Nature-Based Flood Mitigation as an Essential County Purpose

Background

In 2021, the state legislature designated certain county flood mitigation activities as an essential county purpose. The legislation allows counties to more easily install gray infrastructure, such as levees and floodwalls, and modify waterways to prevent flooding.

What is nature-based flood mitigation?

Nature-based flood mitigation, also known as natural infrastructure, uses natural features such as wetlands and floodplain reconnection to restore natural ecological functions, such as floodwater retention and control.

Benefits of nature-based flood mitigation

Nature-based flood mitigation is generally more effective at reducing flood damage, more cost-effective than traditional gray infrastructure that has high maintenance costs, and provides additional benefits such as cleaner water and increased wildlife habitat.

Adding nature-based tools to the flood mitigation toolbox

Adding natural infrastructure to the tools counties can use for flood mitigation will provide counties flexibility in the solutions they can implement. It gives counties more local control of flood mitigation projects to protect themselves from future flood damages. Allowing counties to make strategic investments in nature-based flood mitigation in addition to traditional flood mitigation practices will prevent more flood events that require state and federal intervention.

Facing extreme weather

Extreme weather events increasingly threaten Iowa's farms, communities, economy, and public health. Iowa ranks 4th in the nation for states most impacted by natural disasters.[1] In the past five years, we have faced two dozen extreme weather events with damages over $1 billion.[2] Investing in natural infrastructure will protect Iowa lives and property, boost economic stability and development opportunities, and increase our ability to weather and recover from natural disasters.

REFERENCES

[1] https://wallethub.com/edu/states-most-impacted-by-natural-disasters/111223

[2] https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2023/09/13/new-research-shows-iowa-losing-soil-fertility-organic-carbon-since-farming-began-climate-change/70424614007/