Endangered Species and Habitat Identification Tool for CRS Communities

https://fema.gov/floodplain-management/endangerered-species-act/fresh-mapping-tool

Purpose

FEMA's Flood Risk and Endangered Species Habitat (FRESH) Web-based mapping tool is an integral part to the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7(a)(1) Conservation Action Program. The FRESH mapping tool helps build awareness, assist with identification of federally listed threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitats, and promote incentives or opportunities for NFIP participating communities to further incorporate conservation through NFIP implementation. FEMA's FRESH mapping tool can be used to identify federally listed species ranges and critical habitats, along with Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). The FRESH mapping tool enables users to visualize and analyze community-specific environmental data to achieve as much habitat and species conservation as possible to balance with social and economic needs.
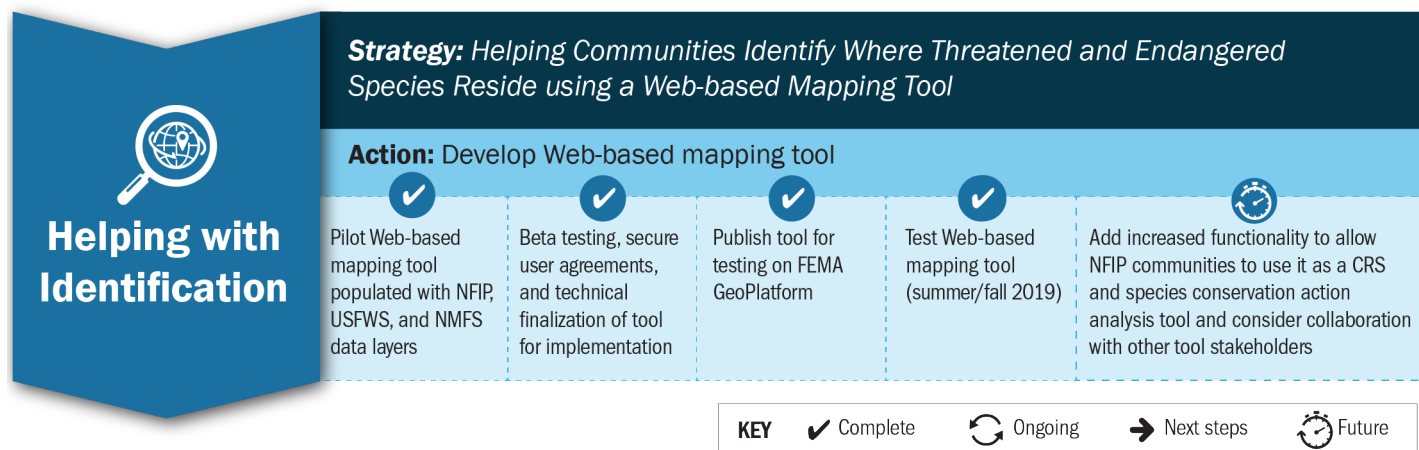

Helping with Identification

Strategy: *Helping Communities Identify Where Threatened and Endangered Species Reside using a Web-based Mapping Tool*

Action: Develop Web-based mapping tool

✔	✔	✔	✔	⏱
Pilot Web-based mapping tool populated with NFIP, USFWS, and NMFS data layers	Beta testing, secure user agreements, and technical finalization of tool for implementation	Publish tool for testing on FEMA GeoPlatform	Test Web-based mapping tool (summer/fall 2019)	Add increased functionality to allow NFIP communities to use it as a CRS and species conservation action analysis tool and consider collaboration with other tool stakeholders

