



# IAFSM NEWSLETTER

Illinois Association for  
Floodplain and Stormwater Management

Spring 2008

## 2008 IAFSM Annual Conference Recap

The 2008 IAFSM Annual Conference was held March 12-13 in Tinley Park, Illinois, and was attended by over 460 people and 18 exhibitors. For the most part, the conference followed our traditional 2-day schedule that has worked so well for us. We did try a few new things including the addition of a fourth concurrent session track on Day 2. Hearing nothing but positive feedback, we'll certainly consider keeping this format going forward.



The conference was a great success! Thanks to all those who completed conference evaluation forms, there was some very insightful feedback. This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to the conference. More information on the conference and award winners can be found inside this newsletter.



### Inside This Issue

2008 Annual Conference Recap	Page 1
IAFSM 2008 Awards	Page 2
Helping CRS Coordinators	Page 6
From the Chair	Page 7
2008 CFM Exam Schedule	Page 8
Map Mod Update	Page 8

# IAFSM 2008 AWARDS

-Paul Osman, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The IAFSM annual awards are an opportunity to honor our friends and colleagues who have excelled in floodplain and stormwater management. Our award winners are role models. They encourage us to work harder. To do better. To push on when times get tough.

The five member IAFSM Awards Committee has a tough job. There are many good candidates in Illinois. The committee does a very thorough review. Choosing the winner often comes down to a debate and committee vote. This year's winners are profiled below.

## **Floodplain Manager of the Year** **Jeff Denny and Twyla Wareing (Alexander County)**

*This award recognizes outstanding individual efforts and contributions at the local level. The award honors an individual responsible for the development of a distinguished local program or activity, or someone who struggles to implement flood hazard reduction at the local level in the absence of sophisticated programs and support.*

Alexander County is one of THE most flood prone communities in the nation (not the state of Illinois... the nation!). If it is snowing heavy in Saskatchewan or pouring in Pittsburgh, the folks in Alexander County have to be concerned. Two thirds of the entire nation drains through their community. Floodplains in this community are 20 miles across. Flood depths in this community are upwards of 30 feet in places. Geographically, Alexander County sits at the confluence of the nation's two largest rivers.

Back in 1988, this county dropped out of the NFIP. It was a county decision. It was simply too difficult to regulate floodplain development. Residents were revolting. Over the years, local officials in this county did little to enforce construction in accordance with the floodplain requirements.

After years of successive flooding, Alexander County got serious. They passed a floodplain ordinance. However, before re-joining the NFIP they were required to rectify over 100 existing floodplain violations. These local officials have worked tirelessly to address those outstanding issues.

Starting from scratch, and knowing nothing about floodplain management, our two award winners quickly learned everything. They coordinated buyout programs, they took on locally funded elevation projects, gathered information, elevations, and permits. They located property owners and found funding grants to mitigate. They worked on remapping large areas of the county.

After dozens of meetings and hundreds of letters, FEMA eventually let the County rejoin the NFIP. In just a few short years, the County has worked steadfastly to address the remaining violations. They have done an amazing job. Despite limited funding, they have a way to elevate or demolish more than 30 violations.

It hasn't been easy for our award winners. They haven't made a lot of friends. The most impressive aspect is that they have turned the tide of public opinion. People in this county now seem to have accepted the floodplain ordinance and floodplain management regulations.

This community has gone from being one of the worst in the state to one of the best in the state in just a few short years.

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For their time, dedication, perseverance, and willingness to step in and do the right thing qualifies these two as our floodplain managers of the year. The Floodplain Manager of the Year award goes to Jeff Denny and Twyla Wareing of Alexander County. They deserve our congratulations and admiration.

## Outstanding Service Mark Hoskins

*Awarded to an IAFSM officer, a Federal, State, or Local Official, or a consultant who has gone above and beyond normal expectations and duties to promote or encourage IAFSM goals. This award may also be given to an agency that has inspired floodplain management efforts or implemented unique programs that encourage flood reduction.*

When we think of Mark Hoskins, this year's Outstanding Service winner, several words come to mind: dedication and commitment, but also wacky, goofy, and nutty! He is the "Bill Nye the Science Guy" of Floodplain and Stormwater Management. Mark can fix any mechanical object from a digital watch to an Airbus 380.

When Mark Hoskins gets an idea in his head (no matter how goofy), stand back and watch the whirlwind. If you stand near him, you can actually hear the gears grinding in his head. There is no stopping him. He takes an idea and he is off like a runaway train.

It doesn't matter if it is floodplain mapping, permit reviews, scholarship programs, or stormwater retention. Mark faces every challenge with the same commitment and often scary motivation.

