

OUTER BANKS REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

PUBLIC MEETING #1 – BARCO, NC

April 23, 5:30pm, Dare County Emergency Operations Center

ATTENDANCE

There were five attendees in person and three online. The following individuals were in attendance:

Mary Beth Newns, Currituck County EM
Olivia Doherty, Currituck County EM
Tab Winborne, Currituck HMPC stakeholder
Carl Baker, NCEM
Chris Crew, NCEM
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 began the presentation with why we plan in the first place. David explained that plan updates ensure preparedness and continued eligibility for FEMA grant funding through programs like the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, and the Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities Program. Additionally, the plan update is an opportunity to identify and understand changes in risk due to greater exposure, new or changing populations, changes to hazards from development, and the impacts of climate change. The plan update is an opportunity to increase resilience through mitigation.

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. Mitigation is sustained action taken to reduce risk and break the damage/rebuild cycle. Approaches to mitigation include altering, averting, adapting to, or avoiding the hazard.

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

David described the planning process in more detail. Phase 1 is already underway and involves reconvening the planning committee, planning for public involvement, and coordinating with stakeholders. A 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.

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.

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. Actions will fall within the six FEMA/CRS mitigation categories: Prevention, Property Protection, Structural Projects, Emergency Services, Natural Resource Protection, and Public Education. In the plan update communities must have at least one action for each natural hazard to meet FEMA requirements.

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

David presented a tentative schedule for the planning process, which includes additional public meetings around June/July, 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

David discussed public outreach efforts which include public meetings facilitated by WSP, a public survey, and an informational flyer. 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 public was asked to share any new data or input relevant to the plan update.