

## Chapter 18

### Equipping the Next Generation

Much has happened in the floodplain management “community” during the past few decades in terms of increased awareness and understanding of the need for sound land-use practices to reduce flood losses and protect valuable floodplain resources. New approaches and “tools” have been added or improved. Technological advances have greatly aided these situations. The Internet contains numerous sites where relevant information can be viewed and downloaded.

The classroom instructor of twenty years ago would not be presenting the breadth of topics covered in this course nor have the literature resources readily available through the Internet. At that time interest and processes for floodplain resources protection were just emerging, as were preparing floodplain information in digital format. The extensive databases now utilized for floodplain management and wetlands protection either did not exist or were just being developed. The student’s learning process was limited by what was then known or available.

The course that the student has just completed was designed to ably equip the next generation of “floodplain managers,” whether as a full-time profession or frequent involvement in matters pertaining to flood-loss reduction and natural resource protection. The present-day student’s overall knowledge and available resources significantly exceeds that of the previous generation.

What of future generations of students? Many observers feel that the creation of awareness of natural hazards should start in the elementary classroom. Dr. Gilbert White, who contributed much to the cause of floodplain management over the past 70 years (see Chapter Three), advocated that the United States’ contribution to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, sponsored by the United Nations during the 1990s, should comprise of activities and programs targeted to school age children. It never materialized. Others did not share his vision.

Earlier, around 1990, the Children’s Television Workshop, with funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, developed materials to help elementary school age children (targeted to second and third grades) learn important facts and safety information to protect themselves from floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Each of the programs contained a booklet and audio cassette story to be used by the teacher in the classroom, a sing-along song, and a game to play. The “Get Ready for Floods” materials include a story about “The Great Flood on Sesame Street” featuring Big Bird, Elmo, Oscar the Grouch, and Hoots the Owl.

Countless elementary school children – the next generation – may have received their first classroom information about floods and other natural disasters from the Children’s Television Workshop materials. Reinforcement in the classroom, and in children television programs, through other materials and means can greatly aid them in understanding about these natural disasters. This awareness empowers children to take actions to reduce their vulnerability and turn them into agents of behavioral change. Typically, they share their enhanced awareness with other family members, increasing educational outreach. Hopefully by their college years, such exposure has created an

interest in learning more about “floods” in a classroom environment, thereby equipping them to assist in reducing flood losses and in protecting important floodplain resources and functions. It just might happen!