

SECTION 2 – PLANNING PROCESS

This section describes the *Planning Process* undertaken by the jurisdictions participating in the regional hazard mitigation planning effort. Specific topics include:

- Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning
- Introduction of the Planning Team
- Explanation of How the Original Plan Was Prepared
- Explanation of the Update Process
- Multi-jurisdictional and Public Participation in the Plan Update

This section will briefly discuss how the original Plan was prepared, and go over the process for the Plan update.

Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning

Hazard mitigation planning is the process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks, and determining how to minimize or manage those risks. Mitigation planning can be described as the means to break the repetitive cycle of disaster loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation is that pre-disaster investments will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery and reconstruction. The primary objective of the planning process is the identification of specific mitigation actions, which when viewed as a whole, represents a comprehensive strategy to reduce the impact of hazards. Responsibility for each mitigation action is assigned to a specific individual, department or agency along with a schedule for its implementation. *Plan Maintenance Procedures* (located in Section 9 of this Plan) are established to monitor progress, including the regular evaluation and enhancement of the Plan. The maintenance procedures ensure that the Plan remains a dynamic and functional document over time.

Mitigation planning offers many benefits, including:

- saving lives and property;
- saving money;
- speeding recovery following disasters;
- reducing future vulnerability through wise development and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction;
- expediting the receipt of pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding; and
- demonstrating a firm commitment to improving community health and safety.

The Planning Team

For the original Plan, the Piedmont Planning Commission – now known as the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) – worked with the consulting firm PBS&J and a Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee which consisted of participating counties and municipalities, as well as state agency officials, non-profit, community and faith-based organizations. The original planning effort included the Counties of Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward, and the Town of Farmville. The Towns of Blackstone, Burkeville, Charlotte Court House, Crewe, Dillwyn, Drakes Branch, Kenbridge, Keysville, Phenix and Victoria also participated, and were represented on the Planning Committee by their respective counties. Additional members of the planning committee included: Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Region III, Area Town and County Administrators, Emergency Management Coordinators, Police, Fire and Rescue Departments, State Police,

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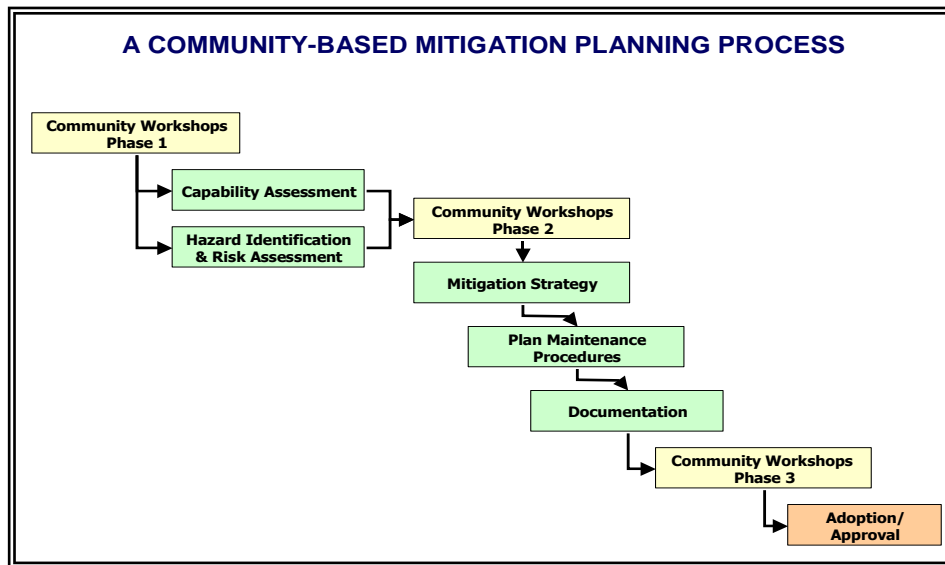
Planning and Zoning Officials, Engineering and Public Works Departments, Virginia Department of Transportation, School Superintendents, Colleges (Hampden-Sydney College and Longwood University), Community Colleges, Professional Associations, Area Chambers of Commerce, Department of Forestry, American Red Cross Chapters, and Community and Faith-Based Organizations. All academic institutions in the region were invited to participate in the development of this Plan as well.

Preparing the Original Plan

The planning process followed a widely recognized approach that meets the requirements of FEMA and VDEM. A Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk, found in the Appendix, provides a summary of federal and state standards of acceptability and notes where each requirement is met within the Plan.

