



Transportation Department

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**BOULDER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 16, 2018**

AGENDA ITEM #6

Commissioners Hearing Room, Third Floor
Boulder County Courthouse

STUDY SESSION:

Update on the County Floodplain Remapping Project

Informational Item – No Public Testimony/No Formal Action Requested

PRESENTERS:

Transportation Staff: Erin Cooper, Floodplain Specialist; Varda Blum, Floodplain Program Manager

ACTION REQUESTED:

Direction and Feedback

Introduction

The purpose of this study session is for:

- Staff to give an overview of activities underway and previously completed related to floodplain remapping of flood affected waterways within the county,
- Planning Commissioners to discuss and ask questions of staff on the technical review and outreach process for the Colorado Hazard Mapping Program (“CHAMP”) Phase II mapping and related floodway analyses, and
- Planning Commissioners to provide direction and feedback on information that they are interested in seeing presented when staff returns to ask for Planning Commission’s recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on the incorporation of draft mapping into the Boulder County Floodplain Overlay District as part of Docket Z-17-0002.

Background

The September 2013 flood significantly changed creek size, shape, and location and altered 100-year floodplains in areas throughout Boulder County and other areas of the state. In response, the State of Colorado has taken steps towards bolstering long-term planning and

resiliency efforts by approving funds through Senate Bill 15-245 for CHAMP, which is managed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (“CWCB”). CHAMP is updating local hazard information including producing new regulatory floodplain maps for the most affected waterways (see Figure 1 in *Discussion*). Most of the current effective regulatory floodplain maps for Boulder County were produced in the 1980’s. In addition to the changes to waterways caused by the 2013 Flood, many land use changes have occurred since the 1980’s, the available information and technology has increased in accuracy, and CWCB modeling standards for delineation of the floodway have become more conservative. Ultimately, the new floodplain maps produced by CWCB/CHAMP will go through FEMA’s extensive review and adoption process to be adopted by FEMA as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (“FIRMs”).

Comprehensive zoning map amendments to the Floodplain Overlay District, specifically the local Boulder County Floodplain and Floodway, to adopt draft mapping from CHAMP Phase I were undertaken in 2017 (Docket Z-17-0001). These map amendments were accomplished through the process set forth in the floodplain regulations adopted by the Board of County Commissioners under Dockets DC-15-0004 and DC-17-0001 and included technical review, public notification, and hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners.

The amended Floodplain Overlay District extents and data produced by Docket Z-17-0001 (CHAMP Phase I local adoption) have already allowed more accurate reflection of real-world conditions post-Flood. Property owners are using updated information regarding flood risks and taking proactive measures to protect people and property before the next significant flood event. The Phase I map amendments are also allowing for more accurate regulatory decisions.

Staff intends to pursue additional comprehensive zoning map amendments, based upon the second phase (“Phase II”) of CHAMP draft floodplain remapping, through Docket Z-17-0002 and completion of associated technical review, public notification, and hearings. Both Phase I and II processes have also included extensive community outreach.

Incorporation of CHAMP Phase II draft mapping into the Floodplain Overlay District will supplement the already adopted Phase I mapping with the second of the two major phases of post-Flood best available floodplain information. Local adoption of the updated maps in the Phase I and II reaches as compared to the alternative of waiting at least three, and likely closer to five years, for FEMA to adopt the maps as FIRMs, have allowed and will continue to allow County staff to better protect the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of and visitors to Boulder County.

FEMA flood insurance requirements and rate calculations will change only once FEMA adopts the new floodplain maps as FIRMs.

Discussion

In general, floodplain draft mapping is not shared with communities until later in the remapping process. Communities and property owners often do not see any draft maps until FEMA releases Preliminary FIRMs, at which time communities are able to submit appeals within a 90-day period and likely will not have the opportunity to speak with the engineers

leading the map development to share local knowledge. However, at the request of County staff, CWCB delivered both Phase I and Phase II of the draft mapping to the county much earlier than is the norm so that county staff was able to:

- Engage in technical review and provide feedback to CWCB/FEMA early in the process when change is easier to make, and
- Engage community members that have site specific on-the-ground knowledge to also provide timely feedback to the remapping process.

The first phase of draft mapping that was delivered included draft floodplain maps for the currently mapped and extended reaches of the Phase I streams identified in Figure 1.