Last year, Mark had an idea: a rain garden/stormwater tent at the Illinois State Fair. The IAFSM Board was skeptical and not fully behind the idea. So Mark went ahead with it alone. He secured funding and sponsors, he had enormous displays shipped from around the country, he filled a gigantic tent with hands on displays, he had handouts and games for kids, he sprayed innocent old women and kids with water as they walked past the tent, and he showed thousands of people why stormwater and floodplain management were THE most important thing in the world. Mark worked the tent (often alone) during the entire fair. He withstood rain and heat. He must have talked to a million people alone. He ate mountains of cotton candy, corn dogs, elephant ears... His cholesterol level

skyrocketed. Yes, he risked his life for floodplain management. He definitely went above and beyond to support our goals. The Outstanding Service Award goes to Mark Hoskins of Manhard Engineering.



*Paul Osman and Mark Hoskins,  
2008 Outstanding Service Award Winner*

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## **Stormwater Management** **Brian Eber – City of Rockford**

*Awarded to a floodplain manager, an individual, a group of individuals, a consultant, or an agency who improved stormwater management or reduced urban flood risks through creative engineering, regulatory measures, or other approaches. The award can also be considered for someone who struggles to implement flood hazard reduction at the local level in the absence of sophisticated programs and support.*

There is a TV show called Heroes that some of you might be familiar with, about ordinary people who discover they have superhuman abilities to help prevent catastrophes. Brian Eber seems to have developed the ability to slow down time in the last year, because otherwise we don't know how he was able to accomplish all he has.



*Brian Eber receives the 2008 Stormwater Management Award from Ron Davis*

Brian worked with his County to get a new stormwater ordinance passed. He became the champion for a mitigation plan, applying for and receiving a grant to develop a plan. He then worked closely with the consultants as they completed the plan within four months which, in mitigation time, is faster than a speeding bullet.

When Rockford faced not one but two major floods in a year, his staff conducted more than 500 damage assessments each time. This is probably the toughest part of being a floodplain manager, and to face the same people twice in a year was unthinkable.

Brian has worked his way through applications for several million dollars worth of mitigation projects. While waiting for approval, he figured out a way to work with a non-profit to speed up the process of purchasing substantially damaged homes. While all of this was going on, he was working with the Army Corps to get an old dam upgraded.

He could have been the nominee for the mitigation award or the floodplain manager of the year, but we are pleased to announce the Stormwater Manager of the year is Brian Eber of the City of Rockford.

## **Mitigation** **City of Elgin**

*This award is given to an individual or community that has encouraged flood hazard reduction through a buyout program, retrofitting, preparation of a mitigation plan, or other similar mitigation efforts.*

A resident of Elgin submitted his community for this year's mitigation award. After doing some research, the award was endorsed by the Awards Committee. The resident said "I do not know how well this qualifies for the IAFSM mitigation award, but my City has worked to improve the Fox River corridor with trails and parks.

“The City of Elgin has created several riverside parks where residents can enjoy the river. One project is Walton Island which is a City owned island which has at least three pedestrian bridges and numerous trails, fishing platforms and overlooks. The island is lined with rip rap and has a huge statute of an American flag in full color. A city only boat launch facility was built to access the downstream end of the Kimball Street dam in case of an emergency. Another park which they have constructed is Festival Park. The park has overlook platforms, a bike trail and a brick paver pedestrian path. It also features a state of the art playground which has a unique play area with rubberized ground surface and playground equipment. The City of Elgin has also constructed a park on the north end of town: Trout Park along the river. It has trails, a fishing platform and parking. There have been buy outs on Poplar Creek.

“The city has also spent millions of dollars for acquiring large parcels of land and demolishing including the large Unilever facility. Elgin has also purchased a scrap yard in the floodplain. They have performed a major clean up operation. These properties are now turf grass and I believe owned by the Parks Department.

“The city is also excavating an area on the west bank of the Fox towards the north end of the City near Judson College. The excavation is to compensate for flood fringe filling which took place years ago.

“These are just a few of the things they have done along the Fox River.”

For an overall City plan to mitigate floodplain areas and create new multi-use public property, the City of Elgin is this year’s mitigation award winner.

