



# THE IAFSM CURRENT

*Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management*

Fall 2025 Newsletter

## Solar Installations in the Floodplain

*~IDNR Office of Water Resources*

Solar projects continue to be proposed throughout the state – from residential (rooftop and yard mounted) to large scale installations. These projects often are proposed for areas with floodplain – which means they must be permitted in compliance with your floodplain management ordinance.

Solar farm projects require a large amount of electrical equipment including the solar panels, racking systems, inverters, and batteries, as well as security fencing. All these components have the potential to block or obstruct flood flows. Local permits are required prior to development in the floodplain. State floodway permits may also be required.

It is always best to avoid development in flood prone locations. However, if the project site must be in a floodplain, certain design considerations are necessary. These facilities could be a significant obstruction to flood flows, especially if the site is graded or if security fencing is proposed around the facility. The following criteria must be considered when reviewing wind or solar farm projects.



### 1. Determination if the site is in a floodway (or a floodplain without a mapped floodway)

Northeastern Illinois - In the six counties in Northeastern Illinois, the Office of Water Resources has determined that solar farms and wind turbine farms are NOT appropriate uses of a designated floodway. Such facilities do not require use of or access to the stream. In addition, permitting solar farms and wind turbine farms in “non-designated” floodways could be problematic and state permit review is required.

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# Solar Installations in the Floodplain Continued

**Downstate Illinois** – Permitting solar farms and wind turbine farms in the floodway could be permitted however, a state permit application must be completed. The density of the towers or solar panel supports are a potential obstruction to flood flow and therefore are a consideration. Fencing around the facilities are also a concern in downstate Illinois.

## **2. If within the floodplain, a local permit must be obtained. The permit should insure the following:**

- Turbines or solar panels should not block or divert flood flows onto neighboring property.
- All structures, electrical components, and service equipment must be either floodproofed or elevated above the flood protection elevation.
- The lowest edge of all photovoltaic panels must be at or above the flood protection elevation when at full tilt.

# Recreational Vehicles in the Floodplain

Recreational vehicles are common in Illinois and are often driven to or stored in floodplains, which are frequently used as recreation areas. At times, RVs are modified to be a more permanent fixture without air in the tires and with attached decks or other construction, and they may be left in place for years at a time. The floodplain requirements for recreation vehicles were written in a way that supports the use of floodplains for camping as long as recreational vehicles can be driven out of the floodplain when floods are forecasted.

Areas that are prone to flash flooding are not recommended for camping if there is not sufficient warning time to safely evacuate in the case of a flood. Over half of all flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous flood water. Never drive around the barriers blocking a flooded road. Just 2 feet of rushing water can carry away most SUVs and trucks; it is never safe to drive or walk into flood waters.

## **Standard floodplain requirements for recreational vehicles are:**

- Be on the site for fewer than 180 consecutive days; or
- Be fully licensed and ready for highway use\*; or
- Meet the permitting, elevation, and anchoring requirements for manufactured homes.

\*Fully licensed and ready for highway use means the vehicle is on its wheels or jacking system and is attached to the site by only quick-disconnect type utilities and security devices. The vehicle also has no permanently attached additions.

# The Cost of Inaction: What the Texas Floods Reveal About Our Risk

*~ASFPM News & Views, July 15, 2025*

The deadly flooding along the Guadalupe River over the July 4th weekend that killed at least 130 people with 160 still missing (as of the original publication date) is a heartbreaking tragedy, and our hearts are with the families and communities who are grieving the unimaginable loss. This moment demands not just an outpouring of compassion and support, but also a commitment to systemic change. This wasn't a freak event — it was another devastating reminder of what happens when floodplain development continues unchecked, flood mitigation is underfunded, and political decisions ignore science and expertise.

We know what works. We've known for decades. But inaction — or worse, deliberate rollback of protections — has once again left communities vulnerable. As Dr. Gilbert White wrote in 1942: "Floods are acts of God, but flood losses are largely acts of man." Unfortunately, we have yet to fully learn that lesson.

