

Assisting the Spirit Lake Tribe Plan for Sustainable Recovery After Flooding, North Dakota

Sustainable redevelopment and green building practices are core goals of EPA's Land Revitalization Program. In support of this goal, EPA staff in Region 8 and at headquarters worked with the Spirit Lake Tribe in North Dakota during the Fall of 2010 to help the tribe develop a plan to guide the tribal community's long-term recovery following several years of flooding in Devil's Lake. The flooding was due to a prolonged period of wet weather. EPA is one of 16 federal agencies involved in the FEMA's Emergency Support Function (ESF) #14 (Long-Term Community Recovery) under the National Response Framework. This was the first time that FEMA, EPA, and other federal partners provided comprehensive post-disaster ESF #14 recovery assistance to a tribe.



Created in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, ESF #14 is a community-based process that facilitates multiple stakeholder involvement in post-disaster recovery decisions and enables communities to prepare for long-term recovery needs. The result of the long-term community recovery process often is a plan, strategy, or framework that allows the community to articulate a vision and rally around goals, objectives, and initiatives that move the community toward a shared vision for recovery.

Under ESF #14, EPA headquarters and regional offices are providing technical assistance, supporting community visioning charrettes, and helping communities plan and implement policies, strategies, and practices for sustainable recovery after natural disasters.

EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities is providing training and capacity-building assistance to the tribe on planning for sustainable living. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency effort amongst EPA, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is developing a strategy to assist the tribe with recovery once implementation work begins.

The Spirit Lake Nation Recovery Plan is a tribe-based initiative that was set in motion and directed by Spirit Lake Tribe's leadership and supported by a long-term community recovery team led by FEMA. The team helped the tribe analyze the various impacts of the flooding on the community and provided planning expertise to address specific long-term disaster impacts. Staff from Region 8 and the Office of Sustainable Communities provided expertise on incorporating sustainability as a core concept of the plan. Region 8 staff also prepared a comprehensive matrix showing where EPA programs could provide assistance to the tribe to address various issues identified by FEMA and the tribe.

The goal of EPA's activities in support of ESF #14 is to assist the Spirit Lake Tribe in adopting smart growth, green infrastructure, and green building practices as well as developing land-use policies to rebuild and plan for growth that is good for the environment, community, and the economy. EPA and FEMA also are collaborating more formally on disaster recovery and hazard mitigation issues, including possible effects related to climate change.