



Submit your own items or suggestions for future topics to column editor Rebecca Quinn, CFM, at rcquinn@earthlink.net. Comments welcomed!

I've recently learned that one of the clues you might be, um, shall we say "getting on in years," is how often you're asked how you came to know what you know. Experience, Grasshopper, experience. Experience and a willingness to always keep learning. Most floodplain managers who have been in this business for 20 years or more learned by bumbling around, talking to others, slogging our way through densely worded FEMA letters, and in the last decade or so – reading the growing number of FEMA guidance documents.

But all too often, I hear that people are too busy to read. That, paired with the lure of word searches in 100+ page documents, means too many people are missing too much.

When was the last time you read an NFIP technical bulletin start to finish? Even the longest ones are just 28 pages – and that includes diagrams and photographs!

How about the *Substantial Improvement / Substantial Damage Desk Reference* (FEMA P-758)? Have you read it? This manual is, hands-down, one of the most valuable that any floodplain manager can have, packing decades of FEMA guidance into just over 100 pages. I teach a 3 or 4 hour class on it. One of the first things I say to the class is that it's impossible to teach the entire manual in just a few hours. But it is possible to read it in about 4 hours ... "class, please turn to page 1." No, I don't make them sit there and just read, although that might actually yield the greater benefit.

I recently decided to put together a recommended reading list for newcomers to floodplain management. An introductory reading list isn't supposed to be the end-all, be-all, but should cover the basic knowledge that every federal, state, and local floodplain manager should have. We need to know the basics before we advise others. Remember, if what we tell a community official or a property owner is wrong, it's bad enough that people and property could be at risk, but property owners could end up paying for our lack of understanding through much higher flood insurance premiums. And here's another hint – right after a flood event is the wrong time to decide to learn the ABCs of floodplain management!

My first draft introductory reading list is shown below.

1. [NFIP Regulations](#): 44 CFR Part 59 (for some definitions in 59.1) and Part 60 (criteria for land management and use, specifically 60.1, .2, .3, .6, .11, .12, .13, .25, .26, which are the sections addressing land management, not those covering insurance and mapping)
2. [NFIP Technical Bulletins](#)
3. [Elevation Certificate](#) and [FEMA 467-1](#), Floodplain Management Bulletin: Elevation Certificate
4. [FEMA 480](#), NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements, A Study Guide and Desk Reference for Local Officials (several years old, be sure to pair with more recent guidance documents)
5. [FEMA P-758](#), SI/SD Desk Reference
6. [FEMA P-499](#), Homebuilder's Guide to Coastal Construction (lots of illustrations and content that's valuable in all flood zones, including riverine communities)
7. For those states and communities that enforce building codes, these documents are on the FEMA Building Science webpage for [Building Code Resources](#):
 - Flood Excerpts of the 2009/2012 I-Codes (and a checklist that shows how the I-Codes and ASCE 24 meet the minimum NFIP requirements for buildings)
 - Highlights of ASCE 24-05 (ASCE 24 is referenced by building codes, order it from the ASCE can be purchased from the [ASCE Store](#))
 - Flood Provisions of the International Code Series: Higher Standards and More Specific Requirements than the Minimum Requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (a paper that summarizes the provisions of the I-Codes that are more detailed or that exceed the NFIP minimums).

I'd appreciate your comments, suggestions for additions and priorities. And what do you think should be on the follow-on reading list for folks with more experience?

[RCQ]