To help prevent tragedies like the one in Texas, ASFPM offers six recommendations to strengthen our nation's approach to flood risk management. [Read more here.](#)

# From the Chair: Ongoing Challenges and IAFSM Support

~Sharon Østerby, CFM, Chair, IAFSM

Welcome to fall! With our call for speakers out and the annual IAFSM conference just around the corner, I want to take a moment to thank the IAFSM Executive Board and Committee Members for the work they do to support our membership. IAFSM exists to support members across the state with resources, guidance, and technical training opportunities. Whether you're reviewing development proposals, maintaining infrastructure, responding to flood events, or educating communities, we're here to help you stay informed, connected, and effective in your work.

## Ongoing Challenges

Communities across Illinois are facing increasing challenges in managing flood risks. Urban flooding affects residents well outside mapped floodplains. Sewer backups and overland flow are damaging homes and businesses. The more intense, short-duration rainfalls are testing our stormwater systems in ways they were not designed to handle.

We also know that funding constraints remain a significant barrier to communities. Elevating buildings, maintaining stormwater infrastructure, updating ordinances, and investing in new detention or green infrastructure all require resources that are often hard to come by. Collaboration across municipalities, counties, and states will continue to be critical for managing stormwater.

## How IAFSM Supports You

That is where IAFSM comes in. We provide opportunities to share knowledge and deliver technical training, helping members gain the skills and tools needed to succeed in floodplain and stormwater management. Through committees, workshops, and the annual conference, members can collaborate, exchange ideas, and learn from each other's experiences to strengthen their work and advance stronger floodplain and stormwater management across the state.

We also keep members informed through timely communications. Last month, we sent an e-blast message to the membership regarding changes to the FEMA Letters of Map Revision (LOMR) and Conditional Letters of Map Revision (CLOMR) review and approval process. When pressing and time sensitive issues such as this arise, we will continue to share them with you. If you are not receiving e-blasts or our quarterly newsletter please contact Amanda King, our Executive Secretary, at [IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org).

Education is another key part of IAFSM's mission. One upcoming opportunity is the **FEQ Beginner Course** on October 28 - 30, 2025 (9:00 am – 4:00 pm) at the DuPage County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 418 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton, Illinois. This course is a great way to strengthen technical skills in floodplain modeling. You can register here: <https://www.illinoisfloods.org/event/3/2043/feq-beginner-course>.

## Moving Forward Together

Most importantly, we are a community. The collective expertise of IAFSM members is one of our greatest strengths, and your voices shape the direction of this organization. I encourage you to stay engaged, share your challenges and successes, and participate in our events and discussions.

Flood risk in Illinois is evolving, but so is our profession. By continuing to learn and work together, we can ensure our communities are better prepared for whatever lies ahead. Thank you for the important work you do every day and for being part of IAFSM.

## CEC Education & Training Opportunities

Looking for training opportunities? FEMA training is currently paused; ASFPM is exploring opportunities to expand its training programs. Additional opportunities are listed below. If you are looking for credits, be sure to review the material and confirm they meet the appropriate requirements.

### IAFSM/ASFPM Sponsored Training Opportunities:

- See separate article regarding SRH-2D courses for IDOT pre-qualification
- FEQ Beginning Course, Oct 28-30, [register here](#)
- 2026 IAFSM Conference, March 11-12, 2026, Champaign (see page 5 for more info)

### IDNR Illinois Floodplain Management Webinars

The Illinois DNR monthly webinar series is starting up again with different floodplain management topics each month. Please share this information with your building inspectors, permit staff, engineers, and public work staff. Use the links below to register and add to your calendar.

- October 21: 10:00 – 11:00, [Variances and Violations – Enforcing Your Floodplain Development Ordinance](#)
- November 18: 10:00 – 11:00, [Permitting in the Floodway](#)

### Webinars

- ASFPM webinars: <https://www.floods.org/training-education/online-training/asfpm-webinars/>
- ASFPM On Demand Learning seminars: [On-Demand Learning \(floods.org\)](#)
- Additional at-home training courses: <https://floods.redvector.com/>
- CRS training webinars: <https://crsresources.org/training/>

## Formation of a New Ad Hoc Mentorship Committee

This temporary committee is exploring the possibility of a peer-to-peer mentorship program for IAFSM members. If you are interested in joining the planning team or serving as a mentor, please contact Sarah Wenzel at [secretary@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:secretary@illinoisfloods.org).

