked with Oregon jurisdictions to develop a proposed Implementation Plan that responds to the BiOp, Oregon Land Use law and local conditions.

The Floodplain Resilience Plan will comply with federal guidance by updating development regulations to expand and improve floodplain habitat for salmon and steelhead.

A companion project led by the Bureau of Development Services will update the building code to ensure new development maintains capacity for flood waters along rivers and streams.

Without these actions, Portlanders risk losing access to FEMA's federally backed flood insurance and disaster relief grants. And salmon, steelhead and other natural resources will likely suffer.



Updated floodplain development regulations, along with City-led restoration projects, will help ensure Portlanders have continued access to FEMA's federally backed flood insurance and financial assistance after floods.

The Floodplain Resilience Plan is a collaboration between City bureaus

When the BiOp was released, staff developed a response that would meet the requirements of the federal government, as well as the needs of the community. The effort directly involves several bureaus and agency partners.



City of Portland, Oregon | Bureau of Planning and Sustainability | www.portland.gov/bps
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As a part of the Floodplain Resilience Plan, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is working to:

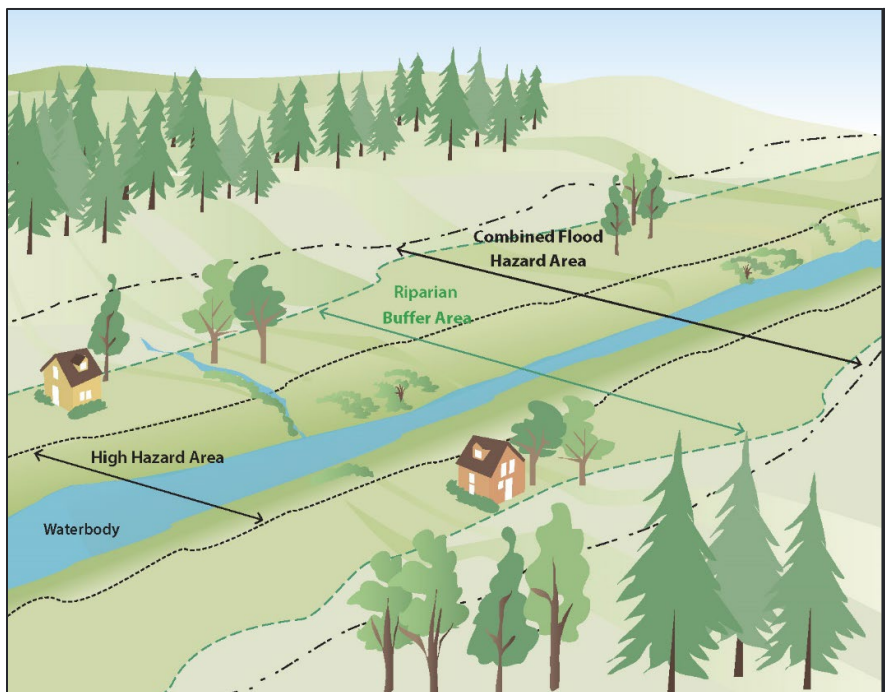
- Incorporate the results of a new model of a 1996 flood-like event (including current conditions) into the City’s regulated floodplain, or “combined flood hazard area.”
- Apply new floodplain development and vegetation requirements through the application of Environmental or River overlay zones.
- Apply additional protections within 170 ft of ordinary high water to expand habitat.

The Bureau of Development Services will lead a project to:

- Update building code requirements to increase or require excavation when additional soil or structures are placed in the floodplain. Currently, excavation is only required with placement of soil.

The Bureau of Environmental Services is:

- Evaluating options to support mitigation banks as an alternative to onsite mitigation.
- Identifying and restoring sites in the floodplain to improve habitat for salmon and steelhead.



The diagram illustrates a river landscape with various floodplain zones. A blue river flows through a green valley. On the left, a brown house is situated near a 'Waterbody'. Further up the valley, another brown house is located within a 'High Hazard Area'. A 'Riparian Buffer Area' is shown as a green strip along the riverbank. The 'Combined Flood Hazard Area' is the largest zone, encompassing the riparian buffer and extending further up the valley. Dashed lines indicate the boundaries of these zones. The background features rolling green hills and a line of evergreen trees.

Regulatory updates are proposed for the **combined flood hazard area**, which includes the FEMA 100-year floodplain, the Modeled Willamette River 1996 Flood Extent and Metro’s 1996 Flood Inundation Area.

Development in the **combined flood hazard area** will be required to avoid the floodplain, where possible, and minimize and mitigate impacts on natural resources.

Development in the Willamette River **riparian buffer area** (170 feet from ordinary high-water) will require additional mitigation for impacts to riverbank habitat.

Project steps and timeline (2021-2023)

November 2021 – January 2022:	Public comments taken on the Discussion Draft
August 2022:	Release of the Proposed Draft
Fall 2022:	Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) public hearing, work sessions and recommendation
Spring 2023:	City Council public hearing, deliberations and decision

For more information

www.portland.gov/bps/environ-planning/floodplain-project

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