

FEMA may approve Ottawa flooding projects

[Tammy Evans](#), *The Lima News*

May 14, 2008

Reprinted with permission

OTTAWA - Members of the Blanchard River Flood Mitigation Coalition found out Wednesday that FEMA may approve new projects within the village of Ottawa.

Jason Phillips, wastewater director for the village, said his department had a lengthy conversation with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials Tuesday.

"We'll be readdressing some of the issues within the corporation limits that were overlooked or pushed aside during the August flood, and we'll be re-evaluating some of the projects that were denied during the original assessment," he told the more than 40 in attendance during Wednesday's coalition meeting at the Putnam County Educational Service Center.

Laurie Collins reported statistics to date on the cleanup projects under way for the Blanchard River and its tributaries. Collins, project operator through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, said workers have disposed of 51.5 tons of debris, including 3.5 tons of trash and 5 tons of other materials to be recycled.

"We're working long days, and we're working through the weather," Collins said. "We hope to finish our work on the Blanchard in the next couple months, and we'll probably be done with Tawa Run by the end of this month."

Former Findlay Mayor Tony Iriti, president of the coalition, gave an update on the organization's involvement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Since the onset of work with the Corps, he said the Corps has done a complete turnaround.

"They're now working with our time frame ... and trying to find ways to help us," he said.

A cost-sharing agreement and management plan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was signed April 28.

"Multiple studies for Ottawa and Findlay are now on the same path," Ottawa Community Development Director Jeff Loehrke told coalition members.

He said that while the local share of funding for the flood-mitigation studies is in place, both Ottawa and Findlay are still waiting to receive news on the status of an appropriations bill requesting federal funding.

Loehrke also informed the coalition that an environmental scoping meeting will be held in Ottawa the end of June, although a date has not been finalized.

"This meeting will allow all the federal and state agencies to come in and comment on the study," he said. "It's open to the public, but it's not necessarily an opportunity for the public to voice their concerns about specific issues, such as those relating to the bridge or trailer court."

Loehrke gave an update on the trailer court located along the Blanchard River on West Main Street in Ottawa. "That's been a real eyesore for the community," he said.

He told coalition members Wednesday that the village has received news from FEMA that its application for a grant to purchase the trailer park land has been approved.