



## High Priority for Buyouts in Lincoln County

**Lincoln County, WV** - Whenever a heavy rain sets in over the small community of Griffithsville, in southwestern West Virginia, flooding can be expected in low-lying areas near Straight Fork and Mud River creeks on Route 3. In November of 2003 several inches of rain fell over a two-day period causing flood damage to many homes in Griffithsville. Six homes located near where the two creeks converge were inundated with flood water and declared substantially damaged by local officials. Following the Presidential Disaster Declaration, homeowners who sustained substantial damage could volunteer for a buyout offered by FEMA through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP.) This year on March 15, 2012 the area again had major flooding, and those individuals who volunteered to take the buyout in 2003 are happy they did.

Richard Stump lived along the creek on Stowers Road for 40 years, first with his parents whose home fronted Route 3, and then in 1971 he built his own home on the lot behind his parent's home. His son was gifted the grandparent's home in 1997. Mr. Stump said "It was our home and we loved it there. I had built a nice addition onto my house and we didn't want to move." His flood insurance paid for repairs whenever there was flood damage on his house and in 2002 he spent \$15,000 elevating his house 2 inches higher than the required elevation to protect it from future flood damages.

Mr. Stump admitted, "It got to the point where I was scared to death when it started to rain. I don't care how much money they (insurance) give you, cleaning up the mess afterward was not worth it." He recalled how floods had disrupted his life three years in a row in the late nineties and in June and August of 2003. When another severe storm flooded his neighborhood in November of the same year, his home didn't escape the flood damage, with water rising to 18 inches on the first floor in his home. Water levels were higher in the other five homes, including his son's house, because they were not elevated. After considering everything they had been through Richard and his son decided to join with the other four neighbors and volunteer to take the buyout that was offered.

The Lincoln County Commission identified this Acquisition/Demolition project as a high priority reflecting their concern for the welfare and safety of the residents. The long-term benefits of removing property from repetitively flooded areas are to eliminate safety and health risks, remove unsafe housing and reduce future recovery and repair costs to property owners and taxpayers. FEMA funds up to 75 percent of approved projects and the remainder comes from state and/or local sources. Every \$1 funded toward a FEMA project equals \$4 in future savings. This acquisition/demolition project has already shown positive results. Lincoln County was declared a federal disaster due to severe flooding for events in June, August and September of 2004 and twice again in March of 2012.

It's been six years since Richard and his wife Neva moved from their home on Stowers Road. They now live a few miles away in a safe area out of the flood plain. Although they still have fond memories of the home where their children grew up, they are now enjoying living free from the threats that flooding posed to their lives for so many years.