

Chapter 4 - Plan Adoption and Maintenance

4.1 Plan Adoption

The purpose of formally adopting this Plan is to secure buy-in from Athens County and participating jurisdictions, raise awareness of the Plan, and formalize the Plan's implementation. Following state and federal approval, Athens County and its participating jurisdictions intend to formally implement the Plan and be full participants in its activities.

4.2 Implementation

Implementation and maintenance of the Plan is critical to the overall success of hazard mitigation planning. The following sections outline how this plan will be implemented and updated. There are three main components for implementation of the Plan. These components are:

- IMPLEMENT the action plan recommendations of this plan;
- UTILIZE existing rules, regulations, policies and procedures already in existence; and
- COMMUNICATE the hazard information collected and analyzed through this planning process so that the community better understands what can happen, where it can happen, and what they can do themselves to be better prepared. Also, publicize the "success stories" that are achieved through the Hazard Mitigation Committee's ongoing efforts.

One of the key activities is the continuation of the natural hazard planning committee. The Athens County Regional Planning Commission, the Athens County Emergency Management Agency, the City-County Health Department and the County 9-1-1 Office will work cooperatively and utilize assistance from institutions and organizations such as the Red Cross, Ohio University, Buckeye Hills Regional Development District, Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Program, ODOT, Hocking College, and the Wayne National Forest to implement the County mitigation plan.

Athens County adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 2010. Several components of the Comprehensive Plan support natural hazard mitigation planning. Athens County will implement the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan through existing programs by continuing to involve local government departments and leadership on the natural hazard mitigation planning committee. Many of the local government entities that influence mitigation efforts are identified as the responsible party for implementing activities listed in the Mitigation Action Plan Table.

Athens County has several planning and plan implementation mechanisms in place. An active Regional Planning Commission meets monthly and has active participation from the Health Department, the County Engineer, County Commissioners, economic development organizations, and incorporated jurisdictions. Specific examples of the County's role in planning include:

- The Regional Planning Commission employs a full time planner and administrative assistant.
- The Regional Planning Commission considers floodplain, drainage, and landslip issues when it reviews new development proposals.
- The Regional Planning Commission has made floodplain management a major priority for its staff.
- The County Auditor oversees an active geographic information system that provided the data for preparation of this mitigation plan.
- The County Engineer provides information and data concerning the County and Township road networks. The County Engineer regularly plans for and deals with natural hazard events and mitigation efforts.

Through the countywide planning process, this Mitigation Plan presents multi-faceted solutions to multi-faceted problems. Implementation will be accomplished by adhering to the schedules and priorities identified for each objective outlined in the Mitigation Action Table for the County. The Plan describes a wide range of possible methods and projects and provides general guidelines for assigning priorities. As solutions and more specific projects are identified, each must be subjected to an analysis of feasibility and cost effectiveness. This is a necessary condition for obtaining FEMA or other federal or state funding assistance. FEMA has a strict set of requirements for mitigation project funding:

- Projects must be technically feasible and ready to implement.
- Structural projects must include engineering studies with the project application so that FEMA can independently evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed project.
- All projects must be cost effective and substantially reduce the risk of future damage, hardship, loss, or suffering. All projects must have a benefit-cost ratio of 1.0 or greater in FEMA's Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA).
- All projects must be in conformance with the current natural hazard mitigation plan.
- All flood-related projects must be located in a community that is participating in and in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program.

Technical assistance on completing the analysis and submitting project grant applications is available from FEMA. These considerations must be included in the on-going project analysis that will take place as this Plan is implemented. Even without the FEMA project requirements, an evaluation of cost effectiveness and technical feasibility is necessary to assure the success of the project. However, a 1.0 or greater BCA result is not the only measure of the value of a project. Some projects such as public education campaigns or ordinance review and updates are difficult to quantify cost effectiveness, but are intuitively seen as valuable and viable mitigation alternatives. Some of these projects can be accomplished with existing staff and funding resources. Low or no-cost projects most easily demonstrate progress toward successful plan implementation. However, staffing resources in a small, rural county are quickly overtaxed so time management and choosing actions that yield the greatest effectiveness are important.

