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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Early Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a Floodplain or Wetland

Date: February 27, 2026

To: All interested Agencies, Groups and Individuals

This is to give notice that New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) under 24 CFR Part 58 has determined that proposed actions under the New Mexico Home Recovery Program (Program) for Lincoln County may be located in the floodplain and/or wetlands. DHSEM will be identifying and evaluating practicable alternatives to locating the action within the floodplain and/or wetlands and the potential impacts on the floodplain and/or wetlands from the Program, as required by Executive Order 11988 and Executive Order 11990 and in accordance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 in Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands.

Program Background

DHSEM received funding under the Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) in areas impacted by two federally declared disasters: DR-4795 (South Fork Fire, Salt Fire, and Flooding) and DR-4843 (New Mexico Severe Storm and Flooding). These disasters significantly compromised the structural integrity of homes, creating an urgent need for comprehensive rehabilitation and reconstruction. HUD designated two counties as "most impacted and distressed," which are Lincoln County for DR-4795 and Chaves County for DR-4843.

The proposed Program in Lincoln County will help disaster-impacted residents return home to safe, resilient, and sustainable living conditions, with mitigation strategies integrated to reduce future disaster risks. In Lincoln County, the South Fork and Salt Fires impacted approximately 1,400 structures, including an estimated 856 family homes. Subsequent monsoon flooding further devastated the area, with an additional 600 homes reportedly lost (see the [CDBG-DR Action Plan](#), Section 2.2.1). Additionally, many low-income neighborhoods located downstream of the burn scar require elevation above base flood elevation or relocation of units outside the floodplain to prevent future flood damage.

The most critical priority of the Program is to serve disaster-impacted families by providing much-needed assistance to complete the necessary home rehabilitation, reconstruction, or new construction, so that families can return to their place of residence in their community. The Program excludes ineligible uses like luxury development, assistance for second homes, improvements to unattached accessory structures, or routine maintenance. This approach ensures that funds support the most at-risk households and contribute to long-term, community-wide recovery.

Eligible activities that may be funded under the Program are identified in the following three categories:

- **Housing Rehabilitation.** Essential repairs to restore disaster-damaged homes to safe, livable conditions, including structural, plumbing, electrical, roofing, and interior work. To receive housing rehabilitation, the estimated total damage to the home must be less than 60% the pre-disaster fair market value of the home.
- **Housing Reconstruction.** Full rebuilding of homes that are not suitable for rehabilitation (e.g., damage exceeds 60% the pre-disaster fair market value of the home), compliant with modern building codes and incorporation of resilience measures. Reconstructed home configurations will be based on minimum unit size in relation to household size and composition.
- **New Housing Construction.** Construction of new homes may be provided for disaster-impacted households on properties they already own, provided the site is located outside of the floodplain. While undamaged property owned by the household may be used for new unit placement, the acquisition of new property is not eligible for funding under the Program. Newly constructed home configurations will be based on minimum unit size in relation to household size and composition.

Environmental Review

Specific locations of Program activities within Lincoln County are not yet known. Pursuant to HUD's regulations at 24 CFR Parts 50 and 58, DHSEM will conduct a tiered environmental review of the Program and its funded activities. A Tier 1 Environmental Assessment review will be conducted at the county level to evaluate and document the potential for broad, Program-wide impacts, including applicable federal laws and authorities (e.g., floodplain management and wetlands protection). Site-specific locations will be identified once applications for the Program are received, reviewed, and approved. DHSEM will conduct Tier 2 site-specific reviews for each individual project or property prior to approval and commencement of construction. These reviews will ensure that each activity complies with environmental requirements and that any site-specific mitigation measures are identified and implemented.

Based on review of FEMA's National Flood Hazard Data, approximately 49,193 acres of the 100-year floodplain (i.e., Zones A or AE); approximately 262 acres of regulatory floodway (Zone AE); and approximately 101 acres of the 500-year floodplain (Zone X) are present in Lincoln County. Additional floodplains present in Lincoln County include areas of minimal flood hazard (Zone X unshaded) and areas that have unknown flood risks as no flood hazard analysis has been conducted (Zone D). Based on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory data, approximately 31,818 acres of wetlands are present in Lincoln County, inclusive of freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested/shrub wetlands, freshwater ponds, lakes, and riverine features. These floodplains and wetlands provide beneficial environmental functions (e.g., floodwater storage and conveyance, groundwater discharge or recharge, erosion control, water quality maintenance, and habitat for flora and fauna) and may hold additional intrinsic values that benefit residents of Lincoln County (e.g., cultural, recreational, educational, and scientific). The Program will provide rehabilitation of existing homes, reconstruction substantially within the original footprint or new construction on land outside of the floodplain. For reconstructions within floodplains or wetlands, elevation mitigation will be implemented to alleviate the risk of flooding impacts to residents, or impacts from residents to protected floodplain and/or wetland resources. Therefore, while some eligible activities may occur near or within floodplains or wetlands, the Program is not expected to adversely affect substantial areas of floodplains or wetlands. The acres of floodplain and/or wetlands impacted by eligible activities will be identified during the Tier 2 environmental reviews for site-specific locations and any applicable/identified mitigation measures will be incorporated into the site-specific projects.

Mitigation measures will be dependent on the eligible activity location and feasibility. For reconstruction of properties, measures may include (but are not limited to) elevating homes in floodplains pursuant to local

floodplain regulations; installing sump pumps and interior drainage systems; sealing or waterproofing foundations and basement walls; regrading around the home to direct water away from the foundation; incorporating durable, flood-resistant building materials; and requiring and verifying flood insurance coverage. Construction of new homes will only occur on sites located outside of the floodplain/wetlands.

Public Comments

There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in floodplains and/or wetlands and those who have an interest in the protection of the natural environment are given an opportunity to express their concerns and provide information about these areas. Commenters are encouraged to offer alternative sites outside of the floodplain and/or wetland, alternative methods to serve the same project purpose, and methods to minimize and mitigate project impacts on the floodplain or wetland. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information and request for public comment about floodplains and/or wetlands can facilitate and enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks and impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas. Third, as a matter of fairness, when the Federal government determines it will participate in actions taking place in floodplains and/or wetlands, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

A full description of the project may be reviewed at <https://www.dhsem.nm.gov/cdbg-dr2025/> and in person from 9am to 4pm at the locations identified at <https://www.dhsem.nm.gov/new-mexico-opens-applications-for-disaster-recovery-grants/>.

Written comments must be received by DHSEM on or before March 16, 2026 through any of the following methods: 1) by email at publiccomments@dhsem.nm.gov; 2) through DHSEM's online comment portal at <https://www.dhsem.nm.gov/cdbg-dr2025/>; or 3) by postal mail at the following address:

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Attention: Public Comments.
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