Extreme Floods in the Intermountain Southwest

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NOTABLE EVENTS & IMPACTS

June, 1965
Denver
Over 1,000 structures damaged

September, 2014
Las Vegas
I-15 shut down for several days to repair damages totaling $5 million

July, 1976
Near Fort Collins
Colorado's deadliest flood killed 143 people

September, 2013
Colorado
Over $2 billion in damages

May-June, 1983
Salt Lake City
Storm drainage completely blocked, turning downtown streets into rivers

September, 2014
Phoenix
The wettest day on record left 10,000 residents without power

October, 1983
Tucson
Massive erosion wiped out bridges and caused buildings to collapse into riverbeds

July, 2007
Aspen
Roads, day-use area, and improved trails buried under 1 to 2 feet of debris

July, 1997
Fort Collins
The city's worst natural disaster led to 400 water rescues

July, 2008
Phoenix
Runways at Sky Harbor International Airport shut down

October, 1983
Arizona
4,000 residents evacuated

July, 1997
Fort Collins
Train derailed

"Preserving this land as open space not only minimizes flood damages, but also enhances the natural and beneficial functions of the floodplain, such as allowing floodwaters to spread out and slow down."

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Urban Planning

Together, the City of Tucson and the Pima County Flood Control District keep constant attention on flood risk, supported by programs to maintain and reinforce stream banks to minimize erosion during extreme floods.

Floodplain Management

The City of Fort Collins floodplain management program mitigates the impact of floods through tools such as floodplain regulations, open space preservation, and public education.

"During the 2013 flood...no rescues were needed in the city limits...probably due in part to informed citizens who knew their flood risk, where to get information...and how to be 'flood safe'."

Greenways Program

The City of Boulder's Greenways Program combines recreational paths with flood mitigation along the major drainageways, and conveys water flows away from properties and critical facilities. Since 1997, the city's $44.8 million in investments have substantially reduced flood risk.

Flagstaff Bond

Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project: City of Flagstaff voters approved a bond measure to fund $10 million in forest treatments to reduce the connected risks of high-intensity wildfire and post-fire flooding.

*Sources: Hilmes-Robinson, M. and C. Lochra. (2014, Mar/Apr). Fort Collins Management Program: Success Stories from the September 2013 Flood. Colorado Water 31(2), 14-19. Colorado Water Institute.