Another important implementation mechanism that is highly effective and low-cost is incorporation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan recommendations and their underlying principles into other County

and municipal plans and mechanisms. Mitigation is most successful when it is incorporated into the day-to-day functions and priorities of government and development. As stated previously, implementation through existing plans and/or programs is recommended, where possible. This point is re-emphasized here. The County and participating entities already have existing policies and programs to reduce losses to life and property from natural hazards. These are summarized in this Plan's capability assessment and in the jurisdictional annexes. This plan builds upon the momentum developed through previous and related planning efforts and mitigation programs and recommends implementing projects through these other program mechanisms. These existing mechanisms include:

- Athens County Comprehensive Plan
- Local Floodplain Ordinances
- Local Comprehensive Plans
- Stormwater Master Plans (City of Athens)
- Soil and Water Conservation Plans and Programs
- Budgets
- Capital Improvement Plans

Opportunities to link this updated Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan with the Comprehensive Plan should be explored. One possibility is to make this Plan an additional element to the nine comprehensive planning elements that currently include:

- Transportation;
- Environment and Natural Resources;
- Economic Development;
- Utilities and Infrastructure;
- Housing;
- Heritage, Arts, and Culture;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Community Facilities; and
- Land Use.

Implementation and incorporation into existing planning mechanisms will require both interdepartmental coordination and inter-governmental coordination. The purpose of interdepartmental coordination is to tap into the experience and expertise of professionals in multiple departments in order to avoid redundancy of effort and capitalize with on-going efforts. Through the planning process it became clear that multi-jurisdictional hazard problems, such as flooding, are pervasive throughout the County. Flooding, and most hazards, do not respect municipal boundaries and many of the most severe flooding problems are cross-boundary ones.

Coordination between jurisdictions will help Athens County avoid the site specific, individualized actions that are relatively unsuccessful. Additionally, by combining projects under the auspices of a single Plan, projects may be able to obtain funding without having to compete against other

jurisdictions within the County. Involving different levels of government also allows for the pooling of resources, thereby increasing the chance of project completion and success.

4.3 Maintenance and Plan Updates

An annual review of the mitigation action plan will consider the following:

1. A review of the goals, policies, and objectives to determine whether they remain an appropriate approach to the problems they are intended to address.
2. The progress of the program activities toward achieving the specific mitigation objectives.
3. The problems encountered in the implementation of the specific activities.
4. Evaluation and refinement of the specific activities based on the evaluation of the problems encountered.
5. Review of possible funding sources that could be applied to future efforts.
6. Review of the public input process to ensure that citizens' concerns are heard in the implementation and evaluation process.

It is the intent of Athens County to update the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan every five years. The subsequent 5-year Plan updates will be a joint effort between the Directors of the Emergency Management Agency and the Regional Planning Commission. The Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee and the responsible governing body will formally approve the updated Plan before it takes effect. This will be an ongoing process that includes the following:

1. Quarterly meetings of the Natural Hazard Plan Committee. More meetings or subcommittee meetings will be held as needed (this may be required in the first year in order to get the program off the ground). Progress on Plan implementation will be a regular agenda item at Plan Committee meetings.
2. Ensuring that the County EMA, Regional Planning Commission, and County 9-1-1 Office coordinate mitigation planning with villages and cities. A subcommittee of the Hazard Planning Committee will evaluate the Plan on an annual basis. Evaluation criteria will include:
 - How have activities in the Plan improved situations during and after hazard events?
 - Have there been improvements in communication between parties responsible for implementing the Plan?
 - What hazard mitigation programs have been started or improved as a result of Plan implementation?
 - Are the activities and tasks on schedule and, if not, what are the reasons?

3. An annual report to the County Commissioners by the natural hazard planning committee will keep the elected officials updated and be an opportunity to publicize the committee's work. The report will focus on accomplishments, the next year's work plan, and recommended changes to the Plan. This will serve as an opportunity for public participation as the meeting will be announced in the media. A written report will also be available and accompany the meeting presentation. Public participation will be enhanced with public notices of the quarterly meetings of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee. The Regional Planning Commission's website maintained by the Planning Commission's staff will provide notices of meetings, minutes, and other pertinent hazard planning information. Any public comments will be maintained in a database at the Regional Planning Commission's office and will be utilized when the Plan is updated.

