

SECTION 9 - PLAN MAINTENANCE

It is required by FEMA (as per 44 CFR Part 201.6(c)(4)(i) that, “[The plan maintenance process shall include a section describing the] method and schedule of monitoring, evaluating, and updating the mitigation plan within a five-year cycle.” A formal plan maintenance process must take place to ensure that the Hazard Mitigation Plan remains an active and pertinent document. Regularly scheduled evaluations during the five-year cycle are important to assess the effectiveness of the program and to reflect changes that may affect mitigation priorities.

URS Corporation (URS), as the consulting company, was able to provide the Core Planning Group with guidance on potential means to satisfy the requirement for plan maintenance procedures. However, it was the members of the Core Planning Group who were in the best position to define the process. URS submitted a Guidance Memorandum (Guidance Memorandum #2 – Plan Maintenance Procedures) to summarize FEMA requirements for plan monitoring, evaluation, and updates to the Atlantic County Office of Emergency Preparedness (ACOEP) on January 6, 2009. It was also posted to the mitigation planning website for review by Core Planning Group members, the public, and other stakeholders.

Team members were asked to provide feedback regarding their desires for plan maintenance to ACOEP. ACOEP, in turn, worked with the Consultant to develop this mitigation strategy to best reflect expressed preferences. The information presented below represents these decisions, as provided to URS through ACOEP. These methods will ensure that regular review and updating of the Hazard Mitigation Plan will occur.

Mr. Edward Conover of the ACOEP, who was identified as Coordinator for this mitigation planning project, will oversee the overall plan maintenance process. ACOEP will take the lead on plan monitoring and evaluation steps, and any required plan updates, with help from the rest of the County Mitigation Planning Jurisdictional Assessment Team.

Monitoring the Plan

An important step in any mitigation planning process is to document the method by which the Core Planning Group will monitor the Hazard Mitigation Plan throughout the five-year period of record. To accomplish this objective, the Core Planning Group has elected to prepare **Annual Work Progress Monitoring Reports**, prepared by entities responsible for implementing mitigation actions (as identified in the Mitigation Strategy). Progress Monitoring Reports shall be submitted on an annual basis to ACOEP, beginning one year from the date of FEMA’s approval of the Final plan. Work progress reports shall be the FEMA How-To #4 (FEMA 386-4), Worksheet #1, Progress Report. Using the FEMA Progress Reports will answer the following questions:

- the hazard mitigation action(s) that the agency is responsible for
- the supporting agencies/entities responsible for implementation;
- a delineation of the various stages of work along with timelines (milestones should be included);
- whether the resources needed for implementation, funding, staff time and technical assistance are available, or if other arrangements must be made to obtain them;
- the types of permits or approvals necessary to implement the action;
- details on the ways the actions will be accomplished within the organization;
- whether the duties will be assigned to agency staff or contracted out;
- the current status of the project; and
- identifying any issues that may hinder implementation.

On a case-by-case basis, ACOEP will determine if site visits, phone calls, and/or meetings would be beneficial to supplement Annual Work Progress Monitoring Reports. If so, ACOEP will initiate the site visits/calls/meetings as applicable.

Evaluating the Plan

Post adoption, a mitigation plan should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to assess the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and to reflect changes that may affect the mitigation priorities.

To accomplish this objective, the Core Planning Group will convene once per year for an **Annual Plan Evaluation Meeting**. Plan Evaluation Meetings will be conducted within three months after each annual batch of Progress Reports are due (see "Monitoring", above). At each Plan Evaluation Meeting, the Planning Group will review Progress Reports, and use the following criteria to evaluate the plan:

- do the goals and objectives address current and expected conditions?
- has the nature and magnitude of risks changed?
- are the current resources appropriate for implementing the plan?
- are there any implementation problems (such as technical, political and/or legal), or coordination issues with the other agencies and/or Committee members?
- have the outcomes occurred as expected?
- have the agencies and other Committee partners participated as proposed?; and
- where shortcomings are identified, what can be done to bring things back on track?

Following each Annual Plan Evaluation Meeting, the ACOEP will prepare meeting minutes summarizing the outcome of the evaluation meeting. ACOEP will distribute meeting minutes to all Core Planning Group members via email, and will post meeting minutes on the web site.

