

FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Fact Sheet No. 29

July 2002

Kansas Water Office

Flooding is a recurring problem in Kansas. In the 20th Century, notable flooding occurred on the Kansas River in 1903, 1951 and 1993. Flooding of the Arkansas River (1965), the Marmaton River (1986, 1998) and the Walnut River (1998) are additional examples. Disastrous flash flooding occurred in the Kansas City metropolitan area in 1977 and 1998. Flood mitigation in the mid-20th Century concentrated on structural prevention methods. A total of 24 large federal reservoirs have been constructed in Kansas by the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Additional federal funding for watershed dams has been provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The primary purpose of these reservoirs is flood control. Federally funded levees also provide a measure of structural flood protection.

In 1976 the Kansas Legislature authorized appropriation of state funds for cost-share assistance in the construction of detention dams and/or grade stabilization structures by watershed districts. The State Conservation Commission has provided funding for watershed dams annually since 1978. There are presently 88 organized watershed districts that cover about 22 percent of the state's land area.

Approximately 60 of these districts have active general plans. Watershed works of improvement eligible for state cost-share assistance must be included in a state approved watershed general plan. Such plans have traditionally focused on structural flood control measures. Typically, the local sponsor is a watershed district, but other local entities such as drainage districts or cities can sponsor plans as well. The state also has statutes covering the development of levees and drainage districts that deal with structural measures for reducing flood vulnerability.

The potential for future flood damages may be reduced significantly by preventing inappropriate development from occurring in flood prone areas. Local governments may accomplish this through

their land use planning and zoning authority to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Additional non-structural flood mitigation measures include forecast and warning systems, flood proofing and evacuation, and riparian and wetland protection or restoration. Incorporating nonstructural measures into watershed plans could further enhance the reduction of damages from floods while providing water quality, riparian and wetland protection and other benefits.

An updated Kansas Hazard Mitigation Strategy was mandated by federal law as a condition of Kansas receiving federal assistance for the two declared flood disasters in 1998. This updated Strategy was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 2001. The Kansas Hazard Mitigation Strategy was developed by the interagency Kansas Hazard Mitigation Team of which the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources; Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing; the Kansas Water Office and others are members. The Strategy identifies several implementation tasks related to flooding that are consistent with the 2010 *Kansas Water Plan* Objective. These tasks are keyed, in part, toward a FY 2005 update of the Kansas Water Plan Flood Management Section.

Additional Information

Further information on this subject or on many other *Kansas Water Plan* related programs can be obtained from: Kansas Water Office, 901 S. Kansas Avenue, Topeka, KS 66612-1249, phone (785-296-3185), toll free (888-KAN-WATER) or check our WEB site at www.kwo.org.