

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COLORADO HAZARD MAPPING PROGRAM (CHAMP)



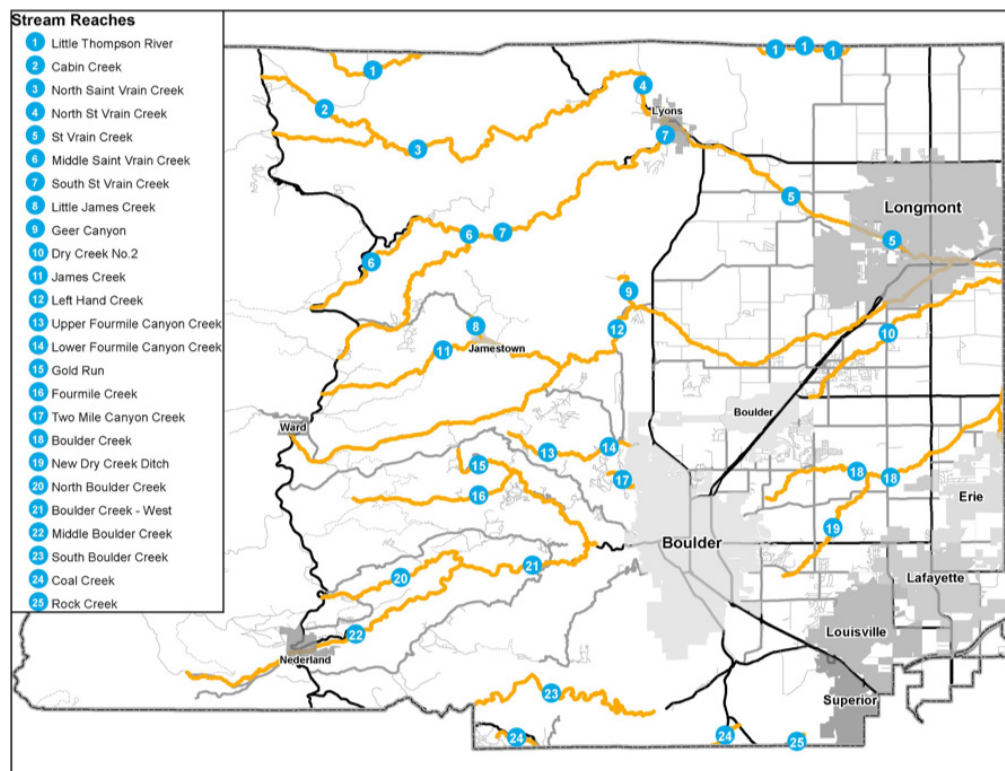
WHAT IS CHAMP FLOODPLAIN MAPPING?

CHAMP is a State of Colorado funded study to provide a mitigation and land use framework in areas likely to be affected by future flooding, erosion, and debris flow events. Following the 2013 flood, Colorado's Legislature passed a funding bill to reanalyze potential hazards including flooding for streams affected by the flood. Now that the study is nearing completion, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is using the data in their Risk Mapping, Analysis, and Planning Program (Risk MAP) to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

WHY WAS CHAMP INITIATED

The 2013 floods caused significant changes to floodplains, and therefore flood risk. Typically, communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program are required to identify when these risk change and perform studies to update risk information that is maintained by FEMA. In this case, the State determined that updated risk information was needed quickly to properly communicate rebuilding efforts so that homes, businesses and infrastructure could be rebuilt safely. It was also clear that communities would likely have to prioritize funding towards rebuilding. The State therefore passed a bill that would help identify updated flood risk across the flood affected areas, allowing communities to be able to focus on recovery and rebuilding efforts.

CHAMP STUDY LIMITS IN BOULDER COUNTY



WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS?

The State of Colorado, Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) – CWCB is in charge of managing the CHAMP program and overseeing work being conducted. CWCB partnered with AECOM, a nationally recognized firm, to complete flood risk studies under CHAMP. They are also partnering with community officials to provide outreach support.

FEMA – FEMA uses final study information to update FIRMs. FEMA also reviews results and provides feedback. Ultimately, FEMA administers the NFIP and oversees any regulatory floodplain updates .

Local Counties and Communities – Local officials have been updated regularly on the progress of the study, and were given the opportunity to review draft results. This allowed concerns to be communicated to CWCB before preliminary information was released for public review. Local officials are also being asked to identify public outreach opportunities so that homeowners and businesses can also see project results. The data will ultimately be owned by community leaders as local administrators of the NFIP, who will communicate and adopt flood risk information, manage development and construction, and enforce regulations.

Property Owners – Property owners will have an opportunity to review results of the analysis prior to FIRMs being finalized. The forum to view this information will vary depending on each community, so contact your local floodplain administrator for more information.

WHAT WAS THE STUDY PROCESS?

The study included a science and engineering-based approach to identify potential flood risk zones:

- Topographic data was obtained to determine ground elevation. This elevation information, obtained via aircraft, was acquired in 2013 and 2014 after the flood, and provides a snapshot in time to conduct the study.
- Survey data was obtained to supplement the topographic information and to gain the necessary detail on bridges, culverts and the ground below the water line. Streams that will not show base flood elevations on FIRMs will not include survey.
- Hydrology uses historical rainfall data, including but not limited to 2013 flood information, to determine amounts of water anticipated during select flood events. Parameters such as ground cover and infiltration were used with statistics to determine flow rates.
- Hydraulic models were then built to simulate flow through rivers using topographic, survey and hydrologic information. These models simulate river conditions and produce potential water surface elevations anticipated during floods. These results were compared to known flood elevations of similar events to verify findings, if available.
- Results were mapped on work maps for review and use. These included calculated floodplain limits and other helpful information.

Since topographic data is a snapshot in time, local communities and counties also provided updated information for areas where there were multiple concurrent construction and/or recovery efforts happening. If it was possible within the project timeline, updated information was incorporated into the CHAMP modeling; if they were not captured, additional changes still can be made to these studies after CHAMP is finalized through FEMA's Letter of Map Change (LOMC) process.

WHO APPROVES THE UPDATES?

The CWCB worked with FEMA to review results of the study throughout the project, expediting the process of data being used to update FIRMs. Community officials were also asked to review the results to avoid concerns when the results were released. Finally, everyone is being given an opportunity to review the maps now that FEMA has published them on Preliminary FIRMs. FEMA will also initiate a statutory appeal period for the Preliminary FIRMs, where the new floodplains can be appealed using technical data.

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED RESULTS OF THE UPDATED INFORMATION?

This study will result in more reliable flood risk information. This information may be different from currently available flood risk information, as streams may have shifted; and better, updated, information is now available to analyze flood risk.

HOW ARE THESE CHANGES COMMUNICATED?

In most cases, local officials will be setting up meetings to review results of the study with interested property owners. The timing of these meetings will vary depending on each community. Contact your local floodplain administrator for more information.

HOW DOES THIS STUDY IMPACT ME?

Ultimately the results of this study will be used by insurance companies to rate flood insurance, and by local officials for issuing permits near special flood hazard areas (SFHA). Local residents will also have access to current risk information to help make more informed decisions resulting in safer, more resilient communities.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON CHAMP FLOODPLAIN MAPPING?

The project website can be viewed for updates and additional information at www.coloradohazardmappingprogram.com.

Boulder County's floodplain administrator can be contacted at 303-441-3900 or FloodplainMapsComment@bouldercounty.org.

For fact sheets related to flood insurance studies, see www.fema.gov/fact-sheets.

Learn about the National Flood Insurance Program by visiting www.floodsmart.gov.