

Section 2. Introduction and Purpose of the LMS

2.1 Introduction

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000), signed into law by the President of the United States on October 30, 2000 (P.L. 106-390), provides the authority for the subsequent Federal Emergency Agency (FEMA) policy in preparing the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS). In turn, the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has provided local governments the guidance necessary to prepare hazard mitigation strategies tailored to their unique local situations. Accordingly, Bay County has prepared this updated LMS document proposing mitigation initiatives to protect critical facilities and resources. It is also the intent of this LMS plan to help reduce the increasing costs of disasters, to individual property owners, as well as local, state and federal governments.

The LMS is considered a guiding or planning document. It has no regulatory authority, but clearly identifies a strategy to mitigate our community from future natural disasters. This requirement is a voluntary requirement whereby communities must create/update their LMS documents and processes to continue to remain eligible for various pre- and post-disaster grant program-funding opportunities. If a community chooses not to participate, they will not be eligible to receive any funds from the nationally competitive grant program. FEMA has created very detailed list of criteria that directs how this LMS planning/guiding document will be created and maintained, as well as a specific list of all required data and analysis. In 2009, Bay County and the municipalities have reaffirmed the desire remain eligible for various disaster grant programs by its commitment to the LMS update process.

The Bay County Mitigation 20/20® *Task Force* was originally established in 2003 to further mitigation goals and to create measures that would make the population, neighborhoods, businesses and institutions of the community more resistant to the impacts of future disasters. This group performed a comprehensive, detailed evaluation of the vulnerabilities of Bay County to all types of future natural hazards in order to identify ways to make the communities in our planning area more resistant to the impacts of these natural disasters. In 2004, the Task Force completed their work and submitted the Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy Plan to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. It has been the directive of the Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) team to continue the effort of the original task force by holding regular meetings, assessing threats, and processing mitigation measures. In 2009, the LMS Team began the work of updating and modernizing the original plan. This document reports the results of that planning process for the current planning period.

It is the mission of the Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy team to continue to examine the causes of vulnerabilities to past, present and future natural disasters and hazards and plan mitigation programs that will alleviate the sources of those vulnerabilities in order to establish a disaster resistant community. The LMS is a comprehensive multi-jurisdictional plan addressing the relevant hazards of the seven incorporated jurisdictions and the 10 Bay County unincorporated fire districts. For each incorporated jurisdiction and unincorporated fire district the risk assessment will map and quantify in detail the potential impacts from flood damage which is the greatest hazard risk to the County, and in more generalized terms potential damage from storm winds and wildfires. Bay County and the municipalities have more information and data on flooding issues, and consequently, have provided more detail for that hazard. Winds have been categorized as a high risk to all regions of the County, and wildfires, as a moderate risk,

primarily to the unincorporated areas. There is less historical data available on these hazards; therefore, less detail is provided on their potential impacts. The LMS Team has also examined two with low probability, sinkholes and tsunamis, but will not conduct a full analysis.

2.2 Goals and Objectives of the LMS

The initial goals and the underlying planning process of the Task Force, as stated in the original LMS plan and reconfirmed by the current Team, are intended to serve as general guidance that defines the long-term direction of the planning. The Team has defined a “broad” set of goals in section 2.3 and more specific goals and objectives under section 2.4. Each “specific” goal statement has one or more objectives that provide a more specific framework for actions to be taken or monitored by the LMS Team and its participants. The objectives define actions or results that can be placed into measurable terms by the LMS Team, and translated into specific assignments by the participants.

2.3 Broad Scope Goals the Local Mitigation Planning Process:

a. Identify critical facilities and resources vulnerable to various hazards, and propose appropriate action to minimize their damage or impairment.

The original 20/20® *Task Force*, used specially designed 20/20® *software program*, to implement a step-wise application of planning concepts to identify vulnerabilities to future disasters and to propose the mitigation initiatives necessary to avoid or minimize those vulnerabilities. The key purpose of the 20/20® *Task Force* was to document this process and to present its results to the community. The community approved this process and the goals of the task force through a series of public meetings held in 2004. The current Local Mitigation Strategy Team endorses the methodology used by the 20/20® *Task Force*, and believes that the procedures and findings of that task force are still valid. It is the intention of the current LMS team to update and to build upon those original findings.

To achieve this purpose the first priority for the LMS team was to understand the hazards the county might experience. In Section 4, *Summary of Countywide Hazards and Vulnerabilities*, the specific hazards that Bay County is susceptible to are examined and the potential risks of each hazard are identified and explained.

b. Enhance Public Awareness and Understanding:

The Local Mitigation Strategy Team is interested in finding ways to make the community more aware of the natural hazards that threaten the public health and safety, the economic vitality of businesses, and the operational capability of important facilities and institutions. The Plan identifies the hazards threatening Bay County and provides an assessment of the relative level of risk they pose. It also details the specific vulnerabilities of the neighborhoods of Bay County and many of the facilities that are important to the community's daily life.