The planning process included nine (9) major steps that were completed over the course of 10 months. These steps are displayed in Figure 2.1 and discussed below. First, the primary components of the Plan will be discussed, followed by a description of the three community workshops.

Figure 2.1
A Community-Based Mitigation Planning Process



The following sections were developed for the original Plan, and updated/revised for the Plan update:

- The *Community Profile*, located in Section 3, describes the makeup of participating counties and towns, including prevalent geographic, demographic and economic characteristics. In addition, building characteristics and land use patterns are discussed. This information was revised for the Plan update, including updated population and economic figures and new mapping to illustrate where the region is located.
- The *Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment*, found in Sections 4, 5 and 6, describes and analyzes the natural hazards that affect the region.

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This analysis was revised with updated historical data on past hazard occurrences, and updated hazard profiles and a hazard risk rankings based on hazard frequency, magnitude and impact. The findings of the *Risk Assessment* enable communities to focus their efforts on those structures or planning areas facing the greatest risk.

- The *Capability Assessment*, found in Section 7, provides a comprehensive examination of participating jurisdictions' capacity to implement meaningful mitigation actions and identifies existing opportunities for program enhancement. Capabilities addressed in this section include staff and organizational capability, technical capability, policy and program capability, fiscal capability, legal authority and political willpower. Information used in the original Plan was obtained through the use of detailed questionnaires and the analysis of existing plans, ordinances and relevant documents. For the update, information was obtained by surveying participating localities and asking for updates to this information. The purpose of this assessment is to identify any existing gaps, weaknesses or conflicts in programs or activities that may hinder mitigation efforts, or to identify those activities that can further the overall mitigation strategy.

The *Community Profile*, *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment* are considered background studies and form the basis for developing, adopting and implementing the *Mitigation Strategy* found in Section 8. The *Mitigation Strategy* is intended to be both strategic (based on long-term goals) and functional (tied to short-term actions). In order to ensure that the *Mitigation Strategy* is effectively implemented over time, *Plan Maintenance Procedures* have been established and are found in Section 9. Both of those sections were updated and revised as part of this Plan update.

More details of how the Plan was updated are found in each section.

The creation of the original Plan involved a series of meetings and workshops, designed to collect data, inform counties and local governments of the *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment* findings, develop mitigation actions, and involve the public. These meetings and workshops prompted continuous input and feedback from Piedmont PDC staff, local officials and concerned citizens throughout the planning process. The meetings and community workshops held were as follows:

- Start-up meeting on March 9, 2004 – This meeting was intended to inform potential stakeholders of the process that would be involved in developing the original Plan. More than 160 potential stakeholders were invited to this meeting. Officials from VDEM were also present to answer any questions. The meeting was held at the Farmville Train Station in Farmville, Virginia.
- Initial Project Kick-off Meeting on May 19, 2004 – this meeting was intended to introduce the selected consultant, PBS&J, to the Mitigation Planning Committee and regional stakeholders, and go over the planning process. This meeting was held in the Conference Room at the USDA Service Center in Farmville.

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- Mitigation Strategy Workshop, held on July 28, 2004 – At this meeting, held at the Farmville Train Station, the consultant presented preliminary findings of the *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment*, and attendees worked with the consultant to begin work on specific mitigation actions designed to reduce future impacts.
- Public meetings/presentations – Piedmont PDC staff made public presentations at various meetings, to give an overview of the planning process and solicit input. Some of those are:
 - Lunenburg Chamber of Commerce
 - President of Southside Community Hospital
 - Piedmont Planning District Commission Board
 - Drakes Branch Town Council
 - Crewe-Burkeville Chamber of Commerce
 - Buckingham Chamber of Commerce
 - Blackstone Chamber of Commerce

There were also two public informational meetings held for citizens to gather information and solicit feedback: July 27, 2004, at Southside Virginia Community College in Keysville, Virginia; and July 28, 2004, at the USDA Service Center in Farmville.

Once the final draft of the Plan was completed, Piedmont PDC staff made the Plan available at local libraries across the region. Notice was also sent out to four of the neighboring Planning District Commissions asking for review comments on the Plan. Comments were received from the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission. The comments received were then incorporated into the Plan.

