



FEMA

May 25, 2018

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Town of Webster  
Planning Department

Andrew Jolda, Chairperson  
Board of Selectmen  
Town of Webster  
Town Hall  
350 Main Street  
Webster, Massachusetts 01570

Subject: Town of Webster, Worcester County, Massachusetts  
Community No.: 250343

Dear Mr. Jolda:

On March 27, 2017, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), conducted a Discovery meeting for the Blackstone Watershed as part of FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) program. The Blackstone Watershed is the 8-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) 01090003. During the meeting, the USGS discussed areas of flooding concern and project goals, milestones, and products with a variety of stakeholders, including FEMA officials, state and community officials, and watershed interest groups. Flooding sources considered during this meeting included major rivers such as Blackstone, Branch, Chepachet, Chockalog, Clear, Mill, Millers, Mumford, Nipmuc, Pascoag, Peters, and Quinsigamond Rivers, as well as other smaller rivers and tributaries in the watershed.

The Discovery process marked the beginning of a Risk MAP project that started in October 2016, and it assisted in identifying the scope of the Blackstone Watershed study. The Discovery meetings are part of the Discovery process, and the information exchanged between FEMA and communities within the Blackstone Watershed during Discovery improved our understanding of the watershed's flood hazard mapping and mitigation planning. At the Discovery meetings, we reviewed the flood risk data gathered to date. We also discussed your community's flooding history, flood risk concerns and mitigation. During the Discovery process, officials in your community may have provided information, comments, or questions to the USGS. If this is the case, a summary of information exchanged is shown in Table 2, and responses to comments or questions are shown in Table 3.

At the website below, you can download a copy of the Blackstone Watershed Discovery Report, which collates information presented at the Discovery Meetings; information collected from communities prior to, at, and following the Discovery Meetings; and other information collected from other sources. Appendices to the report may be available upon request.

[https://newengland.water.usgs.gov/fema\\_blackstone/](https://newengland.water.usgs.gov/fema_blackstone/)

Using this information that we collected during the Discovery process, **the following rivers in the Blackstone Watershed were selected for detailed studies — Blackstone River, Middle River, Mill River, and Quinsigamond River.** The scope of the engineering and mapping covered for each river reach in this project is summarized in Table 1.

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As discussed in the Discovery Meetings, FEMA's goal is to offer useful, credible data, and a fair process to help you make informed decisions to continue building a safer and stronger community. As such, we want to notify you of the engineering data models that are being used in FEMA's ongoing flood risk project. These engineering data models will form the basis for the proposed Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) that will be presented on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). An SFHA is an area that is subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood (also called the base flood). Over time, water flow and drainage patterns on the selected reaches (Table 1) may have changed dramatically due to surface erosion, land use, and natural forces. Given these factors, the likelihood of flooding along these reaches may have increased or decreased over time, changing the SFHA designations.

Upon receipt of this notification, the communities affected by the selected reaches will have 30 days to consult with FEMA Regional Office staff (identified in the last paragraph of this letter) regarding the appropriateness of the models selected for the project. Communities will have additional opportunities to comment on and provide feedback about the models and other draft flood hazard information throughout the project. If there are uncertainties about the mapping data that have been collected and analyzed, a formal appeals process and period will be available to help resolve any remaining questions before the flood hazard information becomes effective.

Draft flood hazard information will be developed by FEMA's mapping partner, the USGS. USGS will use the engineering models shown in Table 1, which lists the flooding sources to be studied, along with details regarding the selected models and the rationale for their use. The engineering models were selected based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the type of study performed (e.g., base or enhanced, shallow flooding, coastal, alluvial fan, etc.), the size of the drainage area affecting the flooding source, and the type of terrain present (e.g., flat, hilly, mountainous, etc.).

FEMA wants to ensure that the most up-to-date and accurate technical data are used to develop the flood risk products. FEMA relies on the community's feedback, partnership, and knowledge during this important project to determine the extent of flood risk in the communities affected by the selected reaches in Table 1 and to support efforts to reduce those risks. We look forward to working with community officials and other stakeholders to increase flood risk awareness and reduce the risk to life and property from flooding. Initial feedback will not affect any community's ability to provide feedback later or to formally appeal the flood hazard information during a future appeal period.

