

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

In the United States, 7 of the 10 most costly disasters in history, based on dollar losses, occurred between 1989 and 1994: Hurricane Andrew (1992), Oakland wildfire (1991), a winter storm (1993), Hurricane Iniki (1992), Loma Prieta earthquake (1989), Midwest floods (1993), and Northridge earthquake (1994) (Mileti, 1999). In the year 2000, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) recognition of the growing costs of responding to and recovering from disasters materialized in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K). DMA2K created a new Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program aimed at reducing the cost of disasters as well as risk through comprehensive planning before disasters occur. DMA2K requires that all communities, tribes, and states have a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan consistent with the DMA2K requirements in place to retain eligibility for PDM project funds and post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds.

Florida is one of the most hazard prone states in the nation. The state is susceptible to a number of hazards including flooding, hurricanes, tornados, severe thunderstorms, and wildland fires, to name a few. In Florida, the goals of the new PDM program are being achieved through the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) process. LMS is a pre-disaster mitigation planning initiative of the Florida Department of Community Affairs (FDCA) Division of Emergency Management, and is intended to reduce the disrupting effects of natural disasters on the economic and social fabric of the community. Pre-disaster mitigation is defined as "sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects" as part of the FEMA's National Mitigation Strategy (FEMA, 1995).

This definition generally distinguishes between actions that have a long-term impact from those that are more closely associated with preparedness for, immediate response to, and short-term recovery from a specific hazard event. The intent of the LMS is to focus on practices that have cumulative benefits over time and to ensure that fewer of the state's citizens and communities are victims of disasters. One of the most important elements is the idea that the resulting mitigation practices are instituted prior to the disaster occurring.

Mitigation practices can be applied to strengthen homes so that people and their belongings are better protected from hurricanes, tropical storms, and inland floods. Pre-disaster mitigation planning can be used to identify and protect at-risk critical facilities, such as hospitals and fire stations, so they can remain operational or reopen quicker after a hazard event. Mitigation planning allows communities to consider the vulnerability of land that is currently undeveloped but may be developed in the future, as well as the risk to people and property on existing developed land. The consideration of the potential for damage to properties in vulnerable areas and implementation of actions to reduce the impact can go a long way towards eliminating the disruption a disaster occurrence creates in the community.

The purpose of the St. Lucie County LMS is to develop a unified approach among County and municipal governments for dealing with identified hazards and hazard

management problems in the St. Lucie County area. This strategy will serve as a tool to direct the County and municipal governments in their ongoing efforts to reduce their vulnerabilities to impacts produced by both the natural and manmade hazards to which southeast Florida is exposed. The strategy also will help establish funding priorities for currently proposed mitigation projects and for such disaster assistance funds as may be made available for disaster mitigation activities.

This LMS is intended to represent the following jurisdictions:

- St. Lucie County
- City of Port St. Lucie
- City of Fort Pierce
- Village of St. Lucie

This plan will be adopted by each of these jurisdictions. Copies of the adopted resolutions can be found at the end of this section.

The St. Lucie County LMS hazard mitigation program has been funded by the FDCA with FEMA funds for the development of comprehensive mitigation planning.

The ultimate objectives of the LMS process are as follows:

- 1) Improve the total communities resistance to damage from known natural, technological, and societal hazards;
- 2) Place St. Lucie County in a position to compete more effectively for pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding;
- 3) Reduce the cost of disasters at all levels; and
- 4) Speed community recovery from disasters that do occur.

Adoption of this strategy will provide the following benefits to both County and municipal governmental entities:

- Compliance with Administrative Rules 9G-6 and 9G-7, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), requirements for local comprehensive emergency management plans to identify problem areas and planning deficiencies relative to severe and repetitive weather phenomenon, and to identify pre- and post-disaster strategies for rectifying identified problems;
- Compliance with FEMA's DMA2K and thus, eligibility for certain FEMA pre- and post-disaster funding programs;
- Credit from the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System Program for developing a Floodplain Management Program, which will help further reduce flood insurance premium rates for property owners;
- Access to FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program grants, which provides funding for pre-disaster mitigation projects and activities;
- Identification and prioritization of projects for funding under the State of Florida's Residential Construction Mitigation Program, to help reduce losses from properties subject to repetitive flooding damage; and
- Eligibility for local governmental funds from the Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance (EMPA) Competitive Grant Program.