Updating the Plan

The update of this Plan was started in December 2009. CRC staff undertook the update of this Plan, with help from VDEM and a Project Management Team. That team consisted of the following members:

- Amelia County – Kent Emerson, Emergency Services Coordinator
- Buckingham County – Kevin Flippen, E-911 Coordinator
- Charlotte County – R.B. Clark, County Administrator; Monica Elder, Planning/Tourism Department
- Cumberland County – Lee Leeds, Building Official
- Lunenburg County – Wayne Hoover, Victoria Fire and Rescue (VFR); Rodney Newton, VFR
- Nottoway County – Steve Ferguson, County Planner
- Prince Edward County – Jonathan Pickett, Assistant County Administrator; Alecia Daves-Johnson, County Planner
- Farmville – Cindy Morris, Town Planner

Due to their size and limited resources (financial and personnel), other Towns in the region requested to be represented by their respective County at Project Management Team meetings.

To save time, most of the correspondence with the Project Management Team was done by phone or e-mail. Meetings were held on the Plan update on the following dates:

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- April 4, 2010 – Project kick-off meeting
- August 13, 2010 – HIRA Workshop
- November 8, 2010 – HIRA Workshop
- January 10, 2011 – HIRA/Mitigation Strategy Workshop
- June 2, 2011 – Public Input Session (held concurrent with the Council's monthly meeting)

The public and regional stakeholders were invited to all of these meetings. Minutes from these meetings can be found in the Appendix.

For this Plan update, the CRC reviewed information including (but not limited to) local Comprehensive Plans (including land use plans), building permit data, local data on existing plans, ordinances and staff capability, FEMA flood zone data/maps, data from numerous state and federal sources (see end of Sections 5 and 6) the State of Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan.

It should be noted that FEMA has a new requirement effective for plans approved after October 1, 2008: Each locality covered under the Plan must have a mitigation action related to participation in and continued compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program. This could be as simple as restricting development in flood areas or mapping flood areas.

Multi-Jurisdictional and Public Participation

The updated Plan covers all seven Counties and 14 incorporated Towns located wholly within Planning District 14 (Pamplin City was not included, since part of that Town is in Appomattox County – which is not part of this Planning District). Amelia County was not part of the original Plan, but did take part in the updated Plan.

To satisfy multi-jurisdictional participation requirements, each county and local jurisdiction was required to perform the following tasks:

- Review and update the data in the Plan (regional profile, hazard history, risk assessment, etc.);
- Review and update their respective *Capability Assessment*;
- Review and update their respective mitigation actions;
- Review the draft of the updated Plan, and provide feedback to the CRC;
- and
- Consider and adopt the revised Plan.

The municipalities adopted the Plan separately, so as to adopt the components that apply to them.

An important component of this planning process involved public participation. Individual citizen and community-based input provided the entire planning team with a greater understanding of local concerns and increased the likelihood of successfully implementing mitigation actions by developing community “buy-in” from those directly affected by the decisions of public officials. As citizens become more involved in decisions that affect their safety, they are more likely to gain a greater appreciation of the natural hazards present in their community and take the steps necessary to reduce their impact. Public awareness is a key component of an overall mitigation strategy

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aimed at making a home, neighborhood, school, business or city safer from the potential effects of natural and human-caused hazards. Public input was sought using the following methods:

- The public was invited to the Workshops;
- The public input session;
- Web site access for the draft Plan (CRC and local governments); and
- Public library posting of the draft Plan.

In addition, the following Planning District Commissions were contacted directly by the CRC and given a chance to review and comment on the Plan during the Summer of 2011:

- Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (PDC 10)
- Region 2000 Local Government Council (PDC 11)
- West Piedmont Planning District Commission (PDC 12)
- Southside Planning District Commission (PDC 13)
- Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (PDC 15)
- Crater Planning District Commission (PDC 19)

The following local colleges and universities, and local groups, were also contacted directly and given the chance to review and comment on the Plan during the Summer of 2011:

- Longwood University
- Hampden-Sydney College
- Southside Virginia Community College
- Centra Southside Community Hospital
- Old Dominion Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District
- Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District
- Southside Soil and Water Conservation District
- Southside Electric Cooperative
- Central Virginia Electric Cooperative
- Dillwyn Correctional Center
- Virginia Department of Corrections (on behalf of Buckingham Correctional Center, Lunenburg Correctional Center, and Nottoway Correctional Center)
- Piedmont Geriatric Hospital

For the Plan update, information was reviewed and revised as necessary. In addition, each locality and participating stakeholder reviewed their respective mitigation strategies and made updates where needed. The sections that follow give more detail on how each section was updated.