



communities are at high risk for long-term economic impacts, decreased quality of life, and avoidable deaths.

## Long-term struggle with flood recovery in Rainelle, West Virginia

A storm on June 23, 2016 delivered nearly [10 inches of rain in 24 hours](#) to southeastern West Virginia, resulting in catastrophic floods that killed 23 people, destroyed 1,500 houses and 125 businesses, damaged 4,000 homes, and caused more than \$1 billion in damages.

### Quote from Rainelle Resident

*I know for a fact that the town was literally devastated with the flood to the point, say we have another one, heaven forbid, that would do the town in. They would have to bulldoze everything and turn it into a big pasture or something.*



June 2016 rescue efforts in Rainelle

Source: Register- Herald

Despite an influx of state and federal assistance, [recovery efforts were complex](#) and much of the rebuilding relied on nonprofit organizations. More than six years later, many towns impacted by the flood continue to [struggle to rebuild](#) and prepare for future disasters. Rainelle is an example of one town that suffered significant damages. [One nonprofit](#) estimated that 90% of homes in the downtown area needed to be demolished or significantly repaired after the flood. Today, individuals report ongoing anxiety and trauma from the flood, with little access to mental health services, and many buildings damaged by the flood still need to be repaired or demolished. What's more, ongoing economic recovery efforts have been further slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rainelle, which has been described as a [bellwether](#) for other communities at risk of flooding, provides clear evidence for why West Virginia needs policy to increase community resilience to flooding.

## Immediate Action Needed

To increase resilience to future floods in places like Rainelle, West Virginia policy makers should ensure the SRO is fully resourced to prepare for immediate flood response and long-term flood recovery in impacted communities. Filling the vacant role of [SRO Director](#) is an important first step, but additional funding and staffing are necessary to do this critical work, including: ensuring delivery of adequate assistance to communities immediately after a flood occurs, increasing training of existing first responders, creating local-level [community response teams](#), and better coordinating a flood response network of relevant nonprofit and governmental organizations at local, state, and federal levels. The result will be improved resilience and recovery for West Virginia communities in the aftermath of future floods.

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## For More Information

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