KEY ✔ Complete   ↻ Ongoing   ➔ Next steps   ⏱ Future

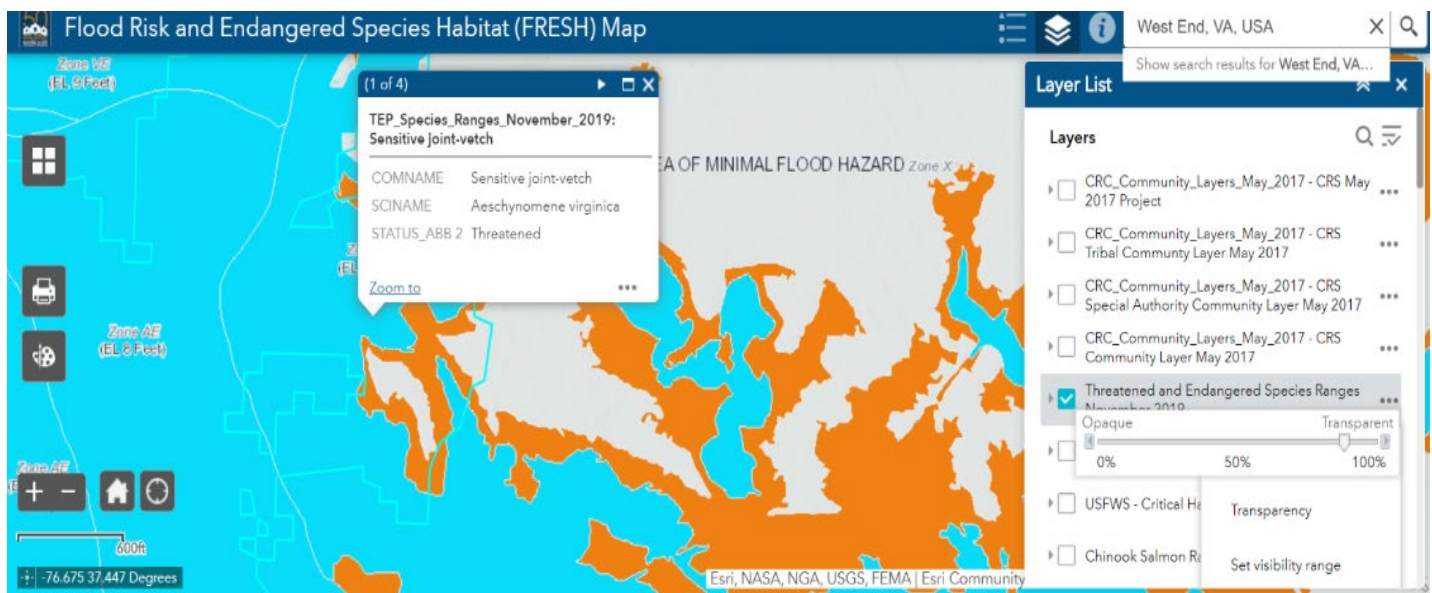**Figure 1. Helping Communities Identify Where Threatened and Endangered Species Reside**

Functionality

This interactive Web-based mapping tool empowers communities with the data needed to make informed decisions by allowing communities to overlay their NFIP regulatory floodplain (100-year floodplain/SFHA) with critical habitat and federally listed species range maps. Users can query analytics for their community or select a specific area to obtain an output of threatened and endangered species and habitats.

Using FRESH, communities can visualize the relationship between their regulatory SFHA overlaid with threatened and endangered species, designated critical habitats, and species ranges to help inform local decisions that may affect the floodplain. Communities that engage in species and habitat conservation activities through the NFIP's Community Rating System (CRS) Program (https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system) may benefit from NFIP premium discounts.

Figure 2. FRESH Map Screenshot

Continuous Improvement

FRESH underwent a 90-day user testing period June-Sept 2019. All comments were evaluated for incorporation into the tool and User's Guide with the purpose of making FRESH more user-friendly and useful to CRS communities. FEMA will continually review FRESH to ensure accuracy. Information provided on the data layers reflects the best available science. As FEMA has no control over the data obtained from authoritative federal sources, data will be periodically reviewed and expanded when possible to ensure they contain the intended information.

FEMA plans to increase functionality with additional analyses, such as displaying what points a CRS community currently receives for certain CRS activities or identifying opportunities for undertaking additional activities that promote habitat and species conservation. In the future, users may also be able to add their own GIS data to FRESH allowing them to customize their visualizations for their community needs.