Through the Emergency Operations Center, the LMS and CRS teams continues to provide public information programs that educate the general public on ways to minimize the impacts of disasters. Public outreach programs coordinated by the Community Rating System (CRS) Team have engaged the community in the local mitigation planning process, shaped the goals, priorities, and content of the plan, and provide information and education to the public regarding ways to be more protected from the impacts of future disasters. The Bay County CRS team is comprised of members from several departments within the County. These departments include

staff from Stormwater Engineering, Builder Services, Information Technology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the University of Florida Extension Office and Planning and Zoning. In order to implement several of the CRS programs, members of the community serve as volunteers. The LMS and CRS teams have been, and will continue to be, active in communicating with the public and attempting to involve interested members of the community in the planning process. All meeting will be advertised and public comments solicited.

This plan also highlights the elements of the Bay County and Municipal Comprehensive Plans that use land development regulations to minimize vulnerabilities to the identified hazards. This information will be very helpful to individuals that wish to understand how departments other than Emergency Management have a significant role in making the community safer from the impacts of future disasters.

The LMS Team will continue to advertise in the local *News Herald* to invite members of the public to participate in the future meeting as well as updates of the LMS plan itself. In addition, the public will be invited to continue to participate as volunteers in various outreach projects that are coordinated through the CRS program. Public participation will continued to be encouraged, and all CRS team meetings are advertised, and will continue to be advertised (all records and meeting advertisements are contained Appendix 2). Draft LMS copies are available at the EOC, Public Library and the Bay County Planning and Zoning Department.

c. Create a Decision Tool for Management:

The Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy provides information needed by the managers and leaders of local government, business, and community associations, as well as other key institutions to take actions to address vulnerabilities to future disasters. It also provides proposals for specific projects and programs that are needed to eliminate or minimize those vulnerabilities.

These proposals, called "mitigation initiatives" in the plan, have been prioritized for implementation using objective criteria presented by the proposing jurisdiction. This approach is intended to provide a decision tool for the management of participating organizations and agencies regarding why the proposed mitigation initiatives should be implemented, which should be implemented first, and the economic and public welfare benefits of doing so.

d. Promote Compliance with State and Federal Program Requirements:

There are a number of state and federal grant programs, policies, and regulations that encourage local government to develop and maintain a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan. This plan is assists participating local governments in complying with these requirements, and enables them to more quickly respond to state and federal funding opportunities for mitigation-related projects. Since the plan defines, justifies and prioritizes mitigation initiatives that have been formulated through a hazard analysis and vulnerability assessment process, the participating organizations are better prepared to develop the necessary grant application for state and federal funding.

e. Enhance Local Policies for Hazard Mitigation Capability:

A component of the hazard mitigation planning process conducted by the Bay County LMS team is the analysis of the existing policies that regulate growth and development, as well as the functioning of key facilities and systems. This process involves cataloging the current mitigation-related policies of local government to compare them against the hazards that threaten the jurisdiction and the relative risks these hazards pose to the community. This includes an analysis of the Comprehensive Plans, CRS programs and stormwater mitigation plans of the

County and municipalities to ensure that potential risks posed to the community by a specific hazard are adequately addressed in the community's policy or regulatory framework, thus minimizing potential impacts of future disasters. Therefore, the planning process utilized by the LMS team supports evaluation of the adequacy of the community's policies and programs in light of the level of risk posed by specific hazards.

The Emergency Management Division is a member of the Planning and Zoning Department's Internal Review Team. In this capacity the Emergency Management Division reviews all Development Orders and has the capacity to recommend procedures and practices for each subdivision and commercial development that will ensure the lowest vulnerability and susceptibility to risk.

f. Assure Inter-Jurisdictional Coordination of Mitigation-Related Programming:

A key purpose of the planning process utilized by the Bay County LMS Team is to ensure that proposals for mitigation initiatives are reviewed and coordinated among the participating jurisdictions. In this way, there is a high level of confidence that mitigation initiatives proposed by one jurisdiction or participating organization, when implemented, will be compatible with the interests of adjacent jurisdictions and unlikely to duplicate or interfere with mitigation initiatives proposed by others. The operating procedures of the LMS team, given in this plan, document the details of the planning process utilized and mandate that all proposed mitigation initiatives will be coordinated among all of the participants prior to their approval for incorporation into the plan. In addition, all projects are reviewed and evaluated to ensure that each is cost-effective.

g. Create Jurisdiction-Specific Hazard Mitigation Plans for Implementation:

A key purpose of the Bay County Hazard Mitigation Plan is to provide each participating local jurisdiction with a specific plan of action that can be adopted and implemented pursuant to its own authorities and responsibilities. Therefore, Section 7 of this plan provides the Unincorporated County's specific mitigation plan, as well as individual local mitigation plans for each separate, participating jurisdiction.

