

Delhi Chosen for Flood Mapping Project

By Robert A. Cairns

DELHI — Local government officials would be better able to respond to floods in the Delhi area under a pilot project proposed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District (DCSWCD).

At Monday night's meeting of the village board of trustees, William Coon, a USGS hydrologist, explained the Flood Inundation Mapping Initiative, a pilot program that would give visual displays of flooding to village officials and emergency responders. Under the program, maps would be created for the village and adjacent areas, showing how much land would be underwater in flood stages at one-foot increments.

The information would help emergency responders and highway crews plan their response to flooding, identifying areas where people might need to be evacuated or where roads should be closed. The information would allow emergency services to alert residents to flooding, either through reverse-911 telephone calls or

door-to-door canvassing.

The alert information would also be available to anyone, via the Internet.

Coon said there are currently 10 pilot projects underway, nationwide.

Delaware County Emergency Services Director Richard Bell said the program is one part of the county's efforts to improve flood prediction and response. He said a river gauge at Bridge Street measures the flow of the west branch of the Delaware River, but that the National Weather Service does not issue flood stage predictions for the village. "We're pushing pretty hard to get the weather service to predict the Delhi gauge," he said. He said that weather service officials at Binghamton have responded positively to his request and that he believes it will happen.

Speaking of the mapping initiative, Bell said, "This is a tremendous tool."

The cost of the pilot project is \$30,000, half of which is funded by USGS. Graydon Dutcher of DCSWCD said the village, as a signatory to the West Branch Delaware River Stream Corridor Management Plan, is eligible for

grant funding to cover the rest. He recommended that the village apply for funding under the plan. "It wouldn't cost Delhi anything, as a whole," he said. "We're excited to get a pilot program here in Delaware County."

Rick Weidenbach, executive director of DCSWCD, said the project meets many grant criteria and would score high in the grant process. "This mapping is tremendous," he said. "This is really empowering for the community."

At the end of the discussion, board members agreed to apply for the grant. "I think it's an opportunity we should take advantage of," said Mayor Richard Maxey.

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