

Colorado River Floodway



The new digitally produced Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties, California, and Yuma, Mohave, and La Paz Counties, Arizona, will reflect the Colorado River Floodway as developed by the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation. Congress established the Colorado River Floodway in the Colorado River Floodway Protection Act of 1986, Public Law 99-450 (100 Statute 1129). The Act imposes certain restrictions within the Floodway.

What Is the Colorado River Floodway?

The Floodway is an area along the Colorado River from the Mexico-Arizona border to Davis Dam within which Federal funding or financial assistance is prohibited, with limited exceptions.

What Methodology was used to Determine the Colorado River Floodway?

The boundaries of the Floodway were established by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) in consultation with the seven Colorado River Basin states, the Colorado River Floodway Task Force (established by the Act), and other interested parties based on a study of the Colorado River and tributary flood flows downstream of Davis Dam. The study was conducted by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Bureau of Reclamation used unencroached analyses of the 1% annual chance (100-year) flood to determine the Floodway. These analyses are more conservative than those typically used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for flood insurance studies of floodways. FEMA typically models and maps a floodway based on a 1.0-foot surcharge (unless a more restrictive state or local criteria is applicable); the Colorado River Floodway methodology assumed a zero-foot surcharge, that is, the Floodway includes all areas that convey flow.

What Restrictions Apply within the Colorado River Floodway?

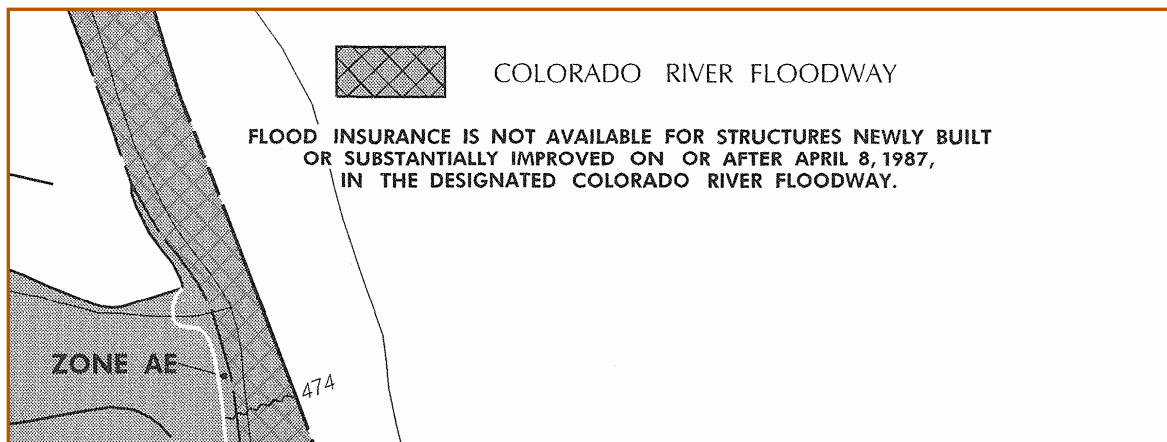
- All new Federal funding or financial assistance for any purpose (with certain exceptions)
- Federal flood insurance for new construction or substantial improvements on existing structures begun six months after enactment (April 8, 1987)
- Granting of new Federal leases (unless the Secretary determines the purpose is consistent with the Act)

Why did Congress Create the Colorado River Floodway?

Congress found that there are multiple purposes for the floodplain, dams, and control structures administered by the Secretary along the Colorado River and that maintenance of a Colorado River Floodway was essential to accomplishing these multiple purposes. Congress also found that development within the Floodway would be vulnerable to damaging flows; and that Federal programs that subsidize or permit development within the Floodway would threaten human life, property, and natural resources. Therefore, there was a need for coordinated action to limit development within the Colorado River Floodway.

How will the Colorado River Floodway be Reflected on a FIRM?

As noted earlier, the new digital FIRMs for Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties, California, and Yuma, Mohave, and La Paz Counties, Arizona, will reflect the Colorado River Floodway as a FEMA regulatory floodway. This can be seen in the graphical example below. The 1% annual chance water-surface elevations determined by the Bureau of Reclamation will be reflected as base flood elevations on the new FIRMs and published in the Flood Insurance Study for each county. If a community wishes to revise the mapped 1% annual chance floodplain or water-surface elevations, the typical map revision process should be followed (see www.fema.gov/fhm/fmc_fmfp.shtm).



How Can the Colorado River Floodway be Revised?

Since the Floodway was enacted by public law, only Congress can revise the Colorado River Floodway; the Floodway cannot be changed by FEMA. For more information on the Colorado River Floodway, questions should be directed to the Bureau of Reclamation.

This fact sheet was produced by MAP IX-Mainland, a joint venture of:



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