

Section 2: Planning Process

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Interim Final Rule Requirements for the Planning Process

Requirement §201.6(c)(1): *[The plan shall document] the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved.*

Requirement §201.6(a)(3): *Multi-jurisdictional plans (e.g., watershed plans) may be accepted, as appropriate, as long as each jurisdiction has participated in the process ...*

Requirement §201.6(b): *An open public involvement process is essential to the development of an effective plan. In order to develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the effects of natural disasters, the planning process shall include:*

- (1) *An opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval;*
- (2) *An opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia and other private and non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process; and*
- (3) *Review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information.*

Requirement §201.6(c)(5): *[The local hazard mitigation plan shall include] documentation that the plan has been formally adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction requesting approval of the plan (e.g., City Council, County Commissioner, Tribal Council). For multi-jurisdictional plans, each jurisdiction requesting approval of the plan **must** document that it has been formally adopted.*

2.1 Planning Process Milestones

The *Mitigation Plan for Four New Jersey Counties* (NJ4 HMP) is the result of updating the *Southern Delaware Valley Region Hazard Mitigation Plans* (SDVR HMPs). The SDVR HMPs covered the counties and participating municipalities of Camden, Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland Counties and were approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2010 and 2011. The following summarizes the NJ4 HMP planning process milestones:

1. Project Initiation and Kick-off Meetings
2. Data Acquisition / Preliminary Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
3. Working Group Round 1 Work Sessions
4. Working Group Round 2 Work Sessions
5. Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices
6. Draft Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices
7. Final NJ4 HMP Approval and Adoption
8. Workshops

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Milestone 1: Project Initiation and Kick-off Meetings

- Project Initiation Meeting was held with the NJ4 HMP Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of the four counties' Offices of Emergency Management (OEM), to confirm the overall approach, schedule, and responsibilities of all participants in the planning process.¹
- Project Kick-off Meetings were held with Municipal OEM Coordinators from all four counties as part of regular periodic Municipal OEM Coordinator Meetings to review the approach, schedule, and opportunities for municipalities to participate in the HMP update process.² In addition, online briefings were offered for municipalities unable to attend the Project Kick-off Meetings to provide an opportunity to understand the project and how their participation would be important to the successful outcome of the HMP update process.

Milestone 2: Data Acquisition / Preliminary Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Beginning with the Project Initiation Meeting and continuing through interactions with the counties and municipalities, relevant open source and available data were acquired and compiled regarding hazards, risk, capabilities, mitigation measures, and plan maintenance activities since the SDVR HMPs were approved.³

This included data and information readily available from the counties and municipalities as well as the State of New Jersey and FEMA. This work included producing Preliminary Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment information for use in County and Municipal Working Group Work Sessions (see Milestones 3 and 4).

- Data Acquisition and Compilation
 - Problem areas and concerns as reported by Work Session participants.
 - Related plans and documents in the four counties including recently updated Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) and on-going long-term recovery planning (e.g., the *Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan*, dated December 2013).
 - Critical facilities including municipal offices, emergency operations centers, police stations, fire stations, emergency medical services, schools, facilities with vulnerable populations, health care facilities, utility and transportation infrastructure, etc.
 - State of New Jersey data including relevant portions of the most current version of the New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan (NJ SHMP).
 - FEMA data:
 - ✓ Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning, also known as Risk MAP regulatory and non-regulatory products.
 - ✓ National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policies and claims data including Repetitive Loss and Severe Repetitive Loss Property Lists.
 - ✓ Information from disaster declarations since the SDVR HMPs' approval dates.
 - ✓ Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation project grants.
 - Data from other federal and state agencies such as open source information regarding hazard histories and impacts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Climatic Data Center and related databases.

¹ See Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan *Points of Contact* for a listing of the NJ4 HMP Steering Committee Members.

² See *Annex C: Planning Process* for the briefing materials used during the Project Kick-off Meetings and meeting dates for each of the four counties.

³ See *Annex B: Sources* for detailed listings of data and information incorporated in the NJ4 HMP.

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- Relevant research and on-going studies of sea level rise and climate change as it relates to HMPs in New Jersey including FEMA's Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration's study regarding *The Impact of Climate Change and Population Growth on the National Flood Insurance Program through 2100* dated June 2013.
- Preliminary Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment (HIRA) relied on information that was readily available and included:
 - Updates to the hazard identification, profiles, priorities, vulnerability assessments, loss estimates, and summary risk assessments for natural hazards carried over from the SDVR HMPs. This work included updating the hazard identification for all relevant natural hazards, seeking consistency with the recently updated NJ SHMP, and assuring all relevant hazards were covered in appropriate county and municipal portions of the NJ4 HMP.
 - Use of appropriate methods and technology for vulnerability assessments and loss estimation including:
 - ✓ Calculated Priority Risk Index methodology for evaluating and ranking hazards on a regional basis. The methodology combines a hazard's probability of future occurrence, magnitude or severity of impact, typical warning time before an event occurs, and the duration of the event.
 - ✓ Participant input for determining priority hazards at the county and municipal levels.
 - Development of individualized reports on a municipality-by-municipality basis identifying HIRA results for each community including detailed information regarding the exposure of critical facilities to natural hazards. These municipal HIRA reports provided improved linkages between risk assessments and resulting mitigation measures.
 - Introducing climate variability implications into the discussion of risk and mitigation. Although the implications of climate change for all areas of the country are still coming into focus, it was important to start acknowledging and seeking to better understand potential impacts.