### **Lifetime Achievement** **Lou Sidell (IAFSM Founding Father)**

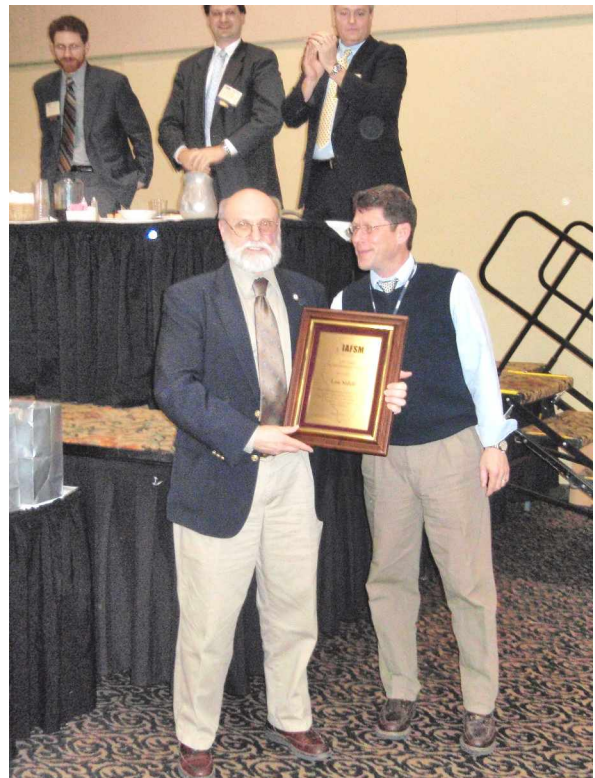
***This award is the IAFSM’s highest honor. It is reserved for outstanding longtime floodplain managers. These individuals’ long-term contributions have made a noticeable impact on floodplain and stormwater management efforts in the State of Illinois. This award is not always given on a yearly basis.***

This award is our state’s highest honor. It is the Emmy Award, the Noble Peace Prize, the Grammy, the Congressional Medal of Honor.... The litmus test for this award is that these individuals have made a noticeable impact on the floodplains of Illinois. Twenty, thirty, a hundred years from now...the impact they made on the state’s floodplain areas will be enjoyed by future generations. Gilbert White, French Wetmore, and David Schein are all names that will live on forever in Illinois’ history of floodplain management.

This year’s award winner is a blueberry farmer from Maine. Yup....that’s right, a blueberry farmer from Maine. He collects old fire trucks.

In the 1970’s, Lou Sidell was the Peoria County Zoning Administrator. During that time period, French Wetmore (who was the State NFIP Coordinator) used to call on him to travel the state and convince other local officials of this budding new concept of “floodplain management”.

French Wetmore requested that many of the newly hired Zoning Administrators in Illinois spend a couple of days in



*Paul Osman presents the 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award to Lou Sidell*

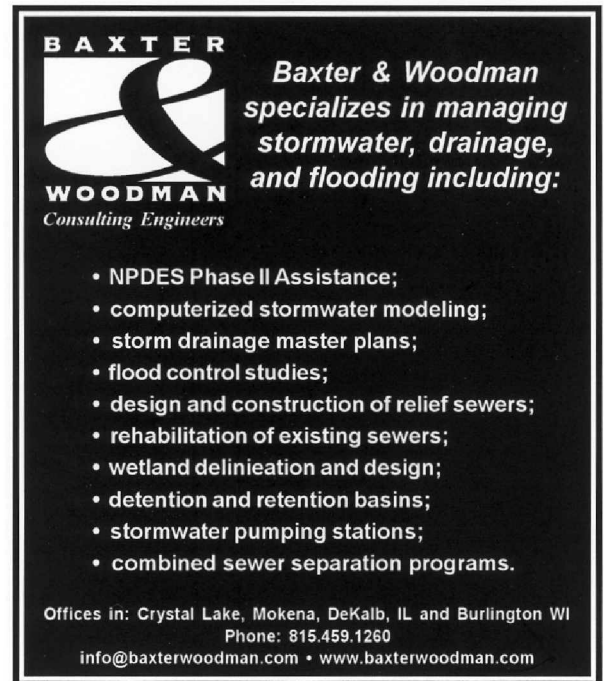
Peoria County with Lou Sidell learning about floodplain management.

In the 1980, Lou Sidell did the first 1362 buyout program in the state to mitigate repetitively flooded homes along the Illinois River north of Peoria. He took a very active lead and had more buyouts in his county that the entire State of Illinois combined. He was one of the first trail blazers for mitigation activities in Illinois.

In 1986, he helped form the Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management. This association. He was one of the founding fathers of this organization. He was named the first ever honorary member of IAFSM.

In 1987, he married his wife Nancy and they left Peoria to move back to Nancy's home state of Maine and took a job as a local Zoning Administrator. He didn't stop in Maine. He became the State Coordinator in Maine. He helped form the New England Floodplain Association. He continues to be Chair in the ASFPM's Insurance Committee and serves on the CRS Task Force.

