



# Ohio Floodplain Management Association

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June 20, 2012

Honorable Sherrod Brown  
Member- U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
200 North High Street, Rm. 614  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Senator Brown,

The Ohio Floodplain Management Association (OFMA) is a leading resource for floodplain management professionals in Ohio. OFMA is an organization dedicated to promoting sound and effective floodplain management through policy, training and collaboration. Over 700 local floodplain managers, who assist with reducing the impact of floods and the management of Ohio's floodplain functions and resources, use OFMA as a network and education forum.

The Obama Administration has released its proposed 2013 budget. If implemented, as proposed, there will be long-term ramifications to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) hazard mitigation programs. Both pre- and post-disaster mitigation programs affect Ohio's capability to mitigate natural hazards and build resiliency in response to natural disasters. Specifically, this budget proposal eliminates all Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant (PDM) funding, and offers the creation of a new Comprehensive Preparedness Grant System. Reducing funding and focus on mitigation, while forcing competition between preparedness and mitigation activities, ignores the fact that mitigation of natural hazards is the nation's biggest threat!

The national trend has been to reduce both focus and funding for hazard mitigation programs. This is not a reasonable or responsible position when flood damages alone (only one natural hazard) have increased from \$6 billion per year in the 1990s to nearly \$10 billion per year in the 2000s. While we can all agree that there is need to reduce expenditures and increase program efficiency, OFMA is concerned that the success of the PDM, especially in dealing with flood risk, is not fully appreciated.

The Federal Robert T. Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. authorizes FEMA's pre-disaster (PDM) and post-disaster (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program – HMGP) programs, and requires states and communities to have FEMA approved natural hazard mitigation plans in order to maintain eligibility for Federal mitigation assistance. **PDM is the only multi-hazard mitigation grant program available on an annual basis to support state and local efforts to reduce risk from all hazards.** The State and communities in Ohio rely on PDM as the main source of funding to develop and update the required mitigation plans. To date, 56 of Ohio's 88 counties have used PDM funds to complete their mitigation plans. Federal law requires the states and communities to update mitigation plans; if PDM funds are eliminated, it is not clear how this mandate can be satisfied. There is no surplus State or local funds available to address the required update.

In addition to hazard mitigation plans, Ohio and its communities have utilized PDM funding to implement mitigation projects that permanently reduce future risk by removing existing development from harm. Fifty-four repetitively flooded structures have been removed and another 47 are in the process of being acquired and

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removed from flood hazard areas. **PDM funds are cost-shared with states and communities so it encourages state and local investment in the goal of more resilient communities.** Ohio has been awarded over \$14.4 million in PDM grants. These Federal funds have been matched with \$5.3 million state and local funds.

Based upon a Congressional budget office study (2007), it is estimated that \$3 in future losses are reduced for every \$1 invested in mitigation projects! Ohio may avoid \$54 million in future risk as a result of its participation in PDM activities. The PDM program has been successful at reducing cost and creating model processes for providing federal and state funds to local communities.

Besides the planning and project benefits received from the PDM program, Ohio has been able to maintain competency and continuity in the Ohio Emergency Management Agency Mitigation Branch. The PDM provides State Management Costs grant to states that can be used to maintain staff and program activities for mitigation during years when there are no Federal disaster declarations. Ohio has had only 1 Federal disaster declaration in the last four years.

In summary, **OFMA recommends that the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program be maintained as a separate, stand-alone grant program focused on mitigating natural hazard risk.** FEMA should continue to improve the grant process to ensure that PDM funds are awarded and expended in timely and efficient ways. Actions taken by Congress, to address the concern over earmark projects and unexpended PDM funds, continue to move the PDM toward a model program for the federal, state and local partnership that builds resiliency in our communities.

OFMA appreciates this opportunity to share our perspective and help explain the concerns for elimination of FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program. Maintaining a consistent source of funding to mitigate multi-hazards is an effective compliment to FEMA's post-disaster mitigation programs. States and communities are provided a broad spectrum of opportunity to reduce future risk and build resiliency. Ohio State and local floodplain managers are committed to our shared responsibility for managing the flood risk.

Sincerely,



Shawn Arden, PE, CFM  
President, Ohio Floodplain Management Association

Cc: Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Chair – U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Senator Thad Cockran, Vice-Chair – U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations



*A Division of the Water Management Association of Ohio  
A Chapter of the Association of State Floodplain Managers*