## Join us for the 2026 Annual Conference, March 11-12 in Champaign





# Join Us at IAFSM's 40th Annual Conference!

The Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management (IAFSM) is turning 40, and we're celebrating with our biggest event of the year! Join professionals from across Illinois as we come together to share knowledge, swap ideas, and tackle today's challenges in floodplain and stormwater management.

 **Where:** iHotel & Illinois Conference Center, Champaign, IL

 **When:** March 11–12, 2026

## Get ready for:

- Engaging presentations from experts across the state
- Hands-on training sessions to sharpen your skills
- Networking opportunities to connect with peers and leaders in the field

## ★ Important Items:

- Early Bird pricing ends January 15, 2026 – save your spot and your budget! ([Register Here](#))
- Registration closes February 27, 2026 – don't miss out.
- Sponsorships will be received until February 23, 2026 – secure your visibility at the conference. ([Sponsorship Flyer](#))
- Exhibitor spots available until February 23, 2026 – showcase your work to professionals across Illinois ([Exhibitor Flyer](#))

## 🎓 Scholarships & Student Discounts

- If you're employed by a state or local government, you may qualify for one of 10 IAFSM scholarships to attend. If you're eligible, don't forget to apply for a scholarship!
- Discounted student registration and scholarships will also be available in January 2026—making it easier than ever to join us.

**Come learn, connect, and celebrate** 40 years of advancing floodplain and stormwater management in Illinois. To register and for more information: <https://www.illinoisfloods.org/events/iafsm-annual-conference>

# Call for Speakers

The Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management (IAFSM) is now accepting speaker submissions and field tour ideas for our 2026 Annual Conference!

If you're passionate about advancing floodplain and stormwater management in Illinois, we want to hear from you. Share your insights, case studies, innovations, and lessons learned with a statewide audience of professionals, agencies, and advocates.

## Topics may include:

- Climate Change
- CRS & Floodplain Administration
- Urban/Riverine Flooding
- Stormwater & Water Quality
- Mitigation, Outreach, Wetlands & More

Submit your abstract by 10/31/2025: <https://forms.gle/PuYvD7Mzx1EVcoQm7>

## Tours / Field Trips Wanted

Does your community have a floodplain, stormwater, mitigation, or wetland project in the vicinity of the conference hotel that you would like to show to other floodplain managers? IAFSM is considering offering Technical Field Tours again if enough tour sites are submitted to make up a tour.

Submit your nominations for potential tour sites by 10/31/25: <https://forms.gle/PuYvD7Mzx1EVcoQm7>

# IAFSM Annual Awards

Awards Season is approaching! Nominate Your Peers and Colleagues for Stormwater and Floodplain Management Awards, for recognition at our 2026 conference in March!

Do you know someone who has made notable contributions to furthering the goals and missions of IAFSM? Nominate them now! All nominations and references are to be submitted online or via email. Nominations are now being accepted for the awards listed below. Nominations for the following categories are due by January 9, 2026. Please visit <https://www.illinoisfloods.org/membership/awards> for more information.

