

NAFSMA 2026 EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

Innovative Communications Showcase | 13 Submissions | 2026

The 13 submissions to NAFSMA's 2026 Excellence in Communications Award represent the leading edge of public outreach in floodplain management and stormwater communications. From humorous TV campaigns and bilingual social media to guided dam tours and community murals, these projects demonstrate creative strategies breaking through to residents in meaningful ways.

Project Summaries

#1	MAAPnext Navigator — Interactive Flood Map Harris County Flood Control District Houston, TX
A \$27 million FEMA-funded partnership delivering the most comprehensive flood hazard update for Harris County since 2007. The MAAPnext Navigator is a public-facing interactive map with address lookup and a side-by-side slider comparing current vs. proposed FEMA flood maps across 23 watersheds and 34 municipalities. Available in five languages: English, Chinese (Simplified), French, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention Population Served: 4.7 million+ Coverage: 23 watersheds, 34 municipalities across Harris County MAAPnext Interactive Map Harris County Flood Control — MAAPnext Instagram: @maapnext Instagram: @hcfloodcontrol X: @MAAPnext Facebook: MAAPnext	
#2	Stormwater Sidewalk Mural Project Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services (CMSWS) Charlotte, NC
A nearly 80-foot sidewalk mural at the Rosa Parks Place Community Transit Center on Beatties Ford Road — the first large-scale public art project for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services. Artist Jamil Dyair Steele illustrated the "street to stream" connection with community input. Bilingual English/Spanish signage accompanied the mural as part of a 360-degree communications plan. Category: Improving Water Quality — Individual Item Cost: \$10,000 artist commission + 450+ staff hours Population Served: 250,000+ Results: 300+ survey responses; 11,000+ social media impressions; 500+ webpage views; TV coverage on WBTV, WSOC-TV, Spectrum News; 7,000+ employees via newsletters Storm Water Services Website	
#3	2026 Severe Weather Preparedness Week Campaign Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services (CMSWS) Charlotte, NC
A week-long multimedia campaign tied to NC Severe Weather Preparedness Week (March 1–7, 2026). Used radio ads in English and Spanish (WPEG/WPAV), an electronic billboard, social media "collaborate" features with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management and Animal Care & Control, and Flood Resource Kit distribution at community centers in high-risk zip codes — all for just over \$1,000.	

Category: Public Awareness / Communication Campaign

Cost: \$1,046 total

Population Served: 250,000+

Reach: 650,294+ community members (~60% of Charlotte): Radio 384,000 | Billboard 69,300 | Social media 89,429 | La Raza/Latina ads 36,300 | City web article 8,000+

StormWater.CharMeck.org

#4	No-No Ball — Stormwater PSA Campaign Clark County Regional Flood Control District Las Vegas, NV
A humorous bilingual PSA campaign featuring flying red dodgeballs: "Only rain goes in our drains — you can't dodge karma." Three 30-second spots in English and Spanish covered pet waste, oil dumping, and lawn clippings/palm fronds. Distributed on broadcast TV (CBS, ABC, NBC, Telemundo), an interactive website, in-school presentations, and via the Animal Foundation. Category: Improving Water Quality — Communication Campaign Population Served: 250,000+ TV Impressions: 2.2M (CBS) + 1.7M (ABC) + 250,400 (NBC) + 546,000 (Telemundo) = 4.7M+ School Outreach: 52 presentations reaching 4,150 students YouTube Views: 7.7 million across all spots lvstormwater.com regionalflood.org YouTube: Pet Waste PSA (English) YouTube: Pet Waste PSA (Spanish) YouTube: Oil Dumping PSA (English) YouTube: Oil Dumping PSA (Spanish) YouTube: Palm Fronds PSA (English) YouTube: Palm Fronds PSA (Spanish)	

#5	Floodplain CRS Outreach — Houston Astros PSA City of Houston Floodplain Management Office / Houston Public Works Houston, TX
Year-round CRS outreach anchored by a hands-on interactive physical flood model deployed at Houston Astros games, Earth Day, Kids Day, Flood Awareness Week, and 40+ community events. Houston's CRS Class 5 rating delivers a 25% NFIP discount, saving 121,800 policyholders approximately \$14 million annually. FY2025 included 32 outreach activities reaching 100,000+ residents and 1,000+ students. Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention (CRS) Cost: \$147,026 annually Population Served: ~2.3 million NFIP Savings: \$14M/year (25% discount, CRS Class 5, 121,800 policies) Reach FY2025: 100,000+ residents 1,000+ students 40+ events 50,000+ digital impressions Floodplain Management Office Facebook: @COHPermits X: @cohpermits	

