



# Moving Homes from a Floodplain

In January 1996, a combination of a heavy snow cover, subsequent heavy rainfall, and warm temperatures combined to cause widespread flooding in Allegany County, Maryland. Many streams exceeded the flood levels caused by Hurricane Agnes in 1972. During the recovery and mitigation process, the County targeted over 300 flood-prone homes and properties for purchase and demolition at an estimated cost of ten million dollars.

# Case Studies

ALLEGANY COUNTY, MARYLAND

## Allegany County, Maryland

**Allegany County's** Project Impact initiative contributed to the long-term mitigation endeavor by earmarking \$150,000 to relocate units from a manufactured home park and return the area to a natural habitat/open space. The units were entirely located within the 100-year flood boundary of Evitts Creek and had experienced flooding and access problems numerous times in the past. What seemed to be a very straightforward purchase and relocation took over two years at a final cost of \$390,000.

In the spring of 1998, the review and approval process began with the accumulation of supporting cost/benefit data. The original application called for relocating the units, and purchasing the manufactured home park as well as the property owner's house that was adjacent to the park but outside the floodplain. Ten of the manufactured homes suffered substantial damage from the January 1996 flood and the remaining eight suffered partial damage. Low-income and elderly retirees living on fixed incomes occupied the units.

The park was comprised of both occupant-owned and leased units with pad and utility rent paid to the property owner.

As the units were being evaluated for relocation, the owners of the manufactured homes sought alternate pad sites. Only four found such sites on private property; the remainder found it impossible to rent pad space in other local manufactured home parks. Their units did not meet the



*Relocation and land restoration in progress.*



## Allegany County, Maryland

new construction and age standards of new zoning regulations. Unfortunately, the evaluation of a local towing firm indicated that most, if not all, manufactured homes were too fragile to move safely. By April 1999, the proposal had to be re-structured to buy out the units and to remove the purchase of the landowner's house from the proposal.

FEMA expressed concern for the continued viability of this project but the County was willing to continue because the staff believed strongly that these units should be removed from harm's way. The timing of the deed transfer to the county was critical. The property owner was required to give a 90-day notice for residents to vacate the property but he had to wait until the last possible moment to make sure he could collect pad rental fees to offset his monthly mortgage payment. The County Administrator and planning staff handled the situation well. Through constant County outreach to the residents and the use of contract personnel well-versed in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA), the process moved forward with the support of the tenants.

By mid-October 1999, the last tenant vacated the manufactured home park and the last home was removed on December 15, 1999. As of June 2000, every family was relocated to affordable housing. The pads and utility connections have been removed and the area is being returned to a natural state.



*Land restored to its natural state.*