- **Floodplain Manager of the Year:** Recognizes outstanding individual efforts and contributions at the local level in the area of floodplain management.
- **Young Professional of the Year:** The Young Professional of the Year Award to recognize the achievements of IAFSM professionals and graduate students under the age of 35!
- **Stormwater Management:** Awarded to an individual or group who have improved stormwater management or reduced urban flood risks through creative engineering, regulatory measures, or other approaches.
- **Mitigation:** Given to an individual or community that has encouraged flood hazard reduction through a buyout program, retrofitting, preparation of a mitigation plan, or other similar mitigation efforts.
- **Outstanding Service:** Awarded to an IAFSM Officer, a Federal, State, or Local Official, or a consultant who has gone above and beyond normal expectations and duties to promote or encourage IAFSM goals.
- **Journalism or Public Outreach Award:** Given to a media outlet that has produced floodplain or stormwater management special features during the year. The award can include individuals or agencies who have contributed to outreach and public awareness of floodplain or stormwater management issues.
- **Legislation:** Honors Illinois lawmakers or local officials for their efforts in floodplain issues. The award can also be given to an individual who makes extraordinary efforts to encourage the passage of legislation or to a community that has adopted unique local regulations that promote floodplain management or flood damage reduction.
- **French and Mary Lu Wetmore Award for Lifetime Achievement:** This award is the IAFSM's highest honor. It is reserved for outstanding longtime floodplain managers. These individual's long-term contributions have made a noticeable impact on floodplain and stormwater management efforts in the State of Illinois. This award is not always given on a yearly basis.

## 2025 CRS Coordinator's Manual

The 2025 CRS Coordinator's Manual is now available. Please visit [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/community-rating-system) to download the full document. <https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/community-rating-system>

Changes were necessary to comply with the executive orders and formatting to align with FEMA's standard template. No significant changes were made. Therefore, this manual did not go for public comments. In addition, the 2017 Coordinator's Manual, the 2021 addendum and the 2024 supplement were merged to focus on simplification. **These changes will not affect a community's CRS credits.** A document explaining the changes in further detail is available on the FEMA website and here: [fema hmd crs-coordinators-manual-summary-changes\\_092025.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/hmd/crs-coordinators-manual-summary-changes-092025.pdf)

All CRS communities should begin using this manual for all cycles, new applications and modifications beginning September 8, 2025.

# SRH-2D Follow-on Training Courses for IDOT Pre-Qualification

IAFSM is pleased to announce that we will be providing follow-on classes to the SRH-2D class that was offered in the Fall of 2024 by IAFSM. The classes are the 2DHM-A course (Jan 26-28) and then the 2DHM-B course (Feb 2-4). These classes, in conjunction with SRH-2D, are some of the criteria that are needed for individuals/companies to be prequalified with IDOT for Hydraulic Reports (Waterways: Complex).

## 2DHM-A Course Description:

This course, *2DHM-A SRH-2D Model Data Files, Diagnostics and Verifying 2D Model Results*, is a follow-on live web training to Two-Dimensional Hydraulic Modeling of Rivers at Highway Encroachments (2DHM). This follow-on course is designed to introduce participants to the various data files utilized for SRH-2D input, as well as the files generated by SRH-Pre and the output files produced by SRH-2D. Attendees will gain familiarity with the different file formats, understand their specific uses, and learn how to interpret the various diagnostic messages provided by SRH-2D through the Surface-water Modeling System (SMS). Developed by Aquaveo, SMS functions as a graphical pre- and post-processor for numerous 2D modeling engines. Additionally, participants will discover how to effectively employ monitor lines within SRH-2D and leverage their output to verify model convergence.

The course material is delivered through a series of three live Zoom sessions, supplemented by two independent, hands-on exercises assigned between sessions. The sessions are structured as follows: Session 1: Introduction, Data Flow in SRH-2D, and Output Files and Diagnostics; Session 2: Monitor Lines/Continuity; and Session 3: Summary and Review. As part of the course, participants will receive a set of independent study exercise data files along with a comprehensive training manual.

Each zoom session is 3 hours long (9 hours total), leaving plenty of time for participants to complete the independent hands-on exercises between sessions 1&2 and 2&3.

## 2DHM-B Course Description:

This course, *2DHM-B SRH-2D Model Terrain Development with Various Data Sources*, is a follow-on live web training to Two-Dimensional Hydraulic Modeling of Rivers at Highway Encroachments (2DHM), a 3-day in-person or 4-day virtual training course. This course is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to process and effectively utilize LiDAR and other elevation data formats when defining the geometry for 2D hydraulic models. All of this is done using the Surface-water Modeling System (SMS), a graphical pre- and post-processor from Aquaveo that supports various 2D modeling engines. Attendees will gain proficiency in identifying potential issues within elevation data. They'll also explore various methods for modifying geometry for simulations and learn how to use the software to import data from diverse sources, merge datasets, and export data in formats compatible with other standard GIS and CAD software.

