

# UNDERSTANDING FLOODPLAINS, FLOODWAYS, AND RIVER CORRIDORS

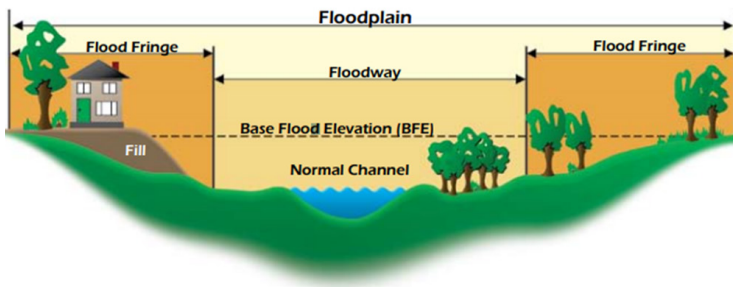
## Floodway

The floodway is the part of the floodplain where **water moves the fastest and deepest** during a flood; it is the most vulnerable area during a flood.

The floodway may not have been drawn on a map for all rivers, but **this zone must remain open** to safely carry floodwater.

Building in a floodway is **regulated and not recommended** because any blockage could raise water levels and worsen flooding elsewhere.

Think of it as the **"conveyor belt" of the floodplain**, critical for moving water downstream.



## Floodplain

A floodplain is a **flat area of land** next to a river or stream. **These areas:**

- Slow, absorb, and store excess water during storms and snowmelt
- Help reduce downstream flooding
- Support wetlands, wildlife, and natural habitats

FEMA has not mapped all floodplains and in some cases mapped floodplains are not based on a detailed study. **So it is important to keep in mind that areas outside of the FEMA-regulated floodplain may have the same flood risk.**

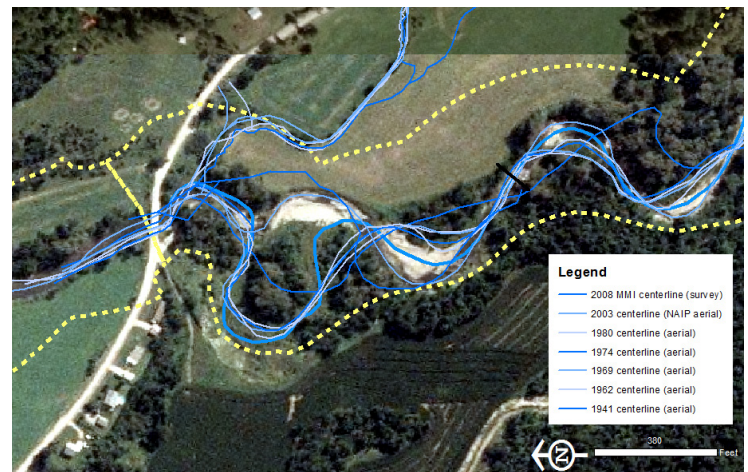
## River Corridor

While floodplains and floodways show where water inundates land, the river corridor shows where the river itself may move or erode the landscape over time.

Rivers are dynamic, they **shift, meander, and carve new channels**, especially during major storms.

A river corridor **includes the river channel and the surrounding land** where this natural movement is likely to occur.

Protecting river corridors helps **reduce long-term flood risk** by giving rivers space to move and adapt.



*Meandering channels in a river corridor*