1.2 PLANNING PROCESS

The St. Lucie County Community Development Department (CDD) was the lead agency in the development of the LMS. CDD contracted with Continental Shelf Associates, Inc. (CSA) to develop and facilitate the following planning process. CSA gathered all relevant background data, developed the content, and facilitated the meetings of the St. Lucie County LMS Steering Committee, and developed proposed strategies for risk reduction in the County.

The development of the DMA2K has placed greater emphasis on the process undertaken to develop a mitigation plan rather than the end product. In an effort to better define the planning process used to develop the St. Lucie County LMS, the following process description and diagram have been developed (**Figure 1.1**). This LMS document:

- CSA worked with CDD to establish and convene an LMS Steering Committee to oversee the LMS planning process (**Section 1.3**);
- CSA and CDD identified opportunities for individuals, jurisdictions, community organizations, and other interested stakeholders to become involved in the LMS planning process;
- The Steering Committee developed and revised guiding principles for St. Lucie County (as a single entity composed of both the County and municipal entities) to use to address the issue of hazard mitigation;
- CSA developed a community profile describing the County in terms of geography, population, infrastructure, economic resources, environmental resources, historic and cultural resources, critical facilities, and property and development trends (**Section 2.0, Community Profile**);
- CSA and the Steering Committee identified the known hazards to which the County is susceptible, discusses their ranges of impacts, as well as the individual vulnerabilities of the various jurisdictions and population centers within the County (**Section 4.0, Hazard Identification, Vulnerability Assessment, and Risk**); and
- CSA reviewed and evaluated the existing legal, regulatory, and response framework currently in place to deal with hazard mitigation (**Section 3.0, Institutional Analysis**); The following documents were reviewed as part of this capability assessment:
 - St. Lucie County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (Mandatory Elements: Future Land Use, Transportation, Infrastructure, Housing, Recreation and Open Space, Conservation, Coastal Management, Intergovernmental Coordination, and Capital Improvements);
 - St. Lucie County Land Development Code;
 - St. Lucie County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan;
 - St. Lucie County Board of Commissioners Annual Report, 2002;
 - St. Lucie County FMA and Community Rating System related plans;
 - St. Lucie County Flood Insurance Study (FEMA, 1991);
 - St. Lucie Village Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (Mandatory Elements: Future Land Use, Transportation, Intergovernmental Coordination, Infrastructure, Conservation, Housing, Recreation and Open Space, Coastal Management, and Capital Improvements);

Insert Figure 1.1

- Port St. Lucie Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (Mandatory Elements: Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Recreation and Open Space, Infrastructure, Intergovernmental Coordination, Conservation, Coastal Management, and Capital Improvements);
- Fort Pierce Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (Mandatory Elements: Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Recreation and Open Space, Infrastructure, Intergovernmental Coordination, Conservation, Coastal Management, and Capital Improvements);
- Treasure Coast Regional Strategic Policy Plan, Emergency Management Element; and
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Division of Water Facilities, Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems report entitled “Critical Erosion Areas in Florida.”
- Based on input from CDD and the Steering Committee, as well as the data, CSA developed an all-hazard mitigation strategy aimed at reducing the risks posed by natural hazards in St. Lucie County;
- CSA developed a detailed method by which St. Lucie County local governments can evaluate and prioritize proposed mitigation projects (**Section 6.0, Implementation Strategy**);
- A conflict resolution procedure by which city and County governmental entities can resolve any differences that arise over prioritized mitigation projects or mitigation strategies was developed during the planning process (**Section 6.0**);
- CSA developed a process and schedule by which this entire Unified LMS will be reviewed and updated, and develops guidelines for updating the Project Prioritization List (PPL) (**Section 6.0**); and
- CSA documented the PPL (**Section 6.0**) of mitigation projects cross-referenced with potential funding sources.

Various appendices are provided listing existing policies (**Appendix A**), mitigation projects (**Appendix B**), mitigation funding sources (**Appendix C**), hazard data information sources (**Appendix D**), documentation of LMS participation (**Appendix E**), and acronyms (**Appendix F**).