The course material is delivered through three live Zoom sessions, supplemented by two independent, hands-on exercises completed between sessions. The sessions are structured as follows: Session 1: Introduction, Working with Topographic Data, Bathymetric Data and Channel Creation; Session 2: Combining and Exporting Data, Incorporating Terrain into a Mesh; and Session 3: Summary and Review. As part of the course, participants will receive a set of independent study exercise data files along with a comprehensive training manual.

Each zoom session is 3 hours long (9 hours total), leaving plenty of time for participants to complete the independent hands-on exercises between sessions 1&2 and 2&3.

## Date, Cost, Etc:

- Dates: 2DHM-A course (Jan 26-28) and 2DHM-B course (Feb 2-4)
- Cost: \$250 per class, PDHs will be offered
- Time: TBD
- Location: Virtual
- Attendee Minimum Limit 10 and Maximum Limit 30
- Registration opens November 15, 2025

IAFSM Contact: Steve Bicking at [sbicking@hrgreen.com](mailto:sbicking@hrgreen.com)

# Important Stuff We Tell You in Every Newsletter...

## 2026 IAFSM Conference (Champaign) & National Conference (Milwaukee)

The 2026 Annual Conference will be held March 11-12, 2026, at the I Hotel in Champaign. IAFSM is co-hosting the 2026 National Conference in Milwaukee, May 31 – June 4, with expanded scholarship opportunities and reimbursements for those who volunteer. Save the dates!

## Wanted: Newsletter Ideas & Articles

IAFSM members, this is YOUR newsletter! Email Jennifer Maercklein, editor, at [newsletter@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:newsletter@illinoisfloods.org) if there are topics that you'd like us to cover. You don't need to write the article - we just want your ideas! If you're gifted with a pen and would like to provide content, we welcome your written contributions as well.

## Get Involved with IAFSM!

IAFSM Committee Chairs welcome your help and involvement. See the list of chairs on the last page of this newsletter, or visit the committee webpage to learn more about volunteer opportunities: <http://www.illinoisfloods.org/committees.html>.

## Borrow our Water Table

IAFSM has five Watershed Tabletop Models available for all members to check out (free of charge) and bring to Public Works Open Houses, Scout meetings, 4-H meetings, school classrooms, etc. This offers a great opportunity to educate about the dangers and impact of unplanned development and human activity in the floodplain. IAFSM currently keeps tables in Fallfield, Champaign, Bartlett, Woodridge, and Swansea. Contact Amanda King at [IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org) to make arrangements.

## Next Board Meeting

The next IAFSM Board Meeting will be held in person at V3 on November 12 with a possible zoom option. Join us! All members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Contact Amanda King for the zoom link if required: [IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org).

## Jobmart

Visit our Jobmart at [illinoisfloods.org/jobmart.html](http://illinoisfloods.org/jobmart.html). Jobmart is a free service to members of IAFSM. To post an open position, please sign into our website and complete the job listing form. If you have any questions please contact Amanda at [IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:IAFSM@illinoisfloods.org).

## CFM Exams

Exams are only offered online. Online exams can be taken in your home (monitored by an online proctor) or at a testing center; there are many testing centers throughout Illinois. For information, visit [www.illinoisfloods.org/certification.html](http://www.illinoisfloods.org/certification.html).



*Sarah Wenzel brought the IAFSM water table to St. Thomas Middle School's Science Palooza event in Peoria Heights and demonstrated to students and parents how different surfaces can affect water runoff in an interactive exhibit.*





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The IAFSM Newsletter is published quarterly for members of the Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management. Information and opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of all members. Items for publication and other editorial matters should be directed to the editor at [newsletter@illinoisfloods.org](mailto:newsletter@illinoisfloods.org).

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For current Job Postings and CEC Training Opportunities, visit our website at [illinoisfloods.org](http://illinoisfloods.org)