

Winnebago County has new Flood Insurance Rate Maps: FIRMs

Most of the FIRMs in use have been around since the early 1980's. There was also a second set of maps that showed Floodways. A few maps in either set have been updated since that time; but the cost of preparing, printing and distribution of an entire map is so great that FEMA has issued Letters of Map Amendment (LOMAs) and Map Revision (LOMRs) to represent most changes.

These early maps also had out-of-jurisdiction areas blanked out. That meant that maps for the unincorporated county showed nothing within any municipality--often obliterating major roads, making the location of some properties difficult. Worse, a City of Rockford (or any other municipality) map wouldn't give any information outside its boundaries. A lot of land has been annexed since the early 1980's. The adjacent county map would have to be used, invariably at a different scale and different cross-section numbering.

Maps of September 6, 2006, are a considerable improvement:

- They show the entire county continuously. There is still a scale problem (rural maps are at 1"=1000' and urban ones at 1"=500') but areas immediately adjacent to municipal boundaries will require no pasting.
- The Flood Insurance and Floodway information is now shown on a single map.
- All the previous LOMA's and LOMR's are incorporated.
- The background of the new maps is based on aerial photography--able to show if a home or business is inside a designated flood hazard area.
- Courtesy of the Winnebago County Geographic Information System, WinGIS, the ortho-photography was accompanied by 2' ground contours: a significant improvement over the 10' contours used (especially in rural areas) for the 1980's maps.
- Unfortunately, the new maps did not include new hydrologic or hydraulic analysis. The base flood elevations are largely the same as computed for the original study.

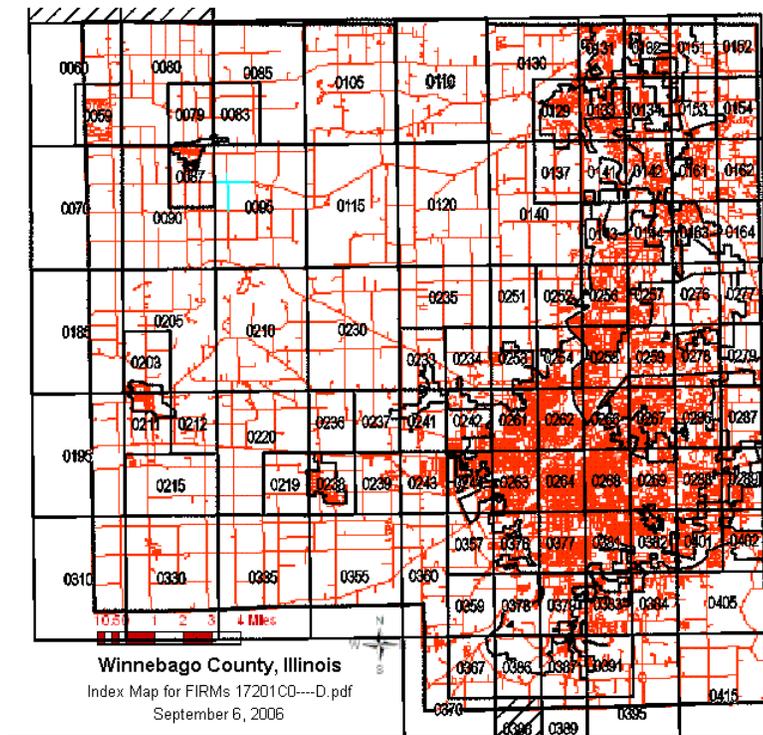
Viewing and/or obtaining the new maps:

These maps are very new and in limited supply. And it takes over 100 maps to cover the entire county. There is a complete set, including the index map and Flood Study text, available for public viewing at the County Clerk's Office (404 Elm Street) and at the County Highway Department (424 N. Springfield Ave.). Neither site has any extra copies for free or sale.

The FEMA Map Store has the maps available for sale online at:

http://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&categoryId=12001&parent_category_rm=12001&type=CAT_MAPPANEL&stateId=13020&countyId=13737&communityId=341060&stateName=ILLINOIS&countyName=Winnebago
The maps have also been converted to Portable Document Format (i.e. .pdf extension), called Digital FIRMs, or DFIRMs. It is expected that these can be viewed (and presumably saved) from this site--perhaps not at this time, maybe after September 6. Be advised that the detail currently seen in DFIRMs results very large file sizes: 18 to 20 mega-bytes each. If you don't have some sort of broad-band connection, it will take a very long time to download such a map. We are not certain when or what will be available, so you might check this site periodically.

An **index map** is shown below. It's not great, but it's better than the list of numbers that FEMA shows. The precise area covered at the edge of a panel is not well refined, so one should do some careful scaling off the full size index map to avoid getting the wrong map. Assistance in locating a particular map may be limited at either of the sites where paper copies are public.



For example: panel 17201C0238D shows the Village of Winnebago and abutting unincorporated Winnebago County, mostly to the east and south.

Last Update: Winnebago County Highway Department: 3 Aug. 2006.