United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

West Virginia

Fact Sheet

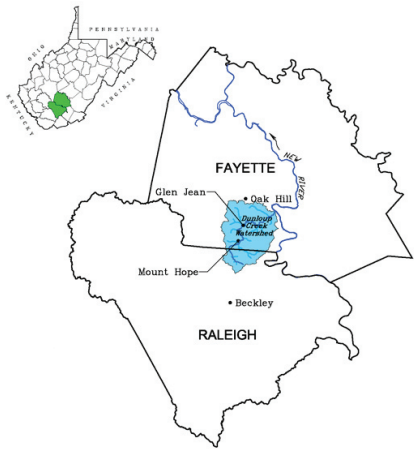
April 2009

Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout

Introduction

Planning for the Dunloup Creek Watershed was re-initiated in 1995 in response to repeated flooding to the communities of Kilsyth, Mount Hope, Glen Jean, Red Star, Harvey, and other settlements along Dunloup Creek. The project was planned under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-93-566, as amended). Approximately 290 properties and associated infrastructure have suffered repeated flooding, with two devastating floods in 2001 and 2004. The area is distressed, with low house values and low per capita incomes.

Measures such as dams, channels, floodwalls, dredging, and floodproofing are not effective in reducing flood damages. All of these alternatives were evaluated in an effort to find a solution to the flooding. The most cost-effective and feasible option for the communities is a voluntary floodplain buyout.



Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout Project is located in Fayette and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia.

Project Description

- **Location:** Fayette and Raleigh Counties, West Virginia, Third Congressional District
- **Size:** The watershed is 31,510 acres. The project area is up to 203 acres, with approximately 298 affected properties.
- **Start Date:** The Final Watershed Plan – Environmental Impact Statement was completed in May 2007. Implementation of the project can begin as soon as funding is available.

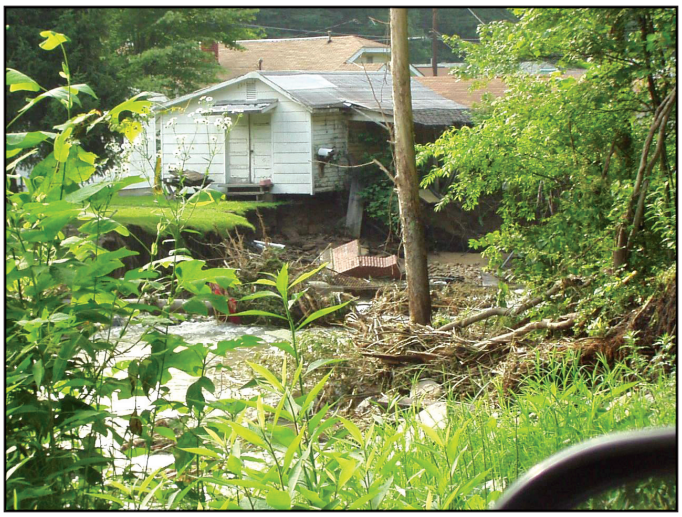
The floodplain consists of a narrow stream bounded on both sides by steep mountains that limits the amount of level land for homes, roads, and utilities. Communities are clustered along the stream where there is room for buildings and infrastructure. A voluntary buyout plan for threatened properties within the 100-year floodplain would be implemented. Buildings and other facilities will be removed from up to 203 acres to restore the floodplain to more natural conditions.

Property obtained would be maintained in perpetuity as natural floodplain. If this area is restored to a natural floodplain, the stream will be free to meander and naturally adjust giving it greater capacity to handle floods and sediment loads.

Partners

- Fayette County Commission
- Southern Conservation District
- West Virginia Conservation Committee
- Dunloup Creek Watershed Association
- New River Gorge National Park Service

Approximately 290 properties and associated infrastructure have suffered repeated flooding, with two devastating floods in 2001 and 2004. Flooding inundates homes and undercuts foundations risking life and property.



Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout

Flood damages will be reduced by 100% for those property owners that participate in the voluntary buyout and relocate outside of the floodplain.

- Raleigh County Commission
- City of Mount Hope
- Fayette County Office of Emergency Services

Benefits

Flood damages will be reduced by 100% for those property owners that participate in the voluntary buyout and relocate outside of the floodplain. There are incalculable benefits to reducing risk to life and property, improving the quality of life to a distressed community, and restoring environmental integrity to the natural floodplain.

Environmental benefits include:

- Aesthetic values of the floodplain will be restored.
- Natural floodplain functions will be restored as homesteads are returned to riparian stream habitat and natural floodplain vegetation.
- Water quality will be improved with the removal of homes, some with failing or non-existent septic systems.
- Streambank erosion will be reduced as areas along the stream are converted from mowed yards to natural streambank vegetation. Streambank stability will improve.
- Fish and wildlife resources will gradually improve as development in the floodplain is removed and natural conditions are restored.
- Fishery habitat will be improved along Dunloup Creek.
- Riparian areas will be restored in the project area.
- Wetland improvement is anticipated as potential wetlands on Philo soils are restored to natural floodplain conditions.
- Properties vacated by this alternative may provide the opportunity for the creation of trails and linear park areas in the floodplain adjacent to the creek.

Economic Opportunities

Employment in the watershed has historically been dominated by the coal industry and subject to the boom-bust cycles of this industry. The Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout would provide demolition/site restoration, technical/engineering, and project administration jobs.

