

# SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

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## Background

In 2004 and 2005, the Piedmont Planning District Commission – now known as the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) assisted in the development of a regional Hazard Mitigation Plan that identified strategies to mitigate (lessen/reduce) the effects of disasters on the community. The Plan is required under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000). Localities must be covered under a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved Plan to be eligible for certain types of FEMA funding. As per FEMA requirements, the Plan must be updated every five (5) years for covered localities to remain in compliance with federal regulations.

The original Plan covered the Counties of Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Prince Edward plus the incorporated Towns within those counties. This first Plan update, completed in 2012, covered the entirety of Planning District 14 – all of the jurisdictions mentioned above, plus Amelia County – which was previously covered under its own Plan. As part of the 2012 update, Amelia County’s Plan was incorporated into the Regional Plan.

For this update, every locality in PD 14 except for Cumberland County participated. See Section 2 for more information on the Plan update process.

Hazards, such as floods, tornadoes and severe winter storms, are a part of the world around us. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little we can do to control their force and intensity. The communities in Planning District 14 are vulnerable to a wide range of hazards. They include flooding, winter storms, tornadoes and even earthquakes. These hazards threaten the safety of residents and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property, disrupt the local economy and impact the overall quality of life of individuals who live, work and play in the region.



### **Hazard Mitigation**

Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards.

While we cannot prevent hazards, we can take steps to lessen their potential impact on the community and its citizens. The effective reduction of a hazard’s impact can decrease the likelihood that such events will result in a disaster. The concept and practice of reducing risks to people and property from known hazards is generally referred to as *hazard mitigation*.

This Hazard Mitigation Plan establishes the broad community vision and guiding principles for addressing hazard risk, including the development of specific mitigation actions designed to eliminate or reduce identified vulnerabilities. This Plan will be a first step toward incorporating hazard mitigation principles and practices into the routine government activities and functions of the Counties and Towns within the covered jurisdictions. By making communities less vulnerable to the impacts of natural hazards, they become safer and therefore more livable.

Hazard mitigation techniques include both structural measures, such as strengthening or protecting buildings and infrastructure from the destructive forces of potential hazards,

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and non-structural measures, such as the adoption of sound land use policies or the creation of public awareness programs. Some of the most effective mitigation measures are implemented at the local government level where decisions on the regulation and control of development are made. A comprehensive mitigation strategy addresses hazard vulnerabilities that exist today and in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is essential that projected patterns of development are evaluated and considered in terms of how that growth will increase or decrease a community's overall hazard vulnerability. Land use is a particularly important theme to the localities in Planning District 14, where many rural communities are facing increasing growth rates. Now is the time to effectively guide development away from identified hazard areas and environmentally sensitive locations, before unsound development patterns emerge and people and property are placed in harm's way.

## **Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000**

In an effort to reduce the Nation's mounting natural disaster losses, the United States Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000). The Act requires that state and local governments develop and adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to be eligible for federal mitigation grant funding. These funds include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, and the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program. These are all administered by FEMA under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It is important to note that this Plan will identify a broad array of funding sources beyond those listed above. In fact, this Plan will draw on dozens of available federal, state and non-profit funding sources. Potentially eligible funding sources will be linked to each action, thereby facilitating its implementation.

This Plan was updated in coordination with FEMA Region III and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to ensure that the Plan meets all applicable DMA 2000 and state requirements. A Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk, found in Appendix J, provides a summary of federal and state minimum standards and notes the location where each requirement is met within the Plan.

## **Linking Hazard Mitigation and Sustainability**

This Plan will be guided by three broad principles – *sustainability*, *safe growth* and *mitigation actions* based on the findings of the risk and capability assessments. Sustainability, simply put, is taking action today that allows for future generations to live in a community that is of the same quality or better than that experienced by the current population. Sustainability is a framework that is intended to guide the actions taken by elected officials, citizens and the business leaders to make the region a place where people can enjoy a sound economy, safe communities, a healthy environment and plentiful recreational opportunities.

The adoption of hazard mitigation practices is viewed as complimentary to these aims. Broadly speaking, by making communities less vulnerable to natural hazards, they become better places to live. For example, a specific action may include the relocation of flood-prone properties outside the floodplain. In turn, the land is allowed to revert back to its natural state or may become part of a park or greenway. By taking this action, several goals can be achieved:

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- a reduction in the number of structures located in harm's way;
- the elimination of search and rescue activities in that area following a flood;
- the creation of additional parkland that may include bike trails or canoe access points;
- the conversion of the floodplain back to its natural function; and
- a reduction in non-point source pollution.

Considerations of land use and safe growth practices are two other key elements of this Plan. The concept of safe growth will be used to describe this process. Safe growth is the practice of reviewing all future land use decisions using the following questions: Will this use increase hazard vulnerability? If so, how could this practice be modified in such a way that a given activity accounts for identified hazards? Specific safe growth techniques may include, but are not limited to: cluster development, setback requirements, identification and mapping of hazard zones and environmentally sensitive zones (GIS), and smart growth activities.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Hazard Mitigation Plan is to:

- protect life, safety and property by reducing the potential for future damages and economic losses that result from natural and human-caused hazards;
- make communities safer places to live, work and play;
- qualify for grant funding in both the pre-disaster and post-disaster environment;
- speed recovery and redevelopment following future disaster events;
- demonstrate a firm local commitment to hazard mitigation principles; and
- comply with state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.

## Scope

The greater focus of this Plan will be on those hazards determined to be “high and moderate risk” as determined from a hazard risk assessment conducted in the six-county area (see Section 6 for more information). This enables those counties and towns participating in the Plan to prioritize mitigation actions based on a greater understanding of hazard risk and vulnerability.

It should be noted that this Plan will focus on natural hazards, including those listed on Page 1 of this section. Man-made hazards – such as biohazards, hazardous material spills, and others – will be covered briefly in this update to the extent that they are acknowledged. However, they will not be discussed in any depth due to the difficulties in obtaining data to measure their impact on the region.

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The geographic scope (planning area) for this Plan includes the following six (6) counties and eleven (11) towns:

**Counties:** Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward

**Towns:** Blackstone, Burkeville, Charlotte Court House, Crewe, Dillwyn, Drakes Branch, Farmville, Kenbridge, Keysville, Phenix, Victoria

## Authority

The Plan, developed in accordance with current state and federal rules and regulations governing local hazard mitigation plans, has been adopted by the six counties and 11 participating towns in accordance with the authority and police powers granted to counties and municipalities under §15.2-2223 through §15.2-2231 of the Virginia State Code. The Plan shall be routinely monitored and revised to maintain compliance with the following provisions, rules and legislation:

- Section 322, Mitigation Planning, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as enacted by Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-390); and
- FEMA's Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201