Flooding Task Force Meeting #2 Summary

Tuesday December 2, 2025

Welcome

Tim Woolley, Mayor of Taylor, Task Force Co-Chair

Don Brown, Deputy Commissioner, Macomb County Public Works – Task Force Co-Chair

Mayor Woolley provided an introduction to the meeting and set the stage for the resilience breakout sessions. Commissioner Brown shared some highlights from SEMCOG's recent General Assembly session on flooding.

Project Updates and Plan Outline

Katie Grantham, Planner III, SEMCOG Environment & Infrastructure

Katie provided an update on the project tasks:

Task 1: Culvert Inventory

- SEMCOG and their consultant team will be collecting culvert data across all seven counties. SEMCOG will reach out with more information about when we will be in your community.

Task 2: Flood Risk Tool Update

- SEMCOG and their consultant team are working on updating SEMCOG's Flood Risk Tool. This update will incorporate more recent data sets and evaluate additional hazards and assets. Coastal erosion and extreme heat will be added as new hazards and bike routes and transit stops will be added as assets evaluated for flood risk. An overview of this updated analysis and draft results will be presented at the next task force meeting.

Task 3: Nature Based Solutions Analysis

- SEMCOG and their consultant team have identified four locations in Southeast Michigan for concept plan development. These locations include:
- Millard Park – Allen Park, Detroit River
- Plum Brook – Sterling Hts, Clinton River
- Allen Creek DPW Site – Ann Arbor, Huron River
- OCWRC Minnow Pond – Farmington Hills, Rouge River

Katie also shared an outline of the Flooding and Resilience Plan for Southeast Michigan, and how feedback from the task force and regional stakeholders will shape the policies, actions, and projects identified within the plan.

Vision Setting & Local Priorities for Resilience Breakout Sessions

Katie Grantham, Planner III, SEMCOG Environment & Infrastructure

Katie set the stage for the breakout sessions by discussing how SEMCOG will collect feedback and project ideas for the Flooding and Resilience Plan.

Resilience Breakout Session Summaries

Common Themes:

- Collaboration is the key to success. There's a need for increased collaboration and communication across all departments and agencies in order for projects to be successful.
- There's a need to restructure how we design communities. All groups noted elements of how communities can be redesigned in the future, including more walkable communities,
- Additional Floodplain Management is needed. At a planning level, multiple groups identified the need to prohibit building in the floodplain.
- Updated data is needed in order to plan for the future. This includes updated floodplain maps, stormwater models, asset management, etc.
- We need more education on all of these topics! Elected officials need to have a better understanding of how flooding impacts their communities and support strategies that build resilience. The public needs to understand the role they play in managing flooding.

Emergency Management Planning, Coordination, Response, and Recovery

- It is imperative that communities establish their own hazard mitigation plans so that clear procedures are in place during events and key staff know what actions to take and who to contact. These local plans should align with county and statewide plans. These plans should connect to County and Statewide Plans.
- Communication is critical, including coordination across all actors through aligned plans and protocols, a clear single point of contact, and consistent, coordinated messaging.
- Education is needed on where flooding is supposed to intentionally happen, to prevent additional infrastructure damage. Our streets, yards, and parks may experience some flooding after extreme rain events, but it's designed to do this to keep it out of roads, basements, etc.
- There's a need to break down silos. Local community staff need to work together internally and with external stakeholders.
- Understanding where flooding happens, where flooding impacts critical infrastructure, and alternative routes that can be utilized to access core services is critical.
- Resources needed for effective emergency management include:
- Training for newly elected officials.
- Communication plans for communities.
- Tabletop exercises and practice sessions, so people have training and are prepared when an emergency happens.
- Templates for communities to utilize, that help communities develop preparedness policies and procedures.

