

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
Washington, DC 20405

PBS 1095.7  
December 27, 2016

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: Floodplain Management

1. Purpose. Establish requirements and management processes to comply with Executive Order (E.O.) 11988, *Floodplain Management* (May 24, 1977), as amended by E.O. 13690, *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) and Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input* (January 30, 2015).
2. Cancellation. This Order cancels ADM 1095.6, *Consideration of Floodplains in Decision Making*, issued February 11, 2003, and re-validated August 1, 2013, and companion PBS Floodplain Management Desk Guide.
3. Background. E.O. 11988 requires Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. Federal agencies are also required to evaluate the potential effects of any actions taken in a floodplain, such as the acquisition, management, and disposal of land and facilities.

In the United States, extreme weather and other impacts of climate change are threatening the health, safety, and infrastructure of cities and communities. The impacts of warming, such as increased storm intensity and rising sea levels, are contributing to an increased risk of flooding. In response to Hurricane Sandy, on December 7, 2012, the President created the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force by Executive Order 13632. The Task Force adopted a higher flood standard for the areas affected by the hurricane to ensure that federally funded buildings, infrastructure, and other projects were rebuilt stronger to withstand future storms. The Task Force also recommended the Federal Government create a higher national flood risk standard for federally funded projects. The President issued E.O. 13690 to implement this recommendation.

E.O. 13690 amends E.O. 11988 to improve the Nation's resilience to flooding and to better prepare for the impacts of climate change. E.O. 13690 directs Federal agencies to amend existing regulations and procedures to be consistent with the FFRMS, to address current and future flood risk, and to ensure that projects funded with taxpayer dollars last as long as intended. The FFRMS is a resilience standard, to increase

resilience against flooding and to help preserve the natural value of floodplains. E.O. 13690 requires Federal agencies to incorporate the FFRMS to expand management from the current base flood elevation to a higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain for Federally Funded Projects, as defined in section 8.b.

Flooding can severely damage GSA-controlled Federally owned and leased facilities, resulting in costs and impacts to the agency's mission and continuity of operations. Floodplain compliance is a component of responsible property management that can reduce the risk of property loss and protect Federal agency resources.

4. Nature of revision. E.O. 13690 requires GSA to amend existing floodplain management procedures to incorporate the FFRMS. The FFRMS is a resilience standard that describes approaches for GSA to determine a higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain, or FFRMS floodplain, for Federally Funded Projects.
5. Effective date. The Order and companion desk guide are effective from the date of signature and remain in effect until cancelled.
6. Scope and applicability. This Order and the companion desk guide apply to all real property management and operation activities for Federal buildings under GSA's jurisdiction, custody or control, including all buildings delegated to other Federal agencies by the GSA Administrator, and leased space. For Federally Funded Projects, as defined herein, this Order and desk guide apply to prospective projects for which a source of funding has yet to be identified as of the Effective Date.
7. Responsibilities.
  - a. Office of the PBS Commissioner. The PBS Commissioner has the authority to determine whether actions in or affecting floodplains are the only practicable alternatives and approve such actions when the actions affect GSA programs, in accordance with PBS 5450.1, GSA Delegations of Authority. The Commissioner may delegate such authority to the Assistant Commissioner for Real Property Asset Management, Chief Architect, Assistant Commissioner for Project Delivery, or Assistant Commissioner for Leasing. The Deputy Commissioner may delegate such authority to the PBS Regional Commissioners.
  - b. Office of Facilities Management. The PBS Assistant Commissioner for Facilities Management is responsible for recommending updates to the policy, as appropriate, advising PBS Assistant and Regional Commissioners as well as all other GSA offices on methods and approaches to address floodplain compliance requirements, and representing GSA in interagency coordination on matters related to floodplain management (e.g., Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force). The Office of Facilities Management is responsible for informing appropriate GSA staff of the agency's floodplain responsibilities.