Updating the Plan

As part of the process to maintain FEMA mitigation funding eligibility, a plan update must always be submitted to NJOEM/FEMA for their review. This must occur within five years of the plan's approval by FEMA (and during subsequent five-year cycles thereafter).

To accomplish this objective, ACOEP will take the lead on Plan updates, with support from the Core Planning Group members. ACOEP will conduct Update Appraisals. During the Update Appraisal, the ACOEP will evaluate the current Plan, Annual Progress Reports, and Annual Plan Evaluation Meeting Minutes. ACOEP will conduct the Update Appraisals at 3.5 years from the date of FEMA's approval of the Final plan, and at the same point in time during subsequent five-year windows (i.e., from the date of FEMA's approval of the final plan, Update Appraisals will occur at Year 3.5, Year 8.5, Year 13.5, etc.). The Planning Group has selected Year 3.5 as the point for the Update Appraisals to ensure that sufficient time (18 months) will be available to update the document within the five year cycle, receive FEMA's re-approval, and for local jurisdictions to formally adopt the updated plan.

The plan update will not only involve a comprehensive review and evaluation of each section of the plan, but also a discussion of the results of evaluation and monitoring activities detailed in the Plan Maintenance section of the previously approved plan. Plan updates may validate the information in the previously approved plan, or may involve a major plan rewrite. A plan update cannot be an annex referring to the previously approved plan; it must stand on its own as a complete and current plan.

Other criteria that will be considered during the update include:

- if changing situations have modified goals/objectives/actions and/or hazards;
- if additional information is available to perform more accurate vulnerability assessments;
- if it is determined that participating jurisdictions wish to be added to and/or removed from the Plan; or
- if it is determined that the Plan no longer addresses current and expected future conditions.

At the time of the update, ACOEP shall consult with FEMA for the latest Guidance in place regarding plan updates to ensure that the latest criteria are addressed in the update process.

ACOEP will prepare an updated plan, and circulate it to Core Planning Group members via email for their review and comment. Comments will be due back to ACOEP within 14 days; lack of response will be assumed to indicate concurrence with the ACOEP appraisal. Comments received which cannot be resolved remotely will trigger an Update Resolution Meeting of the Core Planning Group to resolve differences and develop a joint determination on how to modify the document.

Any plan updates will be released for public review and comment. The updated plan will be posted on the County web site, and made available in hard copy at the ACOEP offices. Notification to the public will also be issued to this same effect, and interested parties will be given 30 days to provide comments to ACOEP.

Public Participation in Plan Maintenance

As per 44 CFR Part 201.6 (c)(4)(iii) states, “[The plan maintenance process shall include a] discussion on how the community will continue public participation in the plan maintenance process.” To meet this requirement, the new Hazard Mitigation Plan should describe what opportunities the public will have during the plan’s periodic review to comment on the progress made to date and on any proposed plan revisions.

The following array of activities was selected by selected by the ACOEP based on feedback received from Core Planning Group members:

- ACOEP will continue to maintain the mitigation planning website and document repositories.
- Each participating jurisdiction will add a link on their jurisdiction’s web page to the County mitigation planning website, if they have not already done so as part of the plan development process.
- ACOEP will lead efforts to prepare an annual fact sheet on the plan. This fact sheet will be submitted via email to Planning Group members for posting on community notice boards, at a minimum, and preferable supplemented with distribution at meetings as applicable. ACOEP will post the fact sheet on the county mitigation plan web site.
- ACOEP will lead efforts to prepare a survey for the public and other stake holders which will be posted on the County mitigation planning web site and in document repositories. Survey forms will be shared with participating jurisdictions for their use, as well. All feedback will be directed to ACOEP as a central location. Survey feedback will be a topic of discussion at Annual Plan Evaluation Meetings
- Participating jurisdictions will conduct annual interviews and/or smaller meetings with civic groups, the public and other stakeholders. This will be accomplished

through incorporating discussion of the mitigation plan into other regularly attended meetings.

- Participating jurisdictions will consider annual flyers, newsletters, newspaper advertisements, and Radio/TV announcements, and will implement some or all of the above at the discretion of the jurisdiction.
- ACOEP will establish a telephone hotline service (preferably a toll-free number) for interested parties to ask questions or submit feedback regarding the plan.
- Participating jurisdictions will consider offering working groups by topic area (such as land use, hazard, mitigation action, etc.) if deemed necessary based upon feedback obtained during the plan maintenance cycles.
- Participating jurisdictions will each conduct an annual town hall meeting on the progress of the mitigation plan.

Plan Integration

As per 44 CFR Part 201.6(c)(4)(ii), “[The plan shall include a] process by which local governments incorporate the requirements of the mitigation plan into other planning mechanisms such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans, when appropriate.”

To meet this requirement, the new Hazard Mitigation Plan should indicate how mitigation recommendations will be integrated into job descriptions, or existing planning mechanisms such as comprehensive plans, capital improvement plans, zoning and building codes, site reviews, permitting and other planning tools, where such tools are appropriate. In other words, “plan integration” can be thought of as the process whereby each local government will incorporate the plan findings and projects into their governing systems.

URS Corporation (URS), as the consulting company, was able to provide the Planning Group with guidance on potential means to satisfy the requirement for plan integration procedures. However, it was the members of the Core Planning Group who were in the best position to define the process. URS submitted a Guidance Memorandum (Guidance Memorandum #3 – Plan Integration) to ACOEP on January 6 2009, to summarize FEMA requirements for integrating the plan into other local planning mechanisms. It was also posted to the mitigation planning web site soon after for review by Core Planning Group members, the public, and other stakeholders.

Team members were asked to provide feedback regarding their desires for plan integration to ACOEP. ACOEP, in turn, worked with the Consultant to develop this mitigation strategy to best reflect expressed preferences. The information presented below represents these decisions, as provided to URS through ACOEP. These methods will ensure that regular integration of the Hazard Mitigation Plan will occur.

ACOEP, with input from URS and the Core Planning Group member feedback, noted the following capabilities in relation to mitigation planning and opportunities to integrate the mitigation plan into daily activities. Progress with regard to Plan Integration will be on the agenda for each Annual Plan Evaluation Meetings.

Participating jurisdictions currently use comprehensive land use planning, capital improvements planning and building codes to guide and control development. After the Hazard Mitigation Plan is formally adopted, these existing mechanisms will have hazard mitigation strategies integrated into them, as follows:

- Within six months after adoption of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Core Planning Group members for each participating jurisdiction will issue a letter to each of its community's department heads to solicit their support and explore opportunities for integrating hazard mitigation planning objectives into their daily activities. Specifically, letters can include:
 - Many participating jurisdictions have Master Plans, General or Comprehensive Plans. In participating jurisdictions where Master Plans, General or Comprehensive Plans exist, Core Planning Group members will work with their respective planning departments to educate them on the Hazard Mitigation Plan and encourage that on the next updates of such plans, hazard mitigation for natural hazards is addressed.
 - Many participating jurisdictions have local building departments responsible for building code enforcement and review of site plans. Local jurisdictions enforce the state-adopted IBC. In these communities, Core Planning Group Members can coordinate with their respective building departments to ensure that they have adopted and are enforcing the minimum standards established in the State-adopted IBC.
 - Many participating jurisdictions participate in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program and as such have local floodplain management ordinances. In these communities, Core Planning Group Members can coordinate with their respective Floodplain Administrator to determine if enforcement beyond FEMA minimum requirements would be prudent for the community.
 - In participating jurisdictions with local zoning ordinances, Core Planning Group members can work with their zoning boards to educate them on the Hazard Mitigation Plan and encourage consideration of low occupancy, low-density zoning in hazard areas, when practicable.
- Participating jurisdictions will consider working with their department or agency heads to revise job descriptions of government staff to include mitigation-related duties to further institutionalize hazard mitigation. This change would not necessarily result in great financial expenditures or programmatic changes. For example, the How-To presents the following language which could be considered for adding into job descriptions for a community planner, floodplain manager, emergency manager, building code official, or water resources engineer in the Public Works Department, or Town Engineer:

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge.** Knowledge of the principles of emergency management, specifically hazard mitigation. Knowledge of the principles and practices of sustainable development and how it is incorporated into hazard mitigation planning. Knowledge of FEMA's pre- and post-disaster mitigation programs, as well as other federal agency programs (HUD, EPA, SBA) that provide technical and/or financial assistance for implementing pre- or post-disaster mitigation planning. Knowledge of private/non-governmental programs that can support reconstruction and mitigation strategies.
- Skills.** Consensus building and team building, communication (verbal and written), and interpersonal skills.
- Abilities.** Ability to apply planning principles and tools to the goals of hazard loss reduction.

- Instead of solely relying on funding from hazard mitigation programs or other external sources of grant monies, participating jurisdictions may consider a line item for mitigation project funding in their capital or operational budgets. Having a line item in these budgets may not guarantee funding

every year, but it is certainly easier to get the money allocated if it is already there. Examples include:

- A revolving fund to finance a buyout program.
 - A low-interest loan program to fund retrofits.
- Participating jurisdictions with comprehensive/master plans will add hazard components to the plan as one of the most effective mechanisms to institutionalize hazard mitigation for new construction. Municipalities should consider all natural hazards which have been identified in this Hazard Mitigation Plan as hazards of significance for their particular municipality. In New Jersey, natural hazards are often addressed in a master plan's Land Use and/or Conservation Elements (some of the more common examples which many municipalities are most familiar with are discussions regarding development within floodplains or on steep slopes). A primary benefit of combining these processes is that they both influence the location, type, and characteristics of physical growth, specifically buildings and infrastructure. While planning in and of itself may not be regulatory, it uses regulatory mechanisms (zoning, development ordinances, etc.) for implementing goals and objectives. The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law provides the legal framework for a local jurisdiction to adopt a master plan and regulate land use through enacting zoning and land use ordinances that are consistent with their master plan. Additionally, in many parts of the country, the comprehensive planning process is an established activity that is already familiar to the public, and it usually generates a great deal of interest and public participation. Two jurisdictions feel that existing rules, regulations and/or ordinances can adequately address plan integration without modifying their comprehensive plan:
- Egg Harbor Township's Deputy Administrator has expressed the position that adding hazard components to the master plan is not necessary due to the presence of other existing rules, regulations and zoning. They have instead indicated that in the future, if the Township should wish to incorporate standards above the existing rules and regulations then they will do so through zoning, not a section in the Master Plan.
 - Brigantine's Director of Emergency Management also indicated that due to existing codes, modification to the Master Plan itself may be unnecessary.

Examples of using existing resources to accomplish mitigation include:

- Core Planning Group members will work with their local Department of Public Works to adopt more rigorous procedures for inspecting and cleaning debris from streams, ditches, and storm drain systems. For example, instead of cleaning only after storms or complaints from citizens, or on an annual basis, the Department could require inspections of streams and ditches at least twice per year and after a significant rain event.
- Participating jurisdictions will seek to add hazard vulnerability to subdivision and site plan review criteria and incorporate any necessary actions at the planning stage.
- ACOEP will seek to identify a community conservation society or other interested voluntary organization that could perform inventories of historic sites in hazard areas that might require special treatment to protect them from specific hazards.
- Partners and nonprofit organizations and businesses can assist the planning team in a number of ways, by including lending expertise, discounted materials, staff or volunteer time, or meeting space. The planning team can in response offer these entities opportunities for greater public exposure and thus, greater recognition. The planning team can inform partners about the hazards they potentially face, the ways they can mitigate these hazards, and how their staff can mitigate hazards at home. Participating jurisdictions will reach out to partner groups in their communities to identify those who may be willing to donate goods or services and create a database of contact information and indicated goods/services.

- Citizens have an ongoing role to play in project implementation. The planning team should actively seek volunteers to help implement programs and activities. Knowledgeable citizens, including those from the emergency services, can also be recruited to provide expertise in specific subject areas. The more the team involves members of the community in implementing the plan, the greater the support it will receive.
- State agencies can lend their time, expertise and funds to the implementation of hazard mitigation projects. ACOEP will make sure the planning team's list of state contacts is very broad, as the resources of one state agency may be unknown to another. ACOEP will assist participating jurisdictions in reaching out to state agencies for support.
- Colleges and universities can provide technical expertise to projects that may require Geographic Information System (GIS), engineering, planning or other expertise and technical assistance. They can also provide meeting space, laboratories and other logistical support. ACOEP will assist participating jurisdictions in reaching out to educational institutions for support.
- Community libraries are an excellent source of information and services, including volunteers. Participating jurisdictions will meet once each five years with their local library staff members to discuss the mitigation plan so they are well-versed in its purpose and understand where to direct interested parties for more information, to provide feedback, or to become involved.

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