- Demolition/site restoration jobs include permit; demolition and disposal of structures; erosion and sediment control; asbestos surveys, proper removal of asbestos materials; decommissioning wells; removal of septic tanks and other identified underground tanks; disconnecting utilities; removal of walks, driveways, and other impervious surfaces; removal of miscellaneous site structures; filling basements or re-grading crawl space areas; removal of any remaining trash or waste; grading; seeding; mulching; fertilization; tree planting; etc.
- Technical/engineering jobs include public information/education activities, eligibility determinations, application ranking determinations, landowner negotiations, cultural resource mitigation assistance, development of technical standards for site demolition/restoration, technical oversight

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Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout

There are incalculable benefits to reducing risk to life and property, improving the quality of life to a distressed community, and restoring environmental integrity to the natural floodplain of Dunloup Creek.

of contractor performance, site inspection, etc.

- Project administration jobs include processing applications, landowner notifications, processing of closing documents, etc.

Recreation is currently the most important industry in the area, providing employment and income directly and indirectly to residents. Tourism is also a significant employer in the area. Dunloup Creek is located within the watershed of the New River Gorge National River. Thousands of whitewater rafters and hiking enthusiasts travel through the communities along Dunloup Creek on their way to access sites on the New River. In its present state, Dunloup Creek has limited recreation potential due to high bacterial contamination and limited public access.

- Flood damaged properties will be removed from the corridor, improving the aesthetics of the area.
- Improving the water quality will increase the recreational and fishing potential of the stream.
- The restored floodplain can be used for other beneficial uses, such as parks, greenways, picnic areas, hiking trails, wildlife viewing, etc.

The Dunloup Creek Watershed meets the criteria for a disadvantaged community, as defined by the National Watershed Manual. Personal equity and financial well-being will be enhanced in a distressed community. Participants in the program will receive a buyout offer that allows them to seek quality housing outside the floodplain. Participants have expressed a desire to relocate as close to their existing communities as possible but out of danger from repeated floods. Housing values in the Dunloup Creek Watershed are below county, state, and national average values.

- Additional housing needed by voluntary relocation of affected homeowners will result in stimulating the housing market and potentially providing new housing construction jobs.
- Human health and safety will be greatly improved for residents who relocate from the floodplain. Risks to life and property associated with flooding will be removed for participating individuals.
- There will be reduced costs for debris removal, rescue operations, and emergency services that must currently be provided to residents when a flood occurs.

Recent Flood Events

- September 19, 2004
- July 22-26, 2004*
- May 28, 2004*
- November 12 and 19, 2003*
- March 2003*
- May 2002*
- July 8, 26, and 29, 2001*
- January 19, 1996
- Mid-Spring 1995
- March 4, 1993
- May 1987
- Spring 1986

*Disaster Declarations

The floodplain consists of a narrow stream bounded on both sides by steep mountains that limit the amount of level land for homes, roads, and utilities.

Dunloup Creek Voluntary Floodplain Buyout

History

From 1965-2005, residents have sought relief from flooding.

1965	First request to NRCS to study problem.
1976	Watershed Plan-Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) recommended channel enlargement and land treatment. Work did not proceed.
1984	Mutual agreement between Sponsors and NRCS to de-authorize the project.
1987-1996	Continued flooding along Dunloup Creek.
1996	New application for assistance submitted to NRCS.
1998	Local Implementation Plan was provided, no funding tied to the plan.
2001	Local Sponsors requested a PL566 Watershed Plan.
2002	WV Statewide Flood Protection Plan was released.
2004	NRCS began re-evaluation of Dunloup Creek with the goal of producing a PL566 Watershed Plan.
Oct. 2006	NRCS released Draft Watershed Plan–Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public review and comment.
May 2007	Final EIS released with recommended voluntary floodplain buyout.

Statewide Perspective

There will be reduced need for federal, state, and local government assistance to residents who are no longer exposed to flooding. There will be a positive effect on the riparian areas, water quality, and floodplain functions of Dunloup Creek with the removal of residential homes from flood prone areas. This will, in turn, improve the New River Gorge National River.

For More Information

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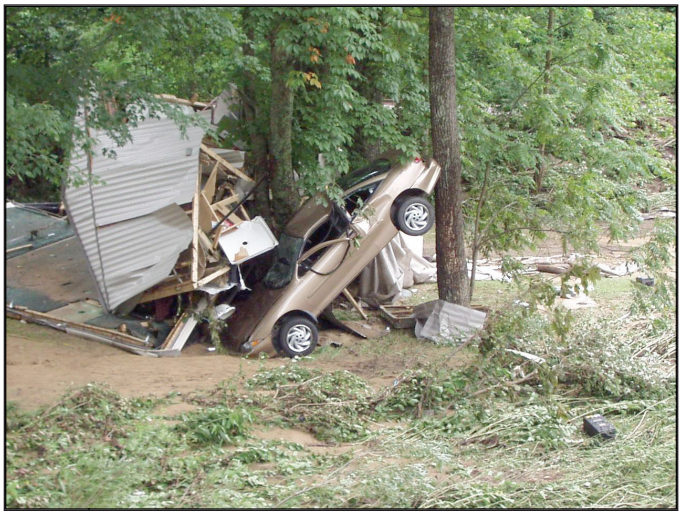
http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/watershed/dunloup/dunloup.html

Natural floodplain functions will be restored as homestead areas are returned to riparian stream habitat and natural floodplain vegetation.

There will be reduced costs for debris removal, rescue operations, and emergency services that must currently be provided to residents in the floodplain when a flood occurs.



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