- c. Office of Project Delivery and Office of the Chief Architect. The Assistant Commissioner for Project Delivery and the Chief Architect are responsible for updating policies and procedures, including the PBS P-100 *Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service*, within their program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff (such as Project Engineers, Project Managers, and Project Management staff) of GSA's floodplain responsibilities.
- d. Office of Leasing. The Assistant Commissioner for Leasing is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff (such as Leasing Specialists and Realty Specialists) of GSA's floodplain responsibilities.
- e. Office of Real Property Asset Management. The Assistant Commissioner for Real Property Asset Management is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff of GSA's floodplain responsibilities.
- f. Office of Real Property Utilization and Disposal. The Assistant Commissioner for Real Property Utilization and Disposal is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff of GSA's floodplain responsibilities.
- g. Office of General Counsel. The Office of General Counsel reviews GSA programs and projects for legal sufficiency and to ascertain whether the proposed action complies with E.O. 11988 as amended by E.O. 13690. Regional Counsel must be informed of any proposed actions in or affecting a floodplain early in the process in order to provide the necessary legal review.
- h. PBS Regional Commissioners. The PBS Regional Commissioners have the authority to review projects, under their jurisdiction, and approve actions that have been determined to be the only practicable alternatives through signed documentation (Justification for No Practicable Alternatives and Floodplain Memorandum). Regional Commissioners are responsible for coordinating with their regional business line leadership on the approval and documentation of such actions.
- i. Office of Government-wide Policy, Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings (OGP, OFHPGB). OFHPGB is responsible for advising PBS on how to integrate the latest relevant engineering, hydraulic engineering, and science and technology publications, released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and U.S. Navy, and other climate science informed documents for federally funded projects.

8. Policy. This Order incorporates requirements of the *Guidelines for Implementing E.O. 11988, Floodplain Management, and E.O. 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input* (October 8, 2015), for GSA activities that may involve floodplains, including real property acquisition through Federal construction, purchase, or lease, public building design and construction, repair and alteration, facility operation, and disposal of surplus real property. An 8-step decision-making process, as described in the companion desk guide, is required for actions that may occur in a floodplain. This Order also defines specific actions for which GSA applies a shortened floodplain decision-making process. This Order and companion desk guide:

a. Aligns floodplain management requirements with GSA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Desk Guide, of October 1999, and decision-making processes. Floodplain requirements, as outlined in this policy, should be facilitated through existing internal NEPA procedures whenever possible.

b. Continues to define Actions as any of the following Federal activities: acquiring, managing, and disposing of Federal lands and facilities; providing federally undertaken, financed, or assisted construction and improvements; and conducting Federal activities and programs affecting land use. Furthermore, this Order defines a new subset of GSA actions, referred to as Federally Funded Projects, for which a new floodplain standard must be applied. Federally Funded Projects, a term introduced in E.O. 13690, are actions where Federal funds are used for new construction, substantial improvement, or to address substantial damage to structures and facilities. This Order uses GSA's annual prospectus threshold to define Federally Funded Projects that are substantial improvements or to address substantial damage (e.g., major repair and alteration projects).

(1) The floodplain for an Action, as distinct from Federally Funded Projects, must be established by one of the following approaches:

- (a) 1-percent-annual-chance (or 100-year) floodplain for non-critical actions;
- (b) 0.2-percent-annual chance (or 500-year) floodplain for critical actions.

(2) A shortened floodplain decision-making process, as explained in the companion desk guide, may be applied to Specific Actions that GSA has determined will likely have insignificant developmental impacts on floodplains. These Specific Actions are the same as those listed as eligible for treatment as automatic Categorical Exclusions (CATEXs) under Section 5.3 of GSA's NEPA Desk Guide.

(3) Federally Funded Projects include:

- (a) New construction and lease construction, including additions and annexes to existing facilities.

(b) Renovations, modernizations, and major repair and alteration projects, at or above GSA's annual prospectus threshold, in GSA-controlled Federal owned and leased space.

(c) Site (or land) acquisition when tied with improvements or investments.

(d) Repair and alteration projects in response to a natural disaster (flood damage), where a facility has had repetitive flood damage and where the cumulative costs of flood repairs (including mission and related impacts) exceed GSA's annual prospectus repair and alteration threshold.

(4) The FFRMS must be incorporated in the floodplain decision-making process for Federally Funded Projects. The floodplain for Federally Funded Projects must be established by one of the following approaches:

(a) Climate Informed Science Approach (CISA), where data is available;

(b) Freeboard Value Approach (FVA); or

(c) 0.2-percent-annual-chance (or 500-year) flood approach.

c. Require application of elevated standards for actions determined to be 'critical'. A 'critical action' is any activity or action for which even a slight chance of flooding would be too great.

d. Require the development of a process or approach to capture data and report on recurring flood damage. GSA-owned facilities subject to repetitive flood damage that exceeds the annual prospectus threshold from cumulative flood events should be re-evaluated to address siting and design decisions that pre-date E.O. 13690 and that may not fully reflect the E.O.'s intent.

9. Point of contact. Please direct inquiries to the Office of Facilities Management, Facility Risk Management Division.

10. Attachment. Appendix A: Desk Guide for Floodplain Management

11. Signature.



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NORMAN DONG  
Commissioner  
Public Buildings Service

**Appendix A: PBS Desk Guide for Floodplain Management**  
**(Companion to GSA Order 1095.7)**