

# Boulder, Colorado: Flooding

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## Background

During the period of 9-16 September 2013, a large area of heavy rainfall, with local amounts exceeding 450 mm, fell over a broad region of the Colorado Front Range foothills and adjacent plains. The severe flooding of many regional river systems, localized flash flooding, and the landslides and debris flows that occurred claimed eight lives and exceeded \$2 billion (U.S. dollars) in damages to private and public properties in Front Range communities. Of the 18 counties designated for assistance, Boulder County was hardest hit in terms of damages, receiving more than \$33 million in state and federal reconstruction grants.<sup>i</sup>

## Long-Term Flood Recovery Group

Following the massive flooding in Colorado, Foothills United Way, a local nonprofit organization serving Boulder and Broomfield counties, initiated the Foothills Flood Relief Fund on September 13, 2013 and helped organize the Long-Term Flood Recovery Group (LTFRG) a month later. The LTFRG is led by Foothills United Way along with other partners, with Foothills United Way acting as fiscal agent. Strong community relationships across the business, nonprofit, government, and faith sectors greatly aided Foothills United Way in its efforts to bring together public and private partners in service of flood relief and recovery. The LTFRG is led by an Executive Committee and composed of several working committees, discussed below.

### *LTFRG Committees and Tasking<sup>ii</sup>*

- ◆ *Needs Assessment and Case Management* – Implementing a system to determine unmet needs throughout Boulder County and Broomfield County and develop a case management program in partnership with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). Setting up logistics and planning for the recruitment, training, and supervision of long-term recovery case managers who will identify resources and refer residents to possible sources of assistance, including funds available from the Foothills Flood Recovery Fund.
- ◆ *Housing and Construction* – Identifying current housing options for residents with immediate housing needs. Working with local agencies and volunteer groups to determine where and how donated or reduced-cost building materials and labor can be used by affected residents. Helping with reconstruction assessments.
- ◆ *Community Resiliency and Engagement* – Creating a vision for how to rebuild communities stronger and better including cultural landmarks, business community, nonprofits, parks, and other community infrastructure.
- ◆ *Volunteer Coordination* – Being the logistical link between local or national volunteer groups and the residents who need donated physical labor. This group will be charged with identifying volunteer needs and pairing them with available volunteer groups.

### **Boulder LTFRG Fast Facts**

- ◆ *Mission Statement.* The mission of the collaborative Long-Term Flood Recovery Group (LTFRG) is to fulfill the unmet needs of residents who faced losses in the destructive 2013 Flood and help them reach a safe, secure, and sanitary situation.
- ◆ *Partners.* Community leaders, local and state officials, representatives from affected communities, FEMA, nonprofits, and others who manage the Foothills Flood Relief Fund.
- ◆ *Active:* November 2013 - present.

- ◆ *Finance, Allocations and Development* – Continuing to find sources of funding donations to meet the financial needs of residents seeking aid. Determining an allocations process tailored to the needs of residents in need. This committee will be in direct contact with case managers and will use a pre-determined priorities scale to allocate funds.

- ◆ *Emotional and Mental Wellness* – Securing resources across the area to help residents affected by the floods to find mental and emotional support while rebuilding and recovering.

- ◆ *Communications and Public Relations* – Keep the public informed of any decisions the group has made and update residents on the process and status of the group. Maintain internal communications within the group to keep all committees up-to-date on progress.

### ***Unmet Needs Case Management***

- ◆ To determine who in the community would not be able to rebuild and recover without assistance, the LTFRG partnered with World Renew, a national disaster recovery group. In February 2014, World Renew sent a team of volunteers to conduct interviews with flood survivors in order to prioritize individual needs and connect survivors with the LTFRG.

- ◆ In addition to the five World Renew walk-in locations across the County, a Flood Recovery hotline was also set up for flood survivors with unmet needs to submit their information. Over 1,100 households impacted by the September 2013 flooding submitted requests for help to the LTFRG.

- ◆ Funding for additional Case Managers in Boulder and Weld Counties was provided through a \$1.9 million grant from the State of Colorado. Catholic Charities, the recipient of the grant, was tasked with handling the selection and hiring of Case Managers to work with county recovery groups, including the LTFRG.

### ***Highlights<sup>iii</sup>***

- ◆ Raised over \$5.1 million for the Foothills Flood Relief Fund
- ◆ Leveraged more than \$100K from FEMA appeals
- ◆ Organized/coordinated over \$3.4 million worth of volunteer hours
- ◆ Issued approximately 300 mental health vouchers to families and individuals
- ◆ Closed over 900 cases through the unmet needs case management process, helping clients to find housing, rebuilding services, furniture and appliance replacements, supplies, and other forms of assistance.

<sup>i</sup> Gochis, David, et al., "The Great Colorado Flood of September 2013," *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 96, no. 9 (September 2015): 1461-1487.

<sup>ii</sup> Long-Term Flood Recovery Group of Boulder County, "About Us," <http://bocofloodrecovery.org/about-us/>

<sup>iii</sup> Foothills United Way, "Flood Recovery," <http://www.unitedwayfoothills.org/flood-recovery>