

OUTER BANKS REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING COMMITTEE (CURRITUCK COUNTY GROUP) – MEETING #1

April 23, 2024, 2pm, Currituck County Public Safety Center EOC Conference Room

ATTENDANCE

There were 10 attendees in person and 5 online. The following individuals were in attendance:

Mary Beth Newns, Currituck County Emergency Management
Olivia Doherty, Currituck County Emergency Management
Jason Litteral, Currituck County Planning
Jennie Turner, Currituck County Planning
Anna Cherry, Currituck County Planning
Carol Frazier, Currituck County stakeholder – Pilmoor UMC Food Pantry
Lora Eddy, Currituck County stakeholder – The Nature Conservancy
Michael Strader, Currituck County stakeholder
Mike Palkovics, Kitty Hawk Police
Carl Baker, NCEM
Chris Smith, NCEM Area 1 Coordinator
David Stroud, WSP
Abby Moore, WSP
Ranger Ruffins, WSP

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Why Plan?
- Project Overview
- Planning Process
- Project Schedule
- Next Steps
- Q & A

WHY PLAN?

David Stroud and Abby Moore with WSP facilitated the meeting following the agenda above. David began the presentation with why we plan in the first place. David discussed that the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 which is codified in 44 CFR 201.6 requires local governments to update their hazard mitigation plans every five years to receive FEMA pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding through the Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding programs. David reviewed some trends in disasters including that we now have more frequent and intense hazard events and greater exposure to risk (people, property and critical infrastructure). In 2023 there were 28 billion-dollar disasters, more than any prior year. Hazard mitigation is a priority for multiple reasons, including that the cost of doing nothing is too high, many events are predictable and repetitive, loss reduction can be effective, cost-beneficial, and environmentally-sound, there are legal and moral responsibilities to prevent disasters, and there are federal funds available to support mitigation. The average benefit-cost ratio for federally-funded projects is 6:1.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

David explained that we must follow the DMA planning process and we will integrate Community Rating System (CRS) Activity 510 planning steps into the DMA four-phase planning process to meet the requirements of both programs. The DMA process provides continued eligibility for mitigation funding, guides mitigation activities in a coordinated and economical manner, integrates hazard mitigation with

other planning mechanisms, directs future development in a safe manner, and helps make communities more disaster resistant. The CRS program provides policy holders in participating communities with flood insurance discounts based on the number of CRS points the communities earn. The flood insurance premium reductions are community-wide.

WSP will ensure that the updated hazard mitigation plan meets all FEMA planning requirements, coordinates with the natural hazards in the updated State Hazard Mitigation Plan, includes natural and human-caused hazards as identified by the HMPC, incorporates local climate change data and findings, and addresses equitable outcomes.

PLANNING PROCESS

Abby described the planning process in more detail. Phase 1 is already underway. The HMPC was reconvened with some new members and will be asked to attend four meetings, provide input on risk and capability, update mitigation actions, and review plan drafts. HMPC members, especially staff, were also asked to consider ways to involve the public throughout the planning process. Another priority is to identify stakeholders that should be invited to participate in the planning process, especially those that may be able to represent underserved communities and/or vulnerable populations. To maximize CRS credit and support awareness of the plan, 30 outside stakeholders must be invited to participate and provide input. The HMPC suggested including faith-based organizations and adult services.

Phase 2 covers the risk assessment, which includes the hazard identification, the vulnerability assessment, and the capability assessment. The hazards that were addressed in the previous plan were presented and the planning committee reviewed and discussed potential additional hazards. There was a question about whether offshore wind farms pose a risk relevant to the HMP. For flood risk, WSP discussed an alternate methodology for estimating exposure and potential future risk using the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Freeboard Value Approach. Regarding the asset inventory, Abby noted that NCEM iRisk data will be used and communities will be asked to review and update their critical facility list; critical facilities will be categorized by FEMA lifeline in the plan update, which may be helpful to communities when preparing FEMA grant applications. For the capability assessment, WSP will update the existing report and request feedback from each community on any additional changes.

Phase 3 involves developing a mitigation strategy by reviewing and updating the plan goals and objectives, evaluating mitigation alternatives, including existing and new projects, and drafting an action plan with prioritized projects. Abby reviewed different approaches to mitigation, the six FEMA/CRS mitigation categories, and the count of actions by category for each jurisdiction in the existing HMP. In the plan update communities must have at least one action for each natural hazard to meet FEMA requirements and should include a flood-related action for at least 5 of the 6 mitigation categories to maximize CRS credit.

Phase 4 is where the communities must adopt and implement the plan. The communities and HMPC will meet quarterly to review the action plan and look for funding and opportunities to implement projects. Abby suggested the Currituck County working group select one person to lead this effort and set up a recurring call so that quarterly meetings are already scheduled. The plan will continue to be updated every five years.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Abby presented a tentative schedule for the planning process, which includes additional HMPC meetings around June/July, September/October, and November. The HIRA meeting in June/July will likely be held jointly with the Dare County group. The draft plan is due to NCEM in December. The plan must be approved by NCEM and FEMA and adopted by all communities before the current plan expires in June 2025.

NEXT STEPS

Abby discussed public outreach efforts which includes public meetings facilitated by WSP, a public survey, and an informational flyer. Community staff were asked to post outreach on local websites and social media and consider ways to advertise the plan or bring the survey and flyer to community events. The plan website used for the previous plan update will be rebooted and shared once it is available.

WSP has begun work on the risk and vulnerability assessment update. Abby noted that Currituck County has posted an annual report of the hazard mitigation action plan with the status of existing actions but asked the HMPC to begin considering new mitigation actions. Carl Baker of NCEM reminded everyone that actions must be included in the HMP to be eligible for FEMA grant funding, so the HMPC should consider any project they may want to pursue in the next five years and add them to the action plan now so that a plan amendment isn't needed later. The HMPC was also asked to look for opportunities to support public engagement and to document any publicity and engagement efforts.