



FEMA

Historic Island Mitigation Finding Up Is the Best Way

Dare County, NC - All along the North Carolina coast, individual homeowners and whole communities have increasingly realized the persistent threat to life and property posed by major storms and hurricanes. North Carolina's Outer Banks, a thin line of barrier islands 25 miles or more from the mainland in places, began to be built up as never before. Then as major storms began to roll in, they saw the forces of both the ocean on one side and Pamlico and Albemarle sounds on the other.

Mickey and Linda Daniels have lived in their Wanchese home for 32 years on Roanoke Island, was flooded in the "Storm of the Century" in March 1993. Every year after that, the arrival of hurricane season would make Mickey acutely aware of the weather reports.

Not far away, Boyd and June Basnight had 13 inches of floodwater surge through their house during the 1993 storm, damaging or destroying all in its path. In the following years, an approaching storm would send the couple into a frantic scramble to raise furniture onto blocks and boxes.

Some 15 miles north in Kitty Hawk, Lou and Helen Hoppe lived in a large and stately historic home built in the 1890s. But after the "Storm of the Century," and then Hurricane Fran in 1996, they were ready to move out of the area. "I don't care if you get two inches or three feet, it's a mess," Lou says. "If you've ever been flooded once, it's something you never want to go through again."

After Hurricane Bonnie hit in 1998, Dare County was ready to participate in a mitigation project for the first time. Jenny Gray Jones, a seventh-generation resident of the Outer Banks and project manager for the county's hurricane recovery mitigation projects, recalls that 400 families showed up for a town meeting on an elevation project and 300 applied for the project. The process eventually winnowed the 10 that would get the \$719,000 in funding, which was split between FEMA (75 percent) and the state of North Carolina (25 percent). The project took some time to get the required engineering drawings and hire contractors that were often booked up to two years in advance. But the homes were elevated before Hurricane Isabel struck in September 2003.

During the elevation of Mickey and Linda Daniels' home, they lived in a church trailer for more than 3 months. The temporary inconvenience proved worthwhile. When Isabel roared through the town, the storm surge covered their yard, and the garage took five inches of floodwater. But the house stayed high and dry. "I'm not under pressure as I was before," Mickey says. "I don't have that sense of dread that the water will come in."

The Basnights also found Hurricane Isabel less threatening to their property. Floodwaters entered their yard-but not their home. "I didn't have to find someone to move my furniture up in the air," recalls Boyd Basnight.

The Hoppes, too, found their home was indeed above the reach of Isabel's floodwaters. "We don't have to worry any more about being flooded," Lou Hoppes says.



Dare County,
North Carolina



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$719,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Elevation, Structural

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)