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

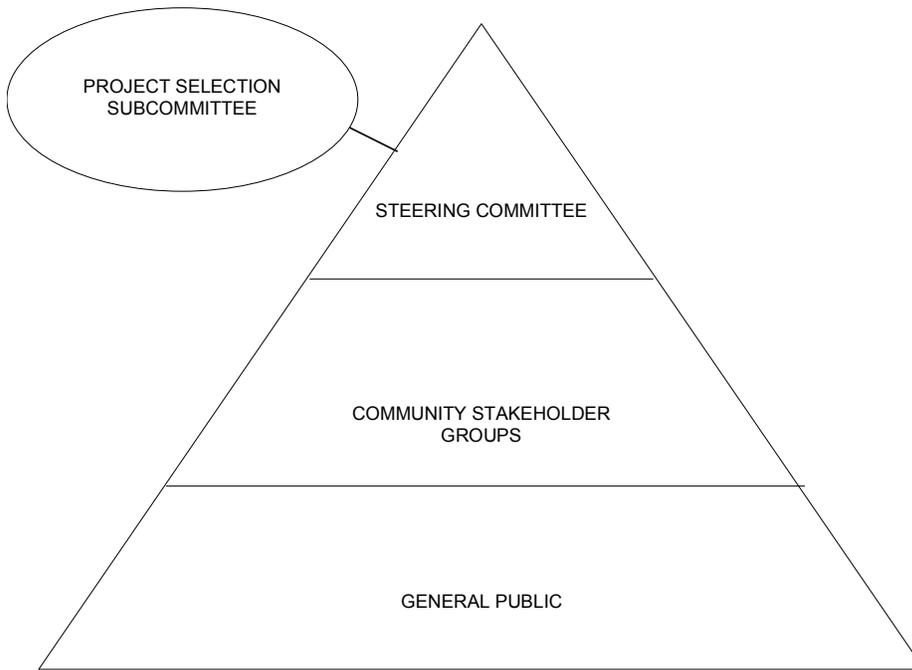
St. Lucie County sought to involve a diverse group of individuals and organizations in planning for natural, technological, and societal hazards within the County. From a broad decision-making body to incorporating public comment to information dissemination, multiple methods of involving the jurisdictions, organizations, businesses, and citizens of St. Lucie County are employed. In designing the public participation process, input has been received from the existing LMS Steering Committee (Committee). The Committee seeks to enhance and expand opportunities for public involvement. The graphic that follows illustrates how the Committee will expand participation. The Committee envisions a three-tiered participation process. Descriptions of each level of participation are discussed as follows.

1.3.1 Steering Committee

A representative Committee oversees the St. Lucie County LMS process.

1.3.1.1 **Role of Committee**

The Committee serves as the policy development body for the LMS program. The role of the Committee is to advise and assist in the formulation, implementation, administration, and refinement of the unified St. Lucie County LMS. The Committee shall represent the four governmental organizations and several community stakeholders found in St. Lucie County.



1.3.1.2 **Composition**

The following organizations are represented on the Committee.

- St. Lucie County
- Port St. Lucie
- Fort Pierce
- St. Lucie Village
- St. Lucie County School Board
- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- St. Lucie County Agricultural Extension – University of Florida
- Adelphia
- Comcast
- Chamber of Commerce
- St. Lucie County Council on Aging
- St. Lucie Medical Center
- Lawnwood Hospital
- St. Lucie County Builders Association

- Fort Pierce Utility Authority (FPUA)
- South Florida Water Management District
- LBFH Inc.
- St. Lucie Water Control District
- North St. Lucie River Water Control District
- Florida Division of Forestry (FDOF)
- St. Lucie County Health Department
- St. Lucie County Fire District
- St. Lucie County Tourism Committee

One representative from each of the organizations listed above will be designated to be the contact person for that particular organization.

1.3.1.3 *Committee Responsibilities*

The Committee will be responsible for reviewing and providing comments on all draft sections of the LMS. A formal voting process will take place for approval of draft final and final sections of the LMS. Informal voting will take place for issues other than approval of draft final or final sections of the LMS. The participating organization representatives are responsible for attending Committee meetings, or arranging for another representative of the organization to attend the meeting in their absence.

1.3.1.4 *Voting*

The voting and approval process for the Committee shall be as follows. Each organization listed in **Section 1.3.1.2** shall receive one vote. A simple majority rules procedure shall be followed when a vote is required. If an organization's representative is not able to attend a meeting, another representative of the organization can assume the voting responsibilities of the designated representative.

