

OUTER BANKS REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING COMMITTEE (DARE COUNTY GROUP) - MEETING #1

April 22, 2024, 2pm, Dare County Emergency Operations Center

ATTENDANCE

There were 26 attendees in person and 8 online. The following individuals were in attendance:

James Wooten, Dare County EM
Drew Pearson, Dare County EM
Barton Grover, Dare County Planning
Noah Gillam, Dare County Planning
John Finelli, Dare County stakeholder – Martin’s Point
Mike McGuire, Dare County stakeholder – Hatteras Island
Donna Creef, Dare County stakeholder – Outer Banks Association of Realtors
Shari Fiveash, Dare County stakeholder – Room in the Inn
Tom Amatucci, Dare County stakeholder – Salvo
Joe Heard, Duck Planning
Walter Hancock, Duck stakeholder
Kevin Wright, Duck stakeholder
Skip Jones, Kill Devil Hills stakeholder – Outer Banks Home Builders Association
Doug Styons, Kill Devil Hills stakeholder
Rob Testerman, Kitty Hawk Planning
Mike Talley, Kitty Hawk Fire
Melissa Dickerson, Manteo Planning
Kevin Zorc, Manteo EM
Kelly Wyatt, Nags Head Planning
Shane Hite, Nags Head Fire
Ed Snyder, Nags Head Planning
Joe Costello, Nags Head Planning
Megan Lambert, Nags Head stakeholder
David Thompson, Nags Head stakeholder
Andy Ward, Southern Shores Planning
Wes Haskett, Southern Shores Planning/Administration
David Bradley, Southern Shores Public Works
Tony DiBernardo, Southern Shores stakeholder
Chris Crew, NCEM
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

INTRODUCTIONS

Drew Pearson, Dare County Emergency Manager, kicked off the meeting with an introduction to the plan update process and the importance of hazard mitigation. David Stroud and Abby Moore with WSP facilitated the rest of the meeting following the agenda above.

WHY PLAN?

David began the presentation with why we plan in the first place. David discussed the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000, which is codified in 44 CFR 201.6 and requires local government 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 (BCR) for federally-funded projects is 6:1; for flood mitigation the average BCR is 7:1.

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.

Overall, the WSP team 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 following stakeholders were suggested by the committee:

- NCDOT Roads Division and Ferries Division
- National Parks Service
- Department of the Interior
- USFWS
- Others on the NC-12 Task Force
- Outer Banks Home Builders Association
- Division of Coastal Management
- USACE
- Non-profits and churches
- Representatives from the school system (School Board, Dare Education Foundation)
- Coastal Studies Institute
- Chamber of Commerce
- Fiber/Utility providers
- Community Foundations
- Visitors Bureau
- Food Bank of the Albemarle
- Community Care Clinic

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. Solar flare and electromagnetic pulse were brought up as a potential hazard. It was suggested that this might be more appropriately addressed by an Emergency Operations Plan. Pandemic was also brought up, and it was noted that there is a detailed public health plan in place. There was discussion about the concern that the current flood maps do not accurately represent 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.

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. 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 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. The HMPC was asked to begin reviewing the existing mitigation strategy to provide action status updates and to look for opportunities to support public engagement.