

## **Emergency Work and Permits**

PA DEP and US Army Corps of Engineers recognize in an emergency it may be necessary for individual landowners to clear streams of blockages and debris. Many items, such as up-rooted small trees, limbs, leaves, and debris that have formed a dam, diverted stream flow, or blocked an opening under a bridge can be removed, provided the work is performed without entering the stream.

**PA DEP and USACE should be consulted prior to the use of any mechanical equipment in a stream for a determination of permit requirements.**

- Public safety is of primary importance. When possible, landowners should seek assistance prior to removing debris.
- Measures to control erosion and sediment should always be employed when working near streams.
- Landowners are reminded that live vegetation on the stream bank minimizes stream bank failures and reduces erosion. Live and undisturbed vegetation should not be removed.
- Machinery should not enter the stream unless access is otherwise impossible. If entering the stream is absolutely necessary, a permit must be obtained.
- Work in and around waterways may affect threatened and endangered species. Before work is conducted in these areas, applicants should contact Pennsylvania Fish and Boat and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for additional guidance.

## **Dredging Does Not Prevent Future Flooding**

Dredging is seldom the answer to preventing future floods. Dredging can have unexpected and unfavorable effects on upstream and downstream property owners. It is important to determine

whether the actual benefits can be achieved by other means. Post-disaster stream recovery projects can achieve the same goals without these negative impacts.

Dredging frequently results in the following:

- increased flooding downstream
- stream and upstream bank erosion
- increased gravel bar formations
- destruction of stream habitat

Dredging is also impractical in most cases, considering the amount of dredging required to achieve adequate flood prevention. For example, to lower potential flood levels by 6 inches on a 900- foot-wide flood plain, you would need to dredge an existing 30-foot-wide channel an additional 15 feet deep, and maintain it at that depth.

*If you have questions or need more information, please contact the Pennsylvania Dept of Environmental Protection: [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us)*

Other Contact Information:

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency:  
[www.pema.state.pa.us](http://www.pema.state.pa.us)

Federal Emergency Management Agency:  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:  
[www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service:  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

U.S.D.A Farm Service Agency  
[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

Pa. Dept. of Labor & Industry  
[www.dli.state.pa.us](http://www.dli.state.pa.us)

Penn. Association of Conservation Districts  
[www.pacd.org](http://www.pacd.org)

*Information for Local Governments, Non- Profit Organizations, and Individuals Affected by Flooding*



**pennsylvania**  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



**FEMA**

## **Post-Disaster Stream Recovery**

*Assistance is available from both Commonwealth and Federal government agencies in developing and implementing plans to restore stream channels.*

*If you are considering a stream recovery or restoration project, please contact one of the listed agencies for assistance and information.*

### **Stream Recovery After Flooding**

Stream blockages, eroded stream banks, and accumulated debris can present significant problems in the aftermath of a flood. The removal of debris and blockages from streams and any work to stabilize stream banks must be carefully planned.

Any disturbance to the streambed or bank requires a permit from PA DEP. Applications for permits to work in waterways or wetlands within the Commonwealth should be directed to the Pennsylvania Dept of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). Depending on the scope of the project, a permit may also be required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). PA DEP will forward the application to the USACE if additional coordination is required.

All landowners are encouraged to contact the USACE, PA DEP or the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for information and guidance relating to emergency stream stabilization. The following government agencies may be able to provide technical and/or financial assistance:

### **PA Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

PA DEP's emergency response mission is to protect public health and safety and restore the natural environment. PA DEP may provide permitting and technical assistance to applicants in planning projects that meet both of these goals.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**

The USACE may provide limited cost shared assistance to local governments for small flood risk management projects, for minimal measures to reduce nuisance flood damages caused by debris and minor shoaling of waterways, and for stream bank protection projects for endangered public facilities, such as roadways and utilities. For active flood risk management projects in the USACE Rehabilitation and Inspection Program, post-flood repairs are limited to restoring the pre-disaster condition and

level of protection. Channel restoration to pre-flood hydraulic capacity is allowed when the channel capacity has been decreased to 75 percent or less of pre-event capacity and when there is a loss of vegetative cover.

### **US Department of Labor**

After a disaster strikes, The US Department of Labor may award a state a National Emergency Grant (NEG) through the PA Dept. of Labor & Industry (L&I). If awarded a NEG, the PA Dept. of Labor & Industry will work with local Workforce Investment Boards to implement disaster projects for the creation of temporary jobs to conduct cleanup on public property in the affected areas. For more information, contact the PA Dept. of Labor & Industry or your local Workforce Investment Board.

### **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)**

The USDA FSA Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) is for farmers, ranchers, producers, landowners and rural communities to rehabilitate farmland damage, including debris removal, repairing of fence and conservation structures damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures. Contact the local USDA Farm Service Agency Service Center for additional information.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Following a disaster, the NRCS may provide funding assistance for emergency measures to relieve imminent hazards to life and improved property. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) may fund work for removing debris from stream channels, restoring vegetation and stabilizing banks. The measures undertaken must be environmentally and economically sound and must benefit more than one property owner.

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance but must be sponsored by a public agency

of state, county, city or township government. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the cost of emergency measures. The remaining 25 percent must come from the local sponsor and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. EWP funds cannot be used to pay for incurred expenses.

### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

In limited circumstances following a major disaster, FEMA may be able to reimburse local governments and non-profit organizations for costs related to removing stream blockages. To be eligible for such reimbursement, the applicant must have assumed responsibility for clearing the stream. Additionally, the blockage created by the disaster must pose an immediate threat to improved property. Reimbursement is limited to the costs of work required to remove the blockage causing the immediate threat.

Projects to alter a natural stream bank are generally ineligible for FEMA assistance. However, limited reimbursement may be available if the stream bank was manufactured or constructed, and has been maintained. FEMA may reimburse applicants 75 percent of the total eligible costs of the work performed. FEMA does not reimburse applicants for the costs of dredging operations.

If a blocked stream on private property is threatening individual homeowners' property, homeowners are encouraged to contact PA DEP and/or their local government.

### **County Conservation Districts**

The County Conservation Districts can provide technical assistance for erosion and sediment control planning and some have the ability to acknowledge permits on behalf of DEP for certain small projects, including projects to clean channels, protect banks, and repair bridges and culverts. In addition, some districts also have the ability to assist with stream stabilization technical assistance.