From the Committee members, one Committee Chair and Vice-Chair will be selected. One representative shall be from one of the local governments, and one shall be from a non-governmental organization. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be responsible for organizing Committee meetings and will prepare annual progress reports to the elected bodies of the participating jurisdictions. The Chair and the Vice-Chair will not have regular voting authority, but will have tie-breaking voting authority when such occasion arises.

1.3.1.5 *Participation Requirement*

- 1) Attend Committee meetings;
- 2) Provide input and technical information to the planning process, (if available);
and
- 3) Disseminate information to others within represented sector.

1.3.2 *Subcommittees*

The Chair of the Committee is authorized to establish ad-hoc subcommittees as needed to further the goals and objectives of the LMS. These groups can be formed to address special issues and can be disbanded once an issue has been properly addressed.

Subcommittee members need not be Committee members, but may be any individual able to provide special expertise and knowledge about specific concerns addressed in the LMS.

1.3.3 Community Stakeholder Groups

Community stakeholder groups are any community group or organization with an interest in reducing the risks posed by natural hazards in St. Lucie County.

1.3.3.1 Role of Community Stakeholder Groups

In an effort to develop a mitigation planning process that is community based and focused on creating disaster-resistant communities in St. Lucie County, community stakeholder groups are invited to participate. Stakeholders provide the process with valuable information about past, present, and future conditions within the community. Stakeholders are asked to participate in an effort to capture input that is representative of the diverse needs of citizens, businesses, and organizations in St. Lucie County.

1.3.3.2 Composition

Community stakeholder groups include any community organization that is not represented on the LMS Steering Committee and can range from neighborhood associations to local businesses, to civic clubs. While these groups are not active or voting members of the Steering Committee, they can provide data and information important in developing the LMS, and may become partners in mitigation activities at some point in the LMS process.

1.3.3.3 Responsibilities

Participation for community stakeholder groups is highly encouraged and voluntary. Groups can participate in the LMS process in the following manners:

- 1) Attend Steering Committee meetings; or
- 2) Provide input and technical information to the planning process; or
- 3) Review and comment on draft final sections of the LMS; or
- 4) Disseminate information to others within the stakeholder's organization.

1.3.4 Citizen Participation

1.3.4.1 Role of the Citizen

In an effort to develop a mitigation planning process that is community based and focused on creating disaster-resistant communities in St. Lucie County, citizens are invited to participate. Citizens provide the process with valuable information about past, present, and future conditions within the community. Citizens are asked to participate in an effort to capture input that is representative of the diverse needs of citizens, businesses, and organizations in St. Lucie County. Citizens will be made aware of the opportunity to participate in the LMS process via local newspaper ads or other communication modes (e.g., newsletters, websites). Draft copies of the LMS will be available for public comment on the County's website and at library locations throughout the County.

1.3.4.2 Participation Responsibilities

Citizen participation is highly encouraged and voluntary. Individuals can participate in the LMS process in the following manners:

- 1) Review and comment on draft and final plans via County website or library system; or
- 2) Attend noticed public meetings.

1.3.5 New Jurisdictions/Entities

In the event of restructuring that duly adds, deletes, or merges jurisdictions within the County, the voting member rolls will be adjusted appropriately.

1.3.6 Documentation

Following each meeting, a summary will be prepared containing how solicitation was completed for that specific meeting along with any comments and suggestions made by the public and/or community stakeholder groups. For each meeting, a meeting summary, attendance list, public invite, public comments, and all other solicitation efforts concerning public comments will be located in **Appendix E** of the LMS.

In order to invite and promote the opportunity for broad participation, at a minimum, meeting notices and agendas will be posted through some combination of the following: newspaper ads or public service announcements, postings on County and municipal websites, announcements on the County's TV station, postings in County and municipal newsletters and calendars, and faxes and e-mailings to previous participants. The procedures of invitation will be documented along with comments in the meeting summaries located in **Appendix E** of the LMS. The various invitation notices are to ensure the continuation of public participation in the LMS update process and other activities in the future.

Once the Local Mitigation Strategy has been adopted, insert adopted resolution for **St. Lucie County**.

Once the Local Mitigation Strategy has been adopted, insert adopted resolution for **City of Port St. Lucie**.

Once the Local Mitigation Strategy has been adopted, insert adopted resolution for **City of Fort Pierce**.

Once the Local Mitigation Strategy has been adopted, insert adopted resolution for **Village of St. Lucie**.