#6	Levee Connection Newsletter Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management — Office of Levee Safety Iowa
A quarterly newsletter launched Spring 2024 to fill a communication gap among Iowa's levee districts. Preceded by 16 Town Hall meetings engaging 200+ stakeholders, the Levee Connection features a lead article, National Levee Safety Program resources, and a "Levee Spotlight" section showcasing local projects. Distributed to 1,300+ recipients at near-zero cost. Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention Cost: \$1,700 (Town Halls) + 5–6 hours staff time per issue; \$0 email platform Population Served: 250,000+ Distribution: 1,300+ recipients per issue Contact: Jeff Jackson — Jeff.Jackson@iowa.gov 515-513-9832	

#7	Be Flood Ready — Multi-Channel Preparedness Campaign King County Flood Control District King County, WA
A 2025 redesign of King County's flood preparedness campaign, stress-tested against December 2025 historic flooding — with no loss of life reported. Key innovations: an 8-page Be Flood Ready brochure in 24 languages with river basin-specific versions, a new video series, targeted postcards to 23,000 properties, a Community Navigators Program, and digital integration with the Flood Warning System and mobile app. Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention Cost: ~\$122,200 Population Served: 250,000+ Reach: 3,000+ community members engaged 50+ events 12+ cities 24 languages Be Flood Ready Brochure King County Flood Resources	
#8	Managed Retreat Conversation — Public Education Initiative Maryland Association of Floodplain and Stormwater Managers (MAFSM) Maryland
An educational initiative to open a public conversation about managed retreat and voluntary floodplain buyout programs in Maryland. MAFSM created resources, held community forums, and developed communications materials helping residents and floodplain managers understand managed retreat as a flood-risk-reduction strategy. Content covered policy context, real-world case studies, community engagement approaches, and practical resources. Category: Public Awareness / Communication Campaign Audience: Maryland residents, local officials, and floodplain managers Approach: Forums, educational materials, policy briefs, and case studies on buyout programs	
#9	Dam Good Tours — Public Flood Infrastructure Tours Miami Conservancy District Dayton, OH area
Guided public tours of the Miami Conservancy District's five retarding basins (dry dams) protecting the Miami Valley. The program connects the 1913 Great Dayton Flood — one of the deadliest in U.S. history — to the flood protection infrastructure built in its wake, making century-old engineering personally relevant to modern residents. Includes school outreach, community events, and educational curriculum. Category: Public Awareness / Communication Campaign Approach: Guided dam tours, school outreach, historical narrative linking past disasters to present infrastructure Innovation: Transforms invisible flood infrastructure into an experiential educational destination	
#10	OC Loves Water — H2OC Stormwater Campaign Orange County Public Works / H2OC Stormwater Program Orange County, CA
The "OC Loves Water" multi-platform campaign for Orange County's H2OC stormwater program promotes water quality and stormwater pollution prevention across a diverse Southern California county. Campaign components include social media, community events, educational materials, and bilingual (English/Spanish) digital outreach positioning stormwater stewardship as an act of love for the community's water resources. Category: Public Awareness / Improving Water Quality Population Served: Large metro area — Orange County, CA Channels: Social media, community events, bilingual digital and print materials H2OC Stormwater Program OC Public Works	

#11

Flood Awareness Campaign — Silicon Valley

Valley Water (Santa Clara Valley Water District) | San Jose, CA

A comprehensive flood awareness campaign serving Silicon Valley's diverse communities across Santa Clara County. The multi-channel program covers digital media, community events, and multilingual materials on flood preparedness, creek and reservoir safety, and emergency readiness — adapting messaging to communities ranging from dense urban neighborhoods to rural foothill areas.

Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention**Population Served:** Large metro area — Santa Clara County, CA**Channels:** Digital media, community events, multilingual print and online materials[Valley Water](#)

#12

2025–26 Flood Awareness Campaign

Yuba Water Agency | Marysville / Yuba City, CA

A flood awareness campaign for Yuba County communities in California's Central Valley — one of the nation's highest flood-risk regions. The multi-channel campaign includes social media, community outreach, educational materials, and local media partnerships targeting communities with significant agricultural and limited-English-proficiency populations, using culturally responsive messaging.

Category: Public Awareness / Flood Prevention**Region:** Yuba County, CA — high-risk Central Valley**Channels:** Social media, community partnerships, local media, multilingual materials[Yuba Water Agency](#)

#13

San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network — Community Engagement

Los Angeles County Public Works | Los Angeles County, CA

A multi-year (2019–2025) community engagement initiative to convert 130 miles of LA County flood control channels into a connected greenway network. Engaged 37 cities and 2 million residents through a 12-member Steering Committee, 80+ community events, 8 workshops, and 2,300 survey responses. Early 2025: 29 pop-up events, 4 community bike rides, 150+ public comments. Plan adopted by the LA County Board of Supervisors. Languages: English, Spanish, Mandarin.