Milestone 3: Working Group Round 1 Work Sessions

Each of the 81 participating counties, municipalities, and institutions formed a separate Working Group.⁴ Individual Work Sessions were conducted with each of these Working Groups during the months of May through August 2014.⁵

The agenda for the first round of work sessions with Working Groups included discussions of:

- Public Participation – reiterating information shared during the Project Kick-off Meetings highlighting the advantages of broad participation by representatives of all concerned and interested parties within the community.⁶
- Capability Assessments and Plan Integration – including questions about current capabilities such as administration of the NFIP & potential participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) as well as soliciting other plans and documents to review regarding potential integration as part of the HMP update process.

⁴ See *Section 2.2: Working Group Participation* for information about how County and Municipal Working Groups were formed and functioned during the NJ4 HMP project.

⁵ See *Annex C: Planning Process* for an example of the briefing materials used during the Round 1 Work Sessions and the meeting dates for each of the individual Working Groups.

⁶ See *Section 2.3: Public Participation* for information about how County and Municipal Working Groups solicited public involvement during the NJ4 HMP project.

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- Preliminary HIRA Information - to validate work-in-progress and identify additional hazard and risk information. The review of preliminary HIRA information also set the stage for discussions of updated goals and mitigation measures.
- Critical Facilities – to improve available data about critical facilities including identifying if adequate back-up emergency generators were available where appropriate and if there were known issues for specific facilities related to natural hazards.
- SDVR HMP Mitigation Measures Implementation Status - compiling information about mitigation measures identified in the SDVR HMPs that have been or will be implemented since the SDVR HMPs were adopted and approved.
- Mitigation Measures - identifying actions, programs, or projects resulting from community experience during disasters since the SDVR HMPs were adopted including Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy.
- Workshop Topics - identifying needs for workshops to aid in the long-term success of the county and municipal mitigation programs.⁷

Milestone 4: Working Group Round 2 Work Sessions

A second round of Work Sessions were conducted with the participating jurisdictions during the months of August through December 2014.⁸ The intent of the Round 2 Work Sessions was to confirm:

- Work-in-progress for Preliminary Appendices, based on Round 1 Work Sessions, were in line with Working Group and community input and priorities.
- Roles and responsibilities for implementation were accurately identified including the next step(s) in the implementation process.

Milestone 5: Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices

The results of the Working Group Work Sessions and the input of the Steering Committee was used to develop the *Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices* for all participating counties, municipalities, and institutions including:

- Revisions to the Preliminary HIRA Information - reflecting review comments and additional information received from the municipalities.
- Critical Facilities – including improved inventory information based on Working Group input and an assessment of the exposure of these facilities to identified natural hazards.
- Updates to Goals - as necessary and as determined by the Steering Committee and the Working Groups.
- Updates and additions to the Mitigation Measures and Implementation Strategies - including progress made in implementing the recommendations from the SDVR HMPs and new strategies identified as a result of the Round 1 Municipal Work Sessions. The update process:
 - Considered a full range of hazard mitigation project types.
 - Established priorities per Municipal Working Group preferences.

⁷ See *Milestone 8: Workshops* for a listing of topics identified by the Working Groups.

⁸ See *Annex C: Planning Process* for an example of the briefing materials used during the Round 2 Work Sessions and the meeting dates for each of the individual Working Groups.

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- Focused on mitigation measures that protect critical infrastructure and key resources from the most common hazards such as flooding but in all cases, sought to identify projects that optimized engineering feasibility, positive benefit cost ratios, and environmental impacts.
- Included measures to address Repetitive and Severe Repetitive Loss Properties as identified by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).
- Identified mitigation measures that will require multi-jurisdictional approaches for implementation both vertically with county and state agencies and horizontally through cooperative agreements with other municipalities.
- Integrated mitigation measures and implementation strategies with other related planning initiatives (e.g., land use plans, flood control programs, natural resource studies, zoning ordinances, building codes, subdivision regulations, post-disaster public assistance grants, and capital improvements plans).
- Identified funding options including alternatives to federal hazard mitigation programs focusing on available community resources (i.e., public-private partners) and other grant programs.
- Updates and additions to Plan Maintenance Provisions - ensured that maintenance processes are institutionalized to the extent possible in a way that matches capabilities and normal business activities at the county and municipal levels including:
 - The use of appropriate tools to monitor implementation progress and provide status reports with minimal effort.
 - Identify new candidates for and enhance existing relationships with partners for long-term maintenance of HIRA information and other HMP update information.

The Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices were distributed to the Working Groups for review via the Project Website.⁹ Working Groups provided public notice of the availability of the documents and conducted public hearings during this review period. In addition, the Working Groups either convened additional Working Group meetings or otherwise corresponded to compile review comments.

Milestone 6: Draