



## Ten Years Toward a Flooding Solution

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Kingfisher County, Oklahoma*



**Kingfisher, OK** – Over the past 10 years, residents in a six-block area cringed whenever authorities forecasted severe rain for their area. And on August 19, 2007, two local creeks ended up spilling from their banks and poured dirty brown floodwater downtown. But thanks to two programs that the City of Kingfisher used to buy frequently flooded lands, the City created places for water to flow and, therefore, mitigate some impacts of flooding.

“The vacant land program offered Kingfisher citizens many benefits. Frequent flooding had displaced residents, but with the acquired open space the community controlled emergency costs and, in dry times, residents used the open space,” said City Clerk and Floodplain Manager William Tucker.

The City’s buyout program, established in 2002, gave citizens owning vacant land that flooded more than once the option of selling the lot to the City for \$300. Within five years, the City invested \$20,000. The resulting sales relieved these owners of taxes and maintenance costs for the properties sold.

Because flooding in this six-block area of Kingfisher occurs more than annually, the City expanded its acquisition efforts with funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and managed by Oklahoma’s Department of Emergency Management. The HMGP infused \$170,000 to buy houses while the City added the 25 percent match.

A single flooding event typically costs the City of Kingfisher more than \$200,000 in this six-block area. But when the August flood struck, the buyout program ended up saving the taxpayer money – as well as reducing the loss of personal items – and peace of mind for those living in the flood-prone area. Without the buyout program, the purchased homes would have suffered an estimated \$170,000 in damage to property and contents with this one flood alone.

Tucker said, “These two programs have made a world of difference in the lives of our residents because when it rains they don’t worry, and that means more than money can buy.”

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

State: **Oklahoma**

County: **Kingfisher County**

City/Community: **Kingfisher**

### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**  
Hazard Type: **Flooding**  
Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Flood Control**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **04/2002**  
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**  
Funding Source: **Local Sources**  
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**  
Funding Recipient Name: **CITY OF KINGFISHER**

### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$190,000.00 (Estimated)**  
Non FEMA Cost:

### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **Yes**  
Federal Disaster #: **1355 , 01/05/2001**  
Federal Disaster Year: **2001**  
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**  
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1712 , 07/07/2007**  
Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.floodsmart.gov>**

## Main Points

- On August 19, 2007 two local creeks spilled over their banks and poured water downtown. Thanks to programs Kingfisher used to buy frequently flooded lands, the city created places for water to flow and avoided catastrophic loss.
- The vacant land program offered Kingfisher citizens many benefits. Frequent flooding had displaced residents, but with the acquired open space the town controlled emergency costs, and, in dry times, residents used the open space.
- Kingfisher's buyout program, begun in 2002, gave citizens owning vacant land that flooded more than once the option of selling the lot to the City for \$300.
- Within five years, Kingfisher invested \$20,000.
- The HMGP infused \$170,000 to buy houses while the city added the 25 percent match.
- Since a single flooding event typically costs Kingfisher more than \$200,000 in this six-block area, the August 19th flood produced a positive cash flow, not including the loss of personal items and peace of mind for those living in the flood-prone area.
- The purchased homes would have suffered an estimated \$170,000 in damage to property and contents.



The bank on Main Street flooding.



Kingfisher open land



Entrance of the Newcastle safe room.