4.3.1 National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Athens County recognizes the importance of the availability of flood insurance to citizens. The County will remain in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The County will continue to comply with the NFIP's standards for updating and adopting floodplain maps and maintaining the floodplain ordinance requirements. Proactive flood mitigation efforts already in effect support Athens County's continued compliance. The County will also continue to provide assistance to jurisdictions, as needed to assure continued local compliance with NFIP standards. There are several objectives identified in this plan that address specifics related to NFIP continued compliance.

Athens County began its floodplain modernization with ODNR in Fiscal Year 2007. This process began with a scoping meeting held on June 5, 2007 and culminated with revised maps becoming effective on December 18, 2009 when they were formally adopted by the County. The Athens County Regional Planning Commission administers the Floodplain Regulations currently in effect. Section 3.0 designates a Floodplain Administrator and duties of that Office to include updating regulations and enforcement of such regulations under Section 6.0. Additionally, the Floodplain Administrator routinely monitors flood hazard areas to enforce regulations and provide community assistance such as encouraging owners to maintain flood insurance policies.

Continued compliance with the NFIP will be maintained with the following strategy:

- The Athens County Regional Planning Commission will continue to be the permitting and enforcement entity for the County's (unincorporated areas) floodplain management program.
- County staff will attend continuing education seminars to stay up to date with floodplain management.
- Post-disaster substantial damage assessments will be performed in a timely and thorough fashion.
- An ongoing information and education program will keep citizens informed about the flood hazard and how to minimize it.
- For each of the incorporated villages the mayors, or designees, act as floodplain managers for their communities. This should be continued with additional assistance

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Acre-foot

An amount of water one acre in extent and one foot deep or approximately 326,000 gallons.

Asset

People, structures, facilities, and systems that have value to a community.

Blizzard

An extreme winter storm that has snowfall, high winds, and extreme cold. The high winds in blizzard conditions create poor visibility and dangerous driving conditions.

Climate Change

A non-random change in climate that is measured over several decades or longer. The change may be due to natural or human-induced causes.

Dam Failure

Any condition resulting in the uncontrolled release of water other than over or through a spillway or outlet works.

Downburst or Straight-line Wind

Downbursts are defined as strong winds produced by a downdraft over a horizontal area up to 6 miles (10 kilometers).

Drought

A deficiency of precipitation over an extended period of time, resulting in a water shortage for some activity, group, or environmental sector.

Earthquake

An earthquake is the shaking of the surface of the Earth, resulting from the sudden release of energy in the Earth's lithosphere that creates seismic waves.

Extreme Heat

Temperatures that hover 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature for the region, last for prolonged periods of time, and are often accompanied by high humidity that the body cannot tolerate.

Flash Flood

A flood that begins within 6 hours, and often within 3 hours, of the heavy rainfall (or other cause).

Flood

A flood is a natural occurrence when streams or lakes overflow their banks and spill onto the adjoining land area, which is called a floodplain.

Invasive Species

Any living organism, whether amphibian, plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an organism's seeds or eggs, that is not native to an ecosystem and causes harm.

Land Subsidence

The settling of the Earth's surface due to the loss of underground geologic support.

Landslide

The downward and outward movement of soil and rock material on slopes usually caused by moisture from rain or snow melt which acts as a lubricant.

Mitigation

Sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from hazards.

Probable Maximum Flood

Flood that may be expected from the most severe combination of critical meteorological and hydrologic conditions that is reasonably possible in the drainage basin.

Resilient

The characteristic of an individual or society to recover after a disaster strike.

Tornado

A narrow, violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground.

Vulnerability

Characteristics of community assets that make them susceptible to damage from a given hazards.

Wildfire

An uncontrolled fire that burns an area of combustible vegetation and typically occurs in rural areas.

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