The process for formal approval of this plan by Resolution will occur upon approval from FEMA. The mitigation plan is detailed herein, and a draft copy of the resolutions for adoption by each participating jurisdiction is provided in Section 7. This plan is also the mechanism by which all of the agencies, organizations and groups within each jurisdiction can incorporate their own technical analyses and proposed mitigation initiatives. In this way, the format of the plan and the operational concept of the planning process ensure that proposed mitigation initiatives are coordinated and prioritized effectively among jurisdictions.

h. Provide a Flexible Approach to the Mitigation Planning Process:

The planning process used by the LMS Team is very flexible in meeting the analysis and documentation needs of the planning participants. The planning process provides for the creation of this document, as well as the preparation of numerous other reports regarding the technical analyses undertaken.

2.4 Specific Goals and Objectives for the Local Mitigation Planning Process:

The goal of the Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy is to reduce or avoid the detrimental effects of the hazards addressed in the risk assessment. This risk assessment has been updated from the previous 2004/2005 LMS and meets the requirement to re-evaluate the probability and

extent of all natural hazards that are considered threats to Bay County and its constituent areas and populations. The most hazardous natural events include flooding, high winds, and wildfire. The list of hazards for the updated LMS has been considerably reduced in order to focus exclusively on the hazards to which Bay County is significantly susceptible and vulnerable. For the purposes of this updated LMS, Bay County is considered significantly susceptible or vulnerable to a given hazard if the hazard is historically known to occur in this region and has resulted in physical damage for which impacts to structures and land can be mitigated through construction projects, building codes, engineering strategies, public works, or land use planning.

Goals for this 2009/2010 LMS have been developed according to the risk/vulnerability assessment findings. The methods used to complete the risk assessment involved data derived from Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping of Bay County hazard areas relative to its populations, urban structures, critical facilities, and economic assets (data runs obtained from the Bay County Property Appraiser's Office). By collecting the most current land use planning, permitting, and property appraisal data available, the GIS analysis serves as the basis for estimating the vulnerabilities and potential losses that may result in each of the identified hazard events.

To effectively identify, calculate and analyze the risks:

a. Local government will develop, implement and maintain effective mitigation programs.

- Data and information needed for defining hazards, risk areas and vulnerabilities in the community will be obtained.
- The capability to effectively utilize available data and information related to mitigation planning and program development will be available, and necessary training provided.
- The effectiveness of mitigation initiatives implemented in the community will be measured and documented by the Vice-chair and other Team members.

b. Each jurisdiction will initiate and sustain emergency response operations during and after a disaster.

- Designated evacuation shelters will be retrofitted or relocated to ensure their operability during and after disaster events.
- Emergency services organizations will detect emergency situations and promptly initiate emergency response operations.
- Local emergency services facilities will be retrofitted or relocated to withstand the structural impacts of disasters.
- Response capabilities will be established and maintained to protect visitors, special needs individuals, and the homeless from a disaster's health and safety impacts.

c. The continuity of local government operations will not be significantly disrupted by disasters.

- Plans will be maintained, and resources identified, to facilitate reestablishing local government operations after a disaster.
- Redundant equipment, facilities, and/or supplies will be obtained to facilitate reestablishing local government operations after a disaster.

d. The policies and regulations of local government will support effective hazard mitigation programming throughout the community.

- Local government will ensure that hazard mitigation needs and programs are given appropriate emphasis in resource allocation and decision-making.
- Local governments will establish and enforce building and land development codes that are effective in addressing the hazards threatening the community.
- Local jurisdictions will participate fully in the National Flood Insurance Program and the associated Community Rating System.

e. All members of the community will understand the hazards threatening local areas and the techniques to minimize vulnerability to those hazards.

- The LMS, CRS and other public organizations will continue education and outreach programs and assess the relevance and effectiveness of those programs on an annual basis.

In short, it is the goal and purpose of the Bay County Local Mitigation Strategy to identify and assess the risks that the structures and citizens within the county are the most vulnerable to, and to plan mitigation measures that minimize or eliminate those risks.

The following sections of the Bay County Local Mitigation Plan present the detailed information to support these purposes and describe the planning, organization and process for creating this plan, as well as the procedures used to manage the planning process. The plan provides a description of the mitigation-related characteristics of each participating jurisdiction, such as its land uses and population growth trends, the mitigation-related policies already in-place, and summarizes the results of the hazard identification and vulnerability assessment process, and addresses the adequacy of the current policy basis for hazard management by the participating jurisdictions and organizations. The plan further addresses the mitigation goals and objectives established by the LMS Team and the actions to be taken to maintain, expand and refine the Bay County LMS. Finally, the past and planned efforts of the LMS Team to engage the entire community in the mitigation planning process are documented.