If your community is listed in Table 1 and you would like to discuss the proposed modeling, please contact Gardner Bent, the project manager, no later than June 25, 2018. We will consider all comments and suggestions received during this period before making a final model selection and commencing with data collection.

Gardner Bent  
U.S. Geological Survey  
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Northboro, Massachusetts 01532  
(508) 490-5041  
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Regardless of the model used, detailed studies involve field surveys to obtain structural geometry and elevation data and new hydrologic and hydraulic analysis resulting in new flood elevations. **The field surveying on the previously listed river reaches will be occurring during 2018. Be aware that you and residents in your communities may see USGS survey crews on the bridges, dams, and rivers, during the next several months.** At the following website, you can view or download a copy of the flyer that the surveyors carry to inform the public of the project.

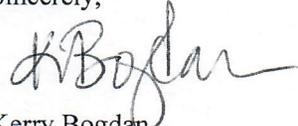
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[https://newengland.water.usgs.gov/fema\\_blackstone/](https://newengland.water.usgs.gov/fema_blackstone/)

As this project continues, the USGS will be conducting a number of other meetings with the stakeholders in the Blackstone Watershed to communicate the progress of the project and to solicit comments about draft and preliminary products. After the Discovery meeting, the next meeting to be held will be the work map meetings. In the work map meetings, the USGS and FEMA will be meeting with officials from each community affected by the project scope to discuss the draft flood insurance rate map products – the work maps – for that community. Communities in the project scope can expect to receive an invitation to these meetings at least four weeks before their scheduled dates.

If you have any questions regarding the Discovery process and results, the selected reaches or models, or the planned work map meetings, please contact Gardner Bent, Project Manager, USGS, by e-mail ([gbent@usgs.gov](mailto:gbent@usgs.gov)) or by calling (508) 490-5041. I am also available to answer any questions at (617) 956-7576 or [Kerry.Bogdan@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Kerry.Bogdan@fema.dhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Kerry Bogdan  
Risk Analysis Branch Chief  
Mitigation Division  
FEMA Region 1

cc: Brian Hickey, Director, Emergency Management, Town of Webster  
Doug Willardson, Town Administrator, Town of Webster  
Kenneth L. Pizzetti, Highway Superintendent, Town of Webster  
Mathew Fitton, Chairperson, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town of Webster  
Paul LaFramboise, Chairperson, Planning Board, Town of Webster  
Rich Franas, Chairperson, Conservation Commission, Town of Webster  
Theodore Tetreault, Building Commissioner, Town of Webster  
Joy Duperault, State NFIP Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Gardner Bent, Project Manager, U.S. Geological Survey

**Table 1: Detailed study reaches in the Blackstone Watershed, Massachusetts and Rhode Island**

River	Communities	Limits of study	Hydrologic model proposed	Hydraulic model proposed	Model rationale
<b>Blackstone River</b>	Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln, Woonsocket, and North Smithfield, RI, and Blackstone, MA	From Main Street, Pawtucket, RI, to Tupperware Mill Dam, Blackstone, MA	Regression equations and streamgage statistics	HEC-RAS one-dimensional steady	Regression equations are applicable to the study reaches and peak discharges are sufficient for the hydraulic analysis. Reaches with streamgage data also are close to a USGS gaging station with at least 20 years of data.  One-dimensional, steady-flow hydraulic models are used where flow is modeled as steady in time, one-dimensional, and generally gradually varied in space, and where channel slope is generally less than 10%.
<b>Middle River</b>	Worcester, MA	From confluence with Mill Brook Conduit, Worcester, MA, to headwaters at confluence of Beaver Brook and Kettle Brook, Worcester, MA	Regression equations		
<b>Mill River</b>	Woonsocket, RI, and Blackstone, Mendon, Hopedale, Milford, and Upton, MA	From confluence with Blackstone River, Woonsocket, RI, to headwaters at North Pond, Milford, MA	Regression equations		
<b>Quinsigamond River</b>	Grafton, MA	From confluence with Blackstone River, Grafton, MA, to headwaters at Hovey Pond, Grafton, MA	Regression equations and streamgage statistics		

**Table 2: Summary of information exchanged during Discovery**

Nothing applicable

**Table 3: Responses to comments and questions**

Nothing applicable