



Office of Community Planning & Development

Brandon Bourgoyne, PE

Director of Public Works • Building Official • Zoning Administrator • Floodplain Administrator

June 2025

Re: Annual Special Flood Hazard Area (“SFHA”) and Finance / Insurance / Real Estate Industry Outreach Regarding Flood Zones in WBR Parish

Dear Community Resident and/or Business Owner:

As part of this Parish’s participation in the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System (NFIP - CRS), we are tasked with annually contacting residents and businesses in the Parish to let them know about what is offered at the local, state and federal level to deal with floodplain issues. We hope that you will take a few minutes to look over some of this information.

We want to begin by letting you know that **there are certain areas of the Parish that are prone to flooding in 100-year (or greater) storm events.** This flooding is caused by high water levels in the Intracoastal Canal which causes our local bayous (e.g. Tiger Bayou, Grand Bayou, etc.) to be unable to contain large rain events within their natural banks. Heavy rains that generate 2 inches per hour or more – when combined with high Intracoastal Waterway water levels – might lead to flooding along low-lying areas of the Parish and those next to some of the larger Parish canals.

For information about specific areas of the Parish that are more likely to flood in heavy rain events, we want you to know that we offer a **Floodplain Mapping Service.** Floodplain maps are generated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and they are used by insurance companies, lenders and others in determining the extents of the 100-year floodplains (Special Flood Hazard Areas, “SFHA”) throughout the nation. In addition to showing the extents of the Special Flood Hazard Areas, these maps also sometimes list Base Flood Elevation (BFE) data. As part of this floodplain mapping service, we have extensive records on building elevations which are available for your review, if necessary.

We wanted to let you know that our office does keep on file these Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The last set of maps produced for our Parish were published on July 16th, 2014. We have a copy of the maps covering the entire Parish and we will be more than glad to assist you with any questions related to 100-Year floodplain delineations and/or community-determined Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) within those areas. In addition to paper copies of these maps, the West Baton Rouge Parish Assessor’s Office website has a digital version of the maps at www.wbrassessor.org. Please understand that we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the digital data and you will be requested to acknowledge a disclaimer when viewing the online data. We also have on file **current and past elevation certificates** for structures located in Special Flood Hazard Areas. We will be glad to assist you in looking at these certificates.

The second service that we wanted you to be aware of is our **Flood Protection Assistance (FPA)** service. We can provide you with flood protection assistance in several ways: by giving you historical flood information, as well as the required floor elevations in your area; providing you with a list of locally registered residential and commercial contractors as well as helpful information on how to select a floodproofing or retrofitting contractor; we will (and have) personally visit(ed) your area to discuss flooding, drainage and sewer problems specific to your area; and we also have on file floodproofing and retrofitting techniques for your information. In the meantime, if you have specific concerns about flooding in your area, you might want to consider elevating your home and accessory buildings above the 100-year base flood elevation (in which case we can apply for federal financial assistance, if necessary) or consider grading your property to assist with drainage or building low walls or berms around the places on your property where water can enter.

In addition to the Flood Protection Assistance (FPA) steps listed previously, we ask that you **help us effectively maintain our drainage system** by reporting any known problems to the number listed on this letter and by helping us keep the drainage system clear of debris. Please be aware that Parish Code Sec. 70-2 prohibits the obstruction of ditches and canals. The Parish maintains many miles of canals and ditches through both its roads (Mr. John Andre, Superintendent) and drainage (Mr. Chad Doiron, Superintendent) programs. If you report debris or obstruction issues to us, we will act quickly to remedy the situation.

There are some **safety steps** that you can take as a property owner to reduce the chances of having injuries or damages during high water events, such as:

- Taking proper, safe steps to shut-off gas and water service lines should flooding occur
- Keeping handy a list of emergency numbers, as well as a list of safe places to evacuate
- Taking precaution not to wade or drive through moving floodwaters
- Staying away from unstable stream banks
- Keeping an inventory of all household contents
- Keeping important documents and valuable papers (including your flood insurance policy) in a safe location

We would be remiss if we did not mention a little about the **National Flood Insurance Program** itself. Please understand that standard property insurance does NOT include flood damage coverage, but that reasonably affordable flood insurance is offered through the NFIP with different rates based on your flooding risks. Some statistics show that there is a 26% chance of experiencing a flood during the life of a 30-year mortgage. We will be glad to help you discover the newest NFIP rate structures and please be aware that a 30-day waiting period applies between the time that flood insurance is purchased and the time it goes into effect.

Furthermore, at the bottom of the West Baton Rouge Parish website homepage (www.wbrparish.org), we keep various flood zone and flooding informational links under the Quick Links column with the "Flood Zone Information" link. After clicking the "Flood Zone Information" link, multiple links will be available for users to visit different FEMA websites directly, flood zone mapping information, local stream gauge data, and other Parish informational items. We recommend Parish residents and/or business owners interested in learning more about the local flood zones utilize these links and notify our office for any questions or issues with the links provided on the webpage. We try to monitor the links and update the information throughout the year; however, if we are notified of an issue, we can quickly identify the issue and address it.

In addition to being aware of flooding events, we should keep in mind the **natural and beneficial functions of floodplain areas**. Large (and even smaller) floodplain areas – such as those wetland areas associated with the lowest lying parts of our Parish – often serve as vegetative buffers which help detain, slow and transfer stormwater, recharge the underground aquifers and support wetland wildlife and vegetation. This is yet another reason why we discourage development in our floodplains.

Finally, we wanted to remind everyone that most residential and commercial construction and renovation projects require **building permits**, but this is especially critical for buildings in floodprone areas. For flood zones, all development (not just the construction of buildings) requires local development permits. Before building, filling or otherwise developing any property in a floodplain, the developer or builder should first contact our office. Also, if a building in a special flood hazard area (SFHA) has been damaged by at least 50% of its market value, any reconstruction project will require a permit and will be scrutinized to see if it conforms with new construction requirements for buildings in flood zones.

Our local floodplain construction regulations (as found in West Baton Rouge Code of Ordinances, Chapter 107) include the following:

- Elevation of buildings to at least one (1) foot above the Base Flood Elevation
- Anchoring of buildings to prevent flotation, collapse and/or lateral movements
- Using flood resistant materials and floodproofing methods
- Construction of electrical, heating, ventilation, plumbing and air conditioning equipment so as to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during conditions of flooding
- The prohibition of any hazardous facilities (e.g. sanitary landfills, septic systems) from locating in special flood hazard areas
- No enclosing of spaces when structures are built on piers. Such spaces must allow the free flow of water

We thank you for your time and attention to these matters and for being good partners with us in floodplain management.

Sincerely,

Brandon Bourgoyne, PE