What is BW-12?
On July 6, 2012, Congress enacted the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Reform Act (also known as Biggert-Waters 12 or BW-12). While BW-12 affects multiple aspects of the NFIP, the primary focus has been on exactly how flood insurance premiums paid by policy holders will change. The long-range benefits of BW-12 include resiliency in communities and reduced flood risk. See FEMA’s resources on the Flood Insurance Reform Act: www.fema.gov/flood-insurance-reform-act-2012.

How will BW-12 affect my community?
For homes built before Flood Insurance Rate Maps or FIRMs were adopted, subsidized flood insurance rates are being phased upward to full actuarial rates, based on actual flood risk. More than one million policies, roughly 20 percent of flood insurance policies nationwide, have been subsidized prior to BW-12’s implementation. The ability for property owners to maintain grandfathered flood insurance rates, based on flood risk designations that are lower than what the current flood mapping reflects, is also scheduled to be phased out.

The direct consequence of BW-12 will be higher flood insurance rates for certain property owners. For those with particularly high flood risk that were previously subsidized or grandfathered, the increased costs can be substantial. Indirect consequences of these higher flood insurance premiums can extend beyond individual property owners to affect communities more broadly. Potential impacts can include property value depreciation, heightened foreclosure risk, decrease in tourism revenues due to impacted vacation rental property, shifts from mortgage-backed primary residence ownership to investor-owned rental occupancy, reduced tax base, and public infrastructure obsolescence.

How can Dewberry help?
There are many strategies that community officials can employ to proactively adapt to BW-12. These strategies include actions to mitigate impacts to the community at large, as well as actions that communities can communicate to individual property owners, so that they will be educated and empowered to adapt. Communities that take proactive steps to adapt to the short term challenges posed by BW-12, will benefit in the long run by being more economically and flood resilient.

Our deep understanding of the NFIP and BW-12 enable us to assist your community in successfully adapting to BW-12 through the following suite of services and expertise:
- Public and stakeholder outreach assistance
- Geospatial and economic analyses
- Hazard mitigation
- Community Rating System (CRS) support
- Flood risk management
- Flood hazard analysis
- Adaptive land use planning
- Critical infrastructure planning
- Training
- Grant writing
- Climate change
- Sustainability