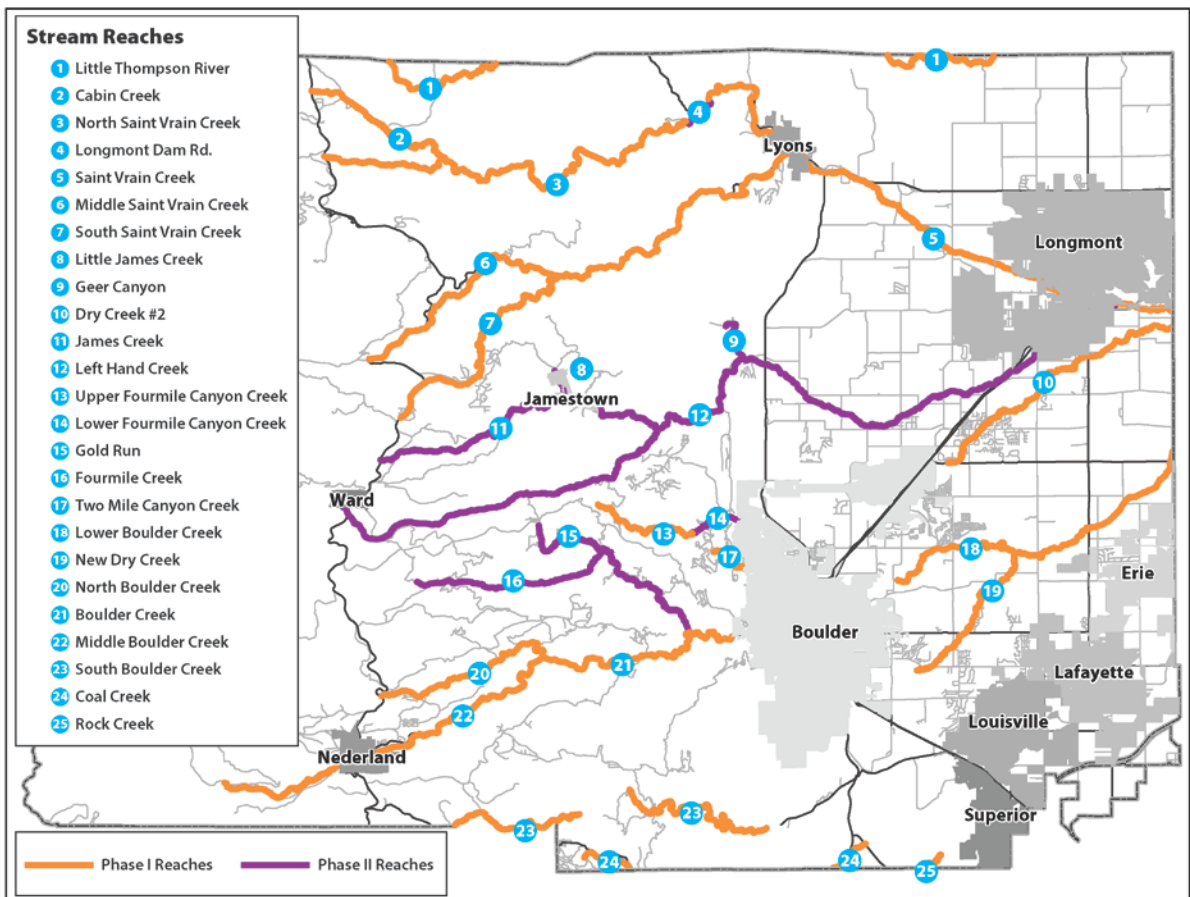


Figure 1. Phase I (orange) and Phase II (purple) CHAMP study reaches throughout unincorporated Boulder County.

In late 2017 and early 2018, the County received an additional delivery of CHAMP draft floodplain mapping (Phase II) for the remaining 70 miles of stream that are being mapped within unincorporated Boulder County, mainly those streams that have a reach that is adjacent to roadwork or stream restoration project areas, including:

- Left Hand Creek both west and east of Highway 36
- James Creek
- Geer Canyon
- Fourmile Creek
- Gold Run

- The reach of Fourmile Canyon Creek along Wagonwheel Gap Road
- The reach of North Saint Vrain along Longmont Dam Road

Additional floodway analysis and mapping for floodway areas within Phase I reaches have been completed by CHAMP during the time frame of the County's Phase II review.

Locations include:

- St. Vrain Creek from upstream of Airport Road to East County Line Road, excluding regions within the City of Longmont municipal jurisdiction
- Lower Boulder Creek from approximately Kenosha Road/119th St. downstream to East County Line

Floodway analysis and modeling was delayed to Phase II for these Phase I reaches due to needed coordination with the City of Longmont on the above noted St. Vrain reach, and in order to resolve technical questions and enable efficiency of analysis with downstream segments of Lower Boulder Creek in Weld County. The County is confident that updating floodway delineations in these two reaches will improve the health and safety impacts of floodplain regulations.

Because the County has now received the Phase II draft maps from CHAMP and as part of the community outreach and technical review process for these draft maps, staff is providing information to the Planning Commission through this study session on the following:

- The continued role of floodplain mapping in Boulder County's floodplain management program,
- The CHAMP floodplain remapping post 2013 Flood accomplished through the CWCB,
- The incorporation of CHAMP Phase I floodplain maps into the Boulder County Floodplain (Floodplain Overlay District),
- The County's ongoing community outreach activities and how CHAMP and FEMA will consider public feedback collected and communicated by the County,
- The County's technical review of CHAMP draft mapping, and
- The anticipated 2018 process to adopt and incorporate CHAMP draft floodplain mapping into the Boulder County Floodplain of the Floodplain Overlay District pursuant to Boulder County Land Use Code Article 4-400, floodplain regulations (revised May 30, 2017).

Next Steps

On May 30, 2017, the Board of County Commissioners authorized staff to proceed with continued analysis of possible zoning map amendments for the Floodplain Overlay District, specifically the Boulder County Floodplain and Floodway, based upon the Phase II floodplain remapping of CHAMP and other best available data (Docket Z-17-0002).

At the June 2018 Planning Commission meeting, staff will ask the Planning Commission to review the proposed zoning map amendments during a public hearing for Docket Z-17-0002 and request that Planning Commission make a recommendation for the Board of County Commissioners regarding incorporation of the CHAMP draft floodplain mapping into the

Boulder County Floodplain. Public testimony will be taken at this hearing. Public feedback gathered as part of the community outreach process will also be presented.

Current information on the floodplain remapping process is available on the Floodplain Remapping Project webpage: www.BoCoFloodplainRemapping.com

Requested Action

Following staff's presentation of the second phase of updates on post-flood floodplain remapping, staff requests the Planning Commissioners provide comments and questions of staff on the remapping technical review and outreach process undertaken for CHAMP Phase II. Additionally, staff requests that Planning Commissioners provide direction regarding information the Commission would like to see when staff returns to ask for a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on the incorporation of draft mapping into the Boulder County Floodplain Overlay District as part of Docket Z-17-0002.