

OUTER BANKS REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

PUBLIC MEETING #2 – AVON, NC

August 28, 2024, 5pm, Avon Volunteer Fire Department

ATTENDANCE

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

James Wooten, Dare County EM

Steve Basnight, Dare County Schools

Mary Helen Goodloe-Murphy, Resident

Donald Rice, Resident

David Stroud, WSP

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Why Plan?
- Project Overview
- Planning Process
- Risk & Vulnerability Assessment Update
- 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.

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

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. A draft of the Risk Assessment is scheduled to be posted by WSP by September 13th for the HMPC and public to review. 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. David 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. It was suggested that 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.

There were several questions on the mitigation projects currently in the existing hazard mitigation plan and proposed projects in the update. James Wooten indicated the status of mitigation projects and some of the projects completed, and grant funding received. Beach nourishment was brought up and Drew Person talked about the approach in Dare County. Drew indicated that Dare creates engineered beaches which requires an engineer certification and makes an eroded beach available for FEMA Public Assistance monies to restore the beach. There was a concern about flooded roads and drainage in the Avon area.

RISK & VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT UPDATE

David reviewed the Priority Risk Index (PRI) methodology and results. The purpose of the PRI is to categorize and prioritize all potential hazards for the Outer Banks planning area as high, moderate, or low risk. David briefly reviewed current draft findings for the hazard profiles included in the plan update.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

David presented a tentative schedule for the planning process, which includes additional HMPC meetings around 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

David 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 has been rebooted and can be found at www.OBX-HMP.com.

WSP is working on the risk and vulnerability assessment update and a draft will be posted by September 13th. David noted that input from public meetings will be reviewed, discussed with the HMPC, and incorporated into the plan update. Currently, the public survey has received 379 responses and David encouraged the group to make sure their input has been shared.