

Discussion Summary — Correspondence Regarding Engineering Support, Grant Opportunities, and Early Mitigation Planning (January–March 2025)

This summary reflects correspondence regarding engineering consultation, potential grant opportunities, and early-stage flood-mitigation planning related to Mallard Lakes Community Association. It is provided for historical context only and should not be interpreted as an official engineering recommendation, funding commitment, or policy position of any participating organization or individual.

Between January and March 2025, correspondence was exchanged with engineering consultant Sharon Cruz of Davis, Bowen & Friedel regarding possible approaches for evaluating flood-related concerns at Mallard Lakes and identifying potential funding opportunities for future mitigation efforts. Discussions focused on the challenges associated with obtaining governmental sponsorship for FEMA-related grant applications, the possibility of pursuing smaller phased mitigation efforts while larger solutions were evaluated, and the practical realities of advancing engineering and resilience planning within an HOA-governed coastal community.

During the discussions, engineering representatives noted that Sussex County appeared hesitant to support grant applications related to Mallard Lakes despite earlier conversations regarding FEMA funding pathways. As an alternative, the correspondence explored whether the HOA might consider engaging engineering support directly to begin evaluating flooding concerns in smaller, more financially manageable phases while broader governmental coordination efforts continued. Potential opportunities discussed included DNREC Community Water Quality Improvement grants, living shoreline concepts, erosion-management measures, and phased engineering evaluations designed to help the community better understand its long-term flood vulnerabilities and mitigation options.

The discussions also referenced broader state and regional resilience coordination efforts, including the Delaware Silver Jackets program and the Delaware Resilient and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL), which assist communities in identifying funding opportunities and connecting with technical experts and consultants. Engineering representatives indicated familiarity with these initiatives and encouraged continued coordination with state agencies, local officials, and the HOA Board as future planning efforts evolved.

Subsequent correspondence also highlighted practical limitations associated with many available grant programs, including the fact that some grants were intended primarily for projects already prepared for construction rather than early-stage feasibility studies or conceptual planning. Engineering representatives further emphasized that formal grant applications and project implementation efforts would ultimately require approval and participation from the governing HOA Board, and noted the significant professional time and technical effort required to prepare complex mitigation grant applications and engineering analyses.

Additional discussions addressed how chronic flooding and poor drainage conditions could affect different building types within the community, including slab-on-grade structures and pile-supported buildings. Engineering correspondence explained that slab-on-grade homes may face increased flood exposure because the finished floor elevation is directly adjacent to exterior grade elevations, while prolonged soil saturation and drainage problems can also contribute to settlement, cracking, or instability associated with undermining of supporting soils beneath concrete slabs.