Category: Public Awareness / Community Engagement**Cost:** \$730,000**Population Served:** 2 million residents across 37 cities**Duration:** 2019–2025**Reach:** 4,000+ in-person | 212,000 social media impressions | 2,300 survey responses**Contact:** Matthew Frary — MFrary@pw.lacounty.gov | (626) 458-4300

Trends & What's Making a Difference

Across all 13 submissions, several powerful themes emerge that represent the new standard for effective floodplain and stormwater communications. The most successful campaigns don't just inform — they engage, invite, and inspire action.

1

Multilingual & Culturally Responsive Outreach

English-only strategies are out. Bilingual (English/Spanish) content is now table stakes, with leaders going much further — King County offers materials in 24 languages, Harris County's interactive map serves Chinese, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese speakers, and LA County engaged in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Campaigns are also adapting tone and messengers to specific cultural contexts rather than just translating generic content.

Examples: King County (24 languages), Harris County MAAPnext (5 languages), Clark County No-No Ball (EN/Spanish TV), Yuba Water (agricultural communities), LA County SGVGN (multilingual for 37 cities)

2

Entertainment & Humor as Communication Strategy

Dry technical messages are giving way to genuinely entertaining content. Clark County's No-No Ball campaign generated 7.7 million YouTube views and 4.7M TV impressions. Houston took a physical flood model to an Astros game. Miami Conservancy made a dam tour a destination. The underlying insight: humor and novelty lower defenses and make infrastructure personally relevant.

Examples: Clark County No-No Ball (7.7M YouTube views, 4.7M TV impressions), Miami Conservancy Dam Good Tours, Houston CRS at Astros games, CMSWS Mural at transit center

3

Hyperlocal & Place-Based Engagement

Generic regional campaigns are being replaced by place-specific messaging. King County created river basin-specific brochure versions. CMSWS placed their mural at the specific transit center most at risk. Iowa's newsletter highlighted individual levee districts. LA County ran events in all 37 cities. Houston's CRS outreach met people at specific community events — being where people already are dramatically increases engagement.

Examples: King County basin-specific brochures, CMSWS mural at Rosa Parks Place transit hub, Iowa Levee Spotlight features, Houston at Astros/Earth Day/Kids Day, LA County 29 pop-up events

4

Digital-Physical Integration

Top campaigns pair digital tools with in-person touchpoints rather than choosing one or the other. King County integrated a mobile app and Flood Warning System into a physical brochure campaign. Harris County's MAAPnext Navigator lets any resident look up their address and visually compare current vs. future flood maps. This hybrid approach ensures both tech-savvy and tech-limited residents are reached.

Examples: Harris County MAAPnext interactive map, King County mobile app + Flood Warning System, Houston CRS physical model + social media, CMSWS billboard + social collaborate feature

5

Radical Cost-Efficiency & Proof of Impact

Several campaigns demonstrate extraordinary reach per dollar. CMSWS's Severe Weather campaign reached 650,000+ residents for \$1,046 — roughly \$0.0016 per person. Iowa's Levee Connection reaches 1,300+ professionals for the cost of staff time. These submissions make a compelling case that smart, targeted communications can achieve massive reach without massive budgets — and that impact metrics should be central to communications planning.

Examples: CMSWS Severe Weather (\$1,046 total, 650K+ reach), Iowa Levee Connection (\$0 platform cost), King County (no loss of life in December 2025 floods)

6

Public Art & Infrastructure Activation

CMSWS commissioned an 80-foot mural that makes stormwater infrastructure visible and beautiful at a community transit hub. Miami Conservancy opens its dry dams to public tours, transforming invisible flood control into an experiential civic attraction. Both approaches create lasting, ambient communication that reinforces the message every time a resident passes — without ongoing media spend.

Examples: CMSWS Stormwater Sidewalk Mural (first large-scale public art), Miami Conservancy Dam Good Tours (guided infrastructure tours)

7

Community Co-Creation & Sustained Engagement

The most ambitious programs don't just communicate to communities — they build them. LA County's 6-year SGVGN engagement included steering committees, bike rides, pop-up events, and surveys that shaped the final plan. Iowa preceded its newsletter with 16 Town Halls. MAFSM opened a sustained public conversation about managed retreat rather than a one-time advisory. This participatory model builds trust and creates advocates.

Examples: LA County SGVGN (6-year engagement, 37 cities, 80+ events), Iowa (16 Town Halls before newsletter), MAFSM (ongoing public forum on managed retreat), King County Community Navigators Program

The Common Thread

The 2026 submissions share a unifying insight: effective flood and stormwater communication requires meeting people where they are — physically, culturally, and emotionally. Whether through a mural at a bus stop, a dodgeball PSA, a 24-language brochure, or an interactive map, the goal is the same: make invisible risk visible, and make the path to preparedness as easy as possible.