

Disaster Recovery Focus Now Looks Towards the Future

Although recovery from the 2008 tornadoes and floods is not complete, the next steps for the Legislature and the Rebuild Iowa Office involve looking towards the future. The goal is to find ways to prevent future disasters or, at least, better prepare for them.

One of the recommendations coming from the Rebuild Iowa Office is to enact **Smart Planning** as a way to make better land use decisions, provide more protected developments, and coordinate the efforts of multiple jurisdictions. The proposal contains three components:

1. Adopt smart planning principles in development and resource management decisions. These principles will be used to ensure Iowa grows in a manner that improves resilience in the face of natural disasters, grows our economy, protects our natural resources, and safeguards our quality of life.
2. Adopt local comprehensive planning guidance providing the basic components and allowing communities to go above and beyond. These components should coordinate with floodplain management recommendations.
3. Establish a state smart planning task force to help create a structure for greater coordination between the state and local communities. This should include goals and measurements.

Another proposal from the Rebuild Iowa Office will officially establish the **case management** process used in helping Iowans deal with the 2008 disasters. This process proved invaluable for homeowners and individuals by helping them identify all the programs created to assist them. By officially establishing the case management process in law, it will be available for future disasters that may occur. In addition, a group will be created to recommend ways that case management can also be used to help businesses.

In the 2009 session, the Legislature asked the Water Resources Coordinating Council to provide recommendations that promote “a **watershed management** approach to reduce the adverse impact of future flooding” on Iowans, communities, and soil and water quality. The council met this summer and adopted 25 recommendations to mitigate flooding by using a watershed approach. Sixteen of the recommendations involve policy changes. For example, the regulated floodplain should be the 500-year floodplain, not the 100-year floodplain. The other nine recommendations deal with funding issues.

The Legislature also asked several agencies to make recommendations on increasing the purchase of **flood insurance**. One proposal would require that the current real estate disclosure form be modified to include specific information on whether a property is in the floodplain and if there has been any history of flooding. Another proposal would require insurance agents to discuss the need for flood insurance with any applicants whenever homeowner or rental insurance is sold.

In addition, work will continue on updating floodplain mapping, restoring lost housing stock so Iowans can return to permanent housing, insuring the stability of impacted businesses that often reopen only to close later, increase the focus on rebuilding with “green” principles, and strengthen emergency management.

State resources are limited, but the commitment made in 2009 to flood recovery and prevention remains a priority in 2010.