



Geneva: Buy-Outs and Acquisitions

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Geneva County, Alabama



Geneva, AL- Geneva has a long history of flooding. In 1861, the town was destroyed by a flood and relocated to higher ground. Since the turn of the century, Geneva has been flooded four times. Three of those events occurred during the 1990s. Although not all residents of Geneva were hard hit in each flood, the small residential area of Baptist Bottoms has always received the brunt of the damage. According to the Geneva City Clerk, "with the exception of what they could carry out during the evacuation, they [Baptist Bottoms residents] lost everything in the [1990 and 1994] floods."

To stem the cycle of disasters, Geneva applied for hazard mitigation grant funds to acquire structures most at risk. FEMA agreed to fund the buyout of dozens of buildings within the floodway of Double Bridges Creek in Baptist Bottoms. Local officials began an aggressive campaign to convince homeowners in the flood-prone Baptist Bottoms area to sell their homes and relocate out of the floodplain. Eventually, they submitted a grant application to FEMA for the acquisition of 54 homes. An initial benefit-cost analysis determined that the project would be cost-effective. All of the structures lay deep in the floodplain, and it was clear that damages from repeated flooding in the future would take a heavy toll on the community.

Of the original 54 structures included in the application, 30 were actually acquired and removed before the March 1998 flood. A revised and updated benefit-cost analysis for this group found that the acquisition was even more cost-effective than initially projected.

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Geneva County**

City/Community: **Geneva**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Activity/Project Start Date: **07/1994**

Activity/Project End Date: **12/1997**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **Geneva, AL**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$672,555.00 (Estimated)**

Non FEMA Cost:

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1034 , 07/08/1994**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **1998**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

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

Reference URL 2: <http://ema.alabama.gov/>

Main Points

- Since the turn of the century, Geneva has been flooded four times. Three of those events occurred during the 1990s.
- Local officials began an aggressive campaign to convince homeowners in the flood-prone Baptist Bottoms area to sell their homes and relocate out of the floodplain.
- Of the original 54 structures included in the application, 30 were actually acquired and removed before the March 1998 flood. A revised and updated benefit-cost analysis for this group found that the acquisition was even more cost-effective than initially projected.