Implementation, Design, and Maintenance (Engineering & Stormwater Management)

- Infrastructure systems should be designed for both current and future conditions. It is crucial to consider the implications of recurring extreme rain events and ensure our infrastructure is prepared to handle future rain events.
- Consider regional approaches to stormwater design across agencies, with a clear understanding of design storm expectations both now and in the future.
- Funding is a critical component of successful implementation. Significant, ongoing investment is needed each year to maintain systems, make upgrades, and make improvements. As much of the federal funding is reduced, it is crucial to think creatively about how stormwater system investments are funded.
- As we are developing a network of nature-based solutions (NBS), we need to remember that it must be maintained. Funding is neccessary to maintain these structures, as well as education for the people involved in maintaining the system on how to do so properly.
- New and Redevelopment sites must consider stormwater management during design and construction. Regionally, there's a need to consider how to incentivize developers to implement stormwater management practices. This is beyond MS4 requirements. Addressing larger events and how developments fit into that framework is necessary.
- Resources needed for effective engineering of stormwater systems:
- Regional stormwater standards - thinking outside the box from MS4 requirements.
- Stormwater Utility development & guidance for local communities.
- Ongoing funding and education for maintenance of these systems.
- Continued asset management to better understand the current condition of our systems and prioritize locations for improvements.
- Updated data and modeling.

Planning Standards and Master Plans

- In envisioning the future, session participants identified the need for:
- Denser, more connected neighborhoods.
- More active transportation opportunities to reduce infrastructure impacts.
- More natural neighborhoods spaces, such as natural lawns versus mowed lawns.
- Development standards should consider more ecological principles.
- Current development programs (wetland mitigation) only aim to not make things worse – could be used to make things better.
- Implementation of 2:1 ratio for replacement for forests/tree canopy/wetlands.

- Important to note that “good” standards aren’t always met – enforcement is crucial to mitigate stormwater runoff. Quality assurance through contractors is imperative to ensure standards are met.
- There is a need for more creative use of underutilized spaces within our communities. This includes redeveloping or naturalizing areas like large parking lots, brownfields, and abandoned spaces to function for stormwater management and multi-use purposes in communities.
- Resources needed for effective planning:
- A document of best practices of resilient planning standards (examples of zoning, master plans, etc.).
- Updated stormwater standards that consider how spaces less than one acre can help mitigate stormwater runoff impacts.
- Public education about impacts from collective action:
- For elected officials – economic benefits and quality of life.
- For DPWs – education on new techniques and technologies.
- Aligning future land use maps with stated goals for stormwater management.
- Consideration and development of creative financing options, such as credit trading.

Outreach and Education

- There is a need for text alert systems to notify residents during flooding emergencies and when there’s approaching weather that may pose a flooding risk. It is important to understand who is currently sending alerts, how they send alerts, and how this system can be more coordinated across agencies and municipalities.
- Residents prefer clear, plain language in communications, rather than technical or project-specific details.
- Many communities, counties, and organizations share similar messaging on flooding, but it doesn’t seem coordinated. It would be helpful to have consistent terminology and messaging across the region. This is where SEMCOG’s One Water Campaign could provide coordinated messages.
- Communication on flooding should focus on personal risk and what personal responsibility people have in managing flooding on their property.
- Social media plays a large role in communicating with residents. Many people are looking to social media, rather than a community's website when flooding or an emergency is underway. Having social media resources is critical for outreach.
- Intergenerational content is necessary for effective education. Many children teach the parents, family members, and caregivers by showing them social media content they’re viewing online.
- Important messages that our region needs to understand:
- Understanding the meaning of a flood zone is and if they live in one.
- Difference between basement back-ups vs flooding.
- Distinguishing between situations where flooding is acceptable (such as bioretention in a public park) versus a flooding emergency.
- Understanding the various ways someone may be impacted by flooding.

- Education on impervious surfaces and its impact on flooding.
- Actions that an individual can take to mitigate their risks and be prepared when experiencing flooding.
- Resources needed for effective outreach and education:
- Coordinated social media messaging and short videos across multiple agencies.
- Signage on flood zones and flood plains.
- Signage on green infrastructure that explains how it helps to mitigate flooding.

Report Out & Next Steps **2:40 PM**

- SEMCOG will be hosting three SEMCOG University Workshops this winter, focused on Resilience. These workshops will provide education on a variety of resilience topics, and will serve to collect feedback on the policies and actions for the Flooding and Resilience Plan.
- SEMCOG University Workshop: Planning for Resilient Communities
- Date: February 3, 2026
- Time: 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM
- Location: SEMCOG Offices
- SEMCOG University Workshop: Emergency Planning, Coordination and Response
- Date: February 11, 2026
- Time: 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM
- Location: SEMCOG Offices
- SEMCOG University Workshop: Engineering Flood Mitigation into the Future
- Date: March 10, 2026
- Time: 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM
- Location: SEMCOG Offices
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