[Name of County/Community] Flood Risks Have Changed

* Flood hazard maps, also known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), are important tools in the effort to protect lives and properties in [county/community name]. The maps currently in use in [county/community name]need to be updated. Some formerly rural areas were never mapped in detail [include if applicable], and other areas haven’t been re-mapped in detail in more than [number] years.
* Detailed watershed studies were last performed in [year]. Since then, drainage patterns have changed, new land development has occurred, and mapping and modeling technology has improved.
* The likelihood of [inland, riverine and coastal] flooding in certain areas has changed along with these factors. *[include example of recent local flooding, citing % of NFSHA properties flooded and/or total damage caused]*
* Through a joint effort between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), [community/county name], and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a multi-year project to re-examine [county’s/community’s] flood risks and develop detailed, digital flood hazard maps will soon start.
* Residents and business owners in the studied areas will soon have up-to-date, reliable, Internet-accessible information about their flood risk on a property-by-property basis.

Updated Maps = A Safer Public

* Based on the latest digital mapping technology, the new flood maps will show the extent to which areas of the studied watershed(s) are currently at a high risk for flooding as well as moderate- and low-risk.
* When the preliminary results are introduced, residents and business owners in many parts of the county may find that their flood risk is higher, or lower, than they thought.
* The new flood maps will help home and business owners better understand their current flood risk and make more informed financial decisions about protecting their property.
* These maps will also allow community planners, local officials, engineers, builders and others to make important determinations about **where**and **how** new structures and developments should be built to maximize safety.

The Mapping Process

* New flood maps will not happen overnight. GA DNR goes through multiple phases as it gathers the most current data, creates the new maps, shares and receives feedback from the public and stakeholders, revises them where necessary, all before issuing the new digital flood hazard maps.
* At a high level, here are the phases this mapping project will go through:
* Data acquisition and modeling to show flood risks.
* Release of preliminary maps to county and communities.
* Open House and 90-day public comment period.
* Letter of Final Determination issued by FEMA indicating the maps will be effective in 6 months.
* New Flood Insurance Rate Maps are issued.
* This entire process can take from 24 months to 36 months or longer, depending upon the complexity of the study.
* This federal mapping update project is currently at the Discovery Phase where FEMA and GA DNR meet with all of the respective communities and county being studied and discuss the area’s flooding risk, gather information, confirm areas needing new studies, define roles and provide an estimated timeline for completion.

[Name of County/Community’s] Role

* In advance of a Discovery Meeting between GA DNR and [county/community name], GA DNR and FEMA will be gathering information about watersheds in the area that may need to be re-studied and will be engaging local officials for information. GA DNR will be looking to leverage any recent engineering and mapping studies as well as factors contributing to flooding and levels and types of mitigation and other assistance [county/community name] provides.
* GA DNR will conduct a Discovery Meeting with the affected communities and other stakeholders to review and finalize the prioritization of needs, confirm areas to be studied and the methodologies to be used based on the available budget, review available data to support the project, discuss areas of interest for mitigation and use of grants. [County/Community name] is expected to participate in the Discovery Meeting, identify available data, and provide copies of their current floodplain ordinances.
* At the Discovery Meeting, additional fact sheets will be provided in hard copy as well as electronic format to allow posting on [county/community name] web site. Once activities for map production have been assigned and documented in the Discovery Report, [county/community name] may use the Discovery materials to provide an overview of the plan to stakeholder groups, media, and public.
* When the new maps are finalized, FEMA will issue to [county/community name] an official letter (called the Letter of Final Determination) informing them that the new flood maps are ready and will be effective in six months. [County/community name] **must have or put in place an ordinance** that accepts these new maps and detail how construction will be managed in high flood risk areas **before they become effective.** If an ordinance that meets FEMA’s minimum requirements is not in place once the map become effective, [county/community name] will be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program and flood insurance and disaster aid for flooding will not be available in the future for us or our citizens.

The Result: More Accurate Maps and a Safer [county/community name]

* The process of developing these maps will be complex, time consuming, but thorough.
* The result will be worth the effort: accurate, up-to-date maps in an easy-to-use digital format.
* Planners, builders, and developers will be able to use the maps to make decisions on how and where to build.
* And home and business owners, as well as renters, will have the information they need to decide how best to financially protect themselves and their properties from the devastation caused by flooding.
* [County/community name] will benefit over time by having a much safer and more resilient community to work and live in.