Overview

Floods and hurricanes are a serious threat to Florida, causing loss of life and considerable physical and economic damage to communities. Between 2000 and 2017, 25 federal disasters were declared for floods, hurricanes, and severe storms in the state. To counter the impact of severe weather, Florida is investing in measures such as elevating buildings and converting flood-prone areas into green spaces to better protect homes and businesses—and it’s realizing a large return on investment.¹

Figure 1

Florida Floods Projected to Cost Millions in Damage
Total economic loss estimates in 1% annual chance flood hazard areas

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**Federal flood insurance helps communities prepare**

In Florida, 238 localities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System. This voluntary program offers communities lower insurance premiums if they have flood plain management practices that exceed the program’s minimum requirements. These practices include buying out flood-prone homes, improving storm drainage, elevating buildings, and flood proofing structures. The city of Ocala has taken advantage of this program and earned a Community Rating System Class 3 designation, which has garnered Ocala policyholders living in a designated flood zone a 35 percent discount on flood insurance premiums.

---

**Figure 2**

**Over 1.3 Million Floridians Live in Flood-Risk Areas**
Lives, property, public infrastructure vulnerable to flooding, and government aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human life and private property</th>
<th>Critical infrastructure</th>
<th>Flood-related disaster assistance, 2000 to 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>More than 1.34 million</strong></td>
<td><strong>Over 2,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5.39 billion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living in a special flood hazard area</td>
<td>Critical facilities at risk from flooding</td>
<td>FEMA public assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More than 14,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$2.66 billion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive-loss properties</td>
<td></td>
<td>FEMA individual assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Figure 3
State and Federal Investment in Florida’s Flood Mitigation Efforts
Risk-reduction spending by program and level of government, 2000-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Federal share</th>
<th>State share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-disaster mitigation and other mitigation grants</td>
<td>$177.1 million</td>
<td>$54 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard mitigation grants made after flood-related disasters</td>
<td>$752.2 million</td>
<td>$301.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sum of hazard mitigation grants made following flood-related major disasters in Florida does not include a full account of grants made after the 2017 hurricane season.


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### Figure 4
Mitigation Pays in Florida
Study shows loss avoidance after Hurricane Matthew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mitigation projects before Hurricane Matthew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losses avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on investment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Flood resilience for buildings saves money**

In the most flood-prone parts of Florida, building two feet above the code requirement returns $21.10 for every dollar invested.⁴
**Importance of policy**

Communities must take actions to better prepare for weather-related catastrophes such as floods. And federal officials should consider policy reforms that would improve flood protection and preparation, minimize disruptions to the economy, and reduce costs to the federal government and taxpayers. These actions include:

- Increasing federal investment in flood mitigation programs that help communities prepare for and reduce the damage from floods.
- Improving resiliency requirements for infrastructure built and rebuilt in flood-prone areas.
- Protecting ecosystems, such as wetlands, salt marshes, and dunes, that can act as barriers to storms and help shield property.
- Reforming the National Flood Insurance Program to better communicate actual risk, break the cycle of repeated loss and rebuilding in the most flood-prone areas, and provide incentives for communities and homeowners to better prepare for floods.

**Endnotes**


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**For further information, please visit:**

pewtrusts.org/flood-prepared-communities