Between Illinois and Maine, Lou Sidell has worked almost 40 years in Floodplain Management. He has mentored many of the State's leading floodplain managers. He has impacted the floodplain landscape of this entire state and will always be part of our history. Lou Sidell is this year's Lifetime Achievement Award winner.



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## Helping CRS Coordinators

*-Scott Cofoid, Insurance Services Office*

For the first time ever, the IAFSM in conjunction with FEMA and the Insurance Services Office, Inc sponsored a pre-conference workshop for current Community Rating System (CRS) Coordinators. The workshop was held the day before the annual conference. All past CRS workshops have catered to non-participating communities to show them the benefits of the Program and help them understand the application process. This workshop was tailored to existing CRS communities to assist them in their daily activities.

The workshop centered on CRS Activity documentation, but also addressed the recent loss of CRS discount issue for some structures in CRS communities, recent manual changes, how building codes tie-in to CRS and repetitive loss, recertification, cycle and modification requirements. In addition, a section was devoted to current CRS statistics which showed how well Illinois communities are doing regionally as well as nationally.

This workshop also gave current CRS Coordinators an opportunity to get to know one another and talk with each other about the challenges they face and what programs they administer. The workshop received numerous positive comments. Many thanks to IAFSM who helped with coordinating this workshop and to the coordinators who attended.

## From the Chair

- E. Stuart Richter, CFM, Chair, IAFSM

The 2008 Annual conference is history and history it was. As I stated at the conference, during the Chair's Report, our Vice Chair Jeff Wickenkamp did one superb job. That goes for all of his Conference Committee members as well. Another special kudo is due to our Executive Secretary, Sarah Harbaugh, who breezed through her "first ever" conference with an air of, "I've done this all of my life". My hat is off to all those involved.

Prior to the conference, Scott Cofoid of ISO put on a workshop Tuesday afternoon for CRS Coordinators. It was an informative and well attended workshop. That was followed by your Board stuffing conference folders for 2.5 hours. A good time was had by all. That evening, 38 prospective CFMs sat for the CFM Exam. This number was lower than the last two years at least, but now we have opportunities 4 times per year that candidates can take the test.

At an early meeting on Wednesday, Heather Lis presented to the Certification Chair, Matt Wahl, committee member Paul Osman and myself, her plans for a study guide and test for CFM transfers to Illinois. If plans work out, one will be able to download the study guide from the IAFSM web site and then take the transfer exam at the AFSPM web site. This will make it easier for people to transfer their CFM status to Illinois.

Our first plenary featured Ed Thomas with AFSPM who discussed many aspects of flooding including legal ones. We are working on setting up a workshop with him for State and local legal types in hopes of bringing them up to speed on legal matters dealing with floods and floodplains. Mr. Thomas was followed by Gary Clark, Director of the Office of Water Resources, IDNR who discussed the "State of the State" in flood terms. He brought us up to date on what is happening at the State level and what to expect.

For our luncheon on the first day, we had Bob Ash, a motivational speaker, who talked about "Life Lessons". To the apparent delight of those present, he said nothing about floods or flooding, keeping the audience attentive with humorous stories about his life and life in general.

At our business meeting on March 13th, the Board approved a change to our By Laws regarding the Treasurer's ability to pay bills. It allows some latitude without requiring a second signature. We also adopted a policy on expenses for business travel when that business is having to do with IAFSM and education. Our Mitigation Chair, Ron Davis of IEMA, announced his resignation from that position. Another person has announced that she wants to be active in IAFSM and her credentials are outstanding so the position should not be vacant long.

A novel approach was taken for the Plenary on the second day of the conference. After hearing a presentation by George Riedel, Deputy Executive Director of ASFPM, regarding their efforts of the past year and a bit about the AFSPM Foundation, our Immediate Past Chair, Sally McConkey discussed the work of our various committees. Following that presentation, the Chairs made themselves available to any of the membership that were interested. By the time it concluded, some Chairs had new members on their committees.



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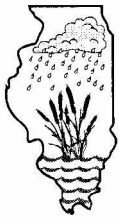
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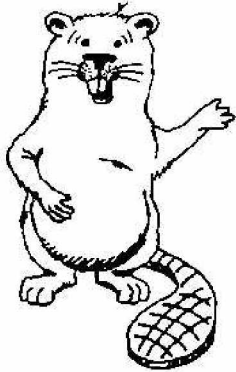


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The IAFSM Newsletter is published quarterly for members of the Illinois Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management. Information and opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of all members. Items for publication and other editorial matters should be directed to the editor at [jmaercklein@v3co.com](mailto:jmaercklein@v3co.com). To advertise in this newsletter (\$100-\$200 per year depending on ad size) contact the association at [IAFSM@sbcglobal.net](mailto:IAFSM@sbcglobal.net).



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