

# Racial Justice in Federal Flood Infrastructure Projects

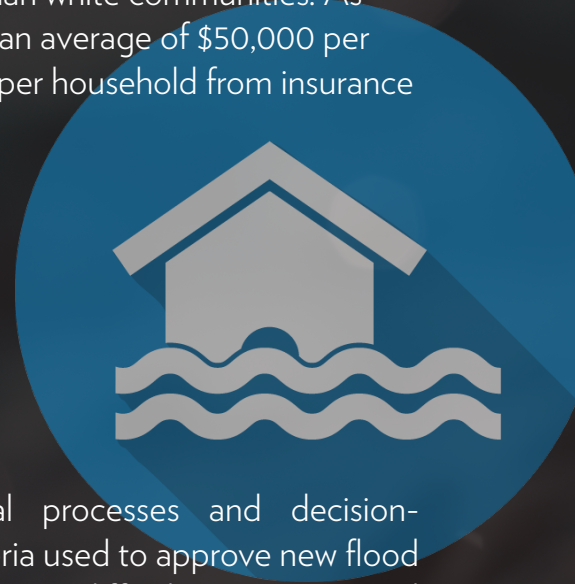
## The Problem

Flooding is a pressing environmental justice issue in the United States. Black communities are far more frequently and severely impacted by flood events than white communities. As of 2013, in the wake of a natural disaster, Black communities lose an average of \$50,000 per household, while white communities gain an average of \$75,000 per household from insurance and relief programs - furthering the racial wealth gap in the U.S.

## Why are flood impacts so severe in Black communities?

The answer begins at the confluence of systemic racism, a history of redlining, and flood prevention and can best be explained by policies and practices that place a greater emphasis on economic considerations rather than social equity.

The federal processes and decision-making criteria used to approve new flood infrastructure are difficult to navigate and are structured in ways that do not always represent the needs of low-wealth or communities of color.



## Forward Movement

To help rectify these disparities, the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has instituted a pilot program to provide 100% federal funding for a few select flood project feasibility studies, eliminating the need for local cost-sharing investments. The USACE is now also required to consider social and environmental impacts in their cost-benefit analysis of flood infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and sea level rise as a result of climate change. Although these are important and welcome changes, these new policies and projects have not been implemented quickly enough given the projected increase in flooding due to climate change.



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## What Can Be Done?

State and local NAACP Units and community members can mobilize to advocate for expanded and more equitable flood infrastructure based on their specific needs. This includes approaching local elected officials, Congress, and local Army Corps staff.

## How Does This Work?

Create educational campaigns with local experts and community members to teach and understand community relationships to the land to ensure public voices are heard. Educational campaign goals should aim to equip residents in these regions to be confident in asserting their local and cultural understanding and offer sustainable solutions that fit with the environment in the area.

Hold workshop meetings and provide informational materials to equip and empower communities with knowledge about flood infrastructure decision making, flood mitigation techniques, and data usage that can be used as tools to engage with USACE.

Encourage community engagement in USACE studies or projects as early as possible, including scheduling meetings with local USACE district offices early in the project development process.

Identify local experts, scientists and community members familiar with the local context and have a connection to the area to ensure appropriate recommendations to the USACE. This is especially critical during feasibility study periods and public input hearings.

Form partnerships and coalitions that resemble the community, organizations with environmental justice interests, and local leaders that can amplify community needs and collectively influence project uptake and investment.

Advocate for alignment and synchronization with the Justice40 Initiative to ensure that historically underserved communities that are often the same communities that are disproportionately located in flood plains are represented in federal investment infrastructure projects and are seamlessly coordinated in terms of priorities and implementation in communities that need fortification the most.

To learn more visit <https://naacp.org/>