



# FEMA

## Village Relocates Uphill Above Floodplain

**Rhineland, MO** - Established in 1853 along the banks of the Missouri River on a backdrop of rolling hills and bluffs, repetitive flooding became a way of life for the nearly 200 residents of the tight-knit community of Rhineland. But between April and July of 1993, four major storms caused the Mississippi River, the Missouri River, and other tributaries to swell and flood communities, including Rhineland. Most of Missouri's 1,500 levees failed or overtopped during the historic floods and damages throughout the State totaled nearly \$6 billion.

"We've had past floods and they were nothing compared to 1993," explained Ervin Elsenraat, former mayor of Rhineland.

"Former Governor Mel Carnahan set a priority to get people out of the floodplain and inform communities of the voluntary buyout program," said Sallie Hemenway, director of operations at Missouri's Department of Economic Development Business and Community Services.

The buyout program, which is voluntary, offers homeowners pre-flood, fair market value of property to relocate outside the flood-prone area. Existing structures are cleared from the floodplain and the deed-restricted property remains in perpetuity.

Preserving their community was just as important to Rhineland's citizens as escaping the floodplain to protect their lives and property. "As homes in Rhineland were severely damaged from repetitive flooding and the market value depreciated, people searched alternatives to the buyout plan," said Steve Etcher, executive director of the Boonslick Regional Planning Commission.

The residents decided to relocate homes to the crest of the nearby bluff at a total estimated cost of \$4.3 million. Local government, Missouri Housing Development Commission, Missouri Economic Development joined resources with U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grants and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to accomplish the move. Rhineland resident Sib Elsenraat agreed to sell 49 acres of the family farm, which had been in his family for nearly a century.

"The key to any move is that people have to want to do it. That's what happened here," said Elsenraat. "I wanted the town to stay together for the good of the town. I just happened to have had suitable land available for the relocation," he added.

"We took control of the floodplain by trading a lot on the hill for a lot from the floodplain," stated Etcher. Residents devised a lottery system allowing homeowners to draw numbers for lots of comparable size to the ones in the floodplain. To ensure same neighbors, many exchanged lots among themselves, referred to as the "swap meet."

When it was finally time to move, exhilaration filled the air as the community, government officials, sightseers, and the local and National media converged on the small village. Homes were hoisted by movers and rolled up the hill, one by one.



Montgomery County, Missouri



### Quick Facts

Year:

**1993**

Sector:

**Public**

Cost:

**\$4,300,000.00 (Estimated)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Relocation**

Primary Funding:

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**