

Three Forks, Montana

2024 Accomplishments

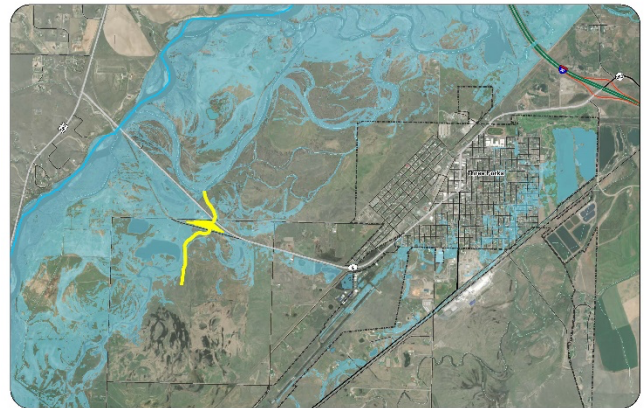
Floodplain mapping updates to the Jefferson and Madison River watersheds highlighted severe flood risk throughout Three Forks, MT (2023 pop. 2,034). Approximately 80% of the city's structures lie within the regulatory floodplain and its northern residential neighborhood was remapped into the floodway.

In 2020 the City of Three Forks and FloodWise formed a project team with city staff, Montana state agencies, and Great West Engineering. Together the partners identified a cost-effective, nature-based solution: a \$5.5 million conveyance channel that reduces flood risk from the Jefferson River for nearly the entire community.

In 2024, the project team officially secured a \$4.2M FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance grant, with Montana's new Resiliency Fund providing the non-federal match. The city established a Special Improvement District (SID) in 2023 to fund its operations and maintenance.

FloodWise Community since August 2020

Project services paid by FloodWise to date:
\$121,401



Mitigation impacts were mapped as part of the process to develop solutions to Three Forks flooding.

2024 FloodWise Deliverables

Key accomplishments in 2024 were:

- Facilitated monthly meetings with project team.
- Received final approval of FEMA's \$4.2 million Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant. The State of Montana also announced that it will pay the non-federal match from its Resiliency Fund.
- Coordinated with Sen. Tester's office, state and federal agency staff, and other key stakeholders to assist with permitting processes, particularly with regards to minimizing impacts to Ute Ladies' Tresses habitat.
- Submitted abstracts to Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) and Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) conferences to share Three Forks' flood resilience accomplishments.

Stakeholder Engagement & Permitting

In 2024, FloodWise Community Assistance facilitated monthly meetings with the project team, which includes representatives from the City of Three Forks, Montana Department of Resources and Conservation and Department of Emergency Services, Great West Engineering, and Headwaters Economics.

Much of Three Forks' flood resilience work in 2024 focused on finalizing review requirements for FEMA to officially secure the Flood Mitigation Assistance grant. Great West Engineering led the technical aspects of this work, including working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the biological opinion and coordinating with Montana Department of Transportation. FloodWise staff assisted the process by hosting collaborative meetings with multiple agencies, meeting one-on-one with agency staff, and keeping our elected officials informed of progress. The FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance grant was officially awarded in August 2024, thanks to the diligent work of the Three Forks staff and the project team.

Updated Floodplain Maps

In 2019, Three Forks and Gallatin County partnered with FEMA and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to update the floodplain maps for the Madison River, Ruby River, and Jefferson River watersheds. The updated floodplain maps will have the latest, most accurate flood risk data to enable Three Forks staff and elected officials to make informed decisions. Over the last five years, Three Forks staff, the flood mitigation project team, and DNRC representatives have carefully coordinated the flood mitigation work with the floodplain mapping efforts. The floodplain mapping process continued throughout 2024 with preliminary maps expected to be released in spring 2025.



Next Steps

In 2025 the Three Forks flood mitigation project will transition from planning to construction. Great West will lead the construction phase with FloodWise supporting community engagement and other tasks as needed.

- Finalize permits, acquire land easements, and coordinate with MDOT on Route 2 crossing in preparation for construction. Great West Engineering will lead these efforts.
- Assist with community engagement related to the flood mitigation project and the updated FEMA floodplain maps.
- Evaluate the broader impacts of the Three Forks project team's work by conducting a ripple-mapping impact evaluation workshop in March 2025.
- Present Three Forks' successes and lessons learned at the AMFM and ASFPM conferences in winter/spring 2025.

About FloodWise Community Assistance & Headwaters Economics

FloodWise Community Assistance is a program of Headwaters Economics that provides free technical assistance to decrease flood risk and strengthen communities.

Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group whose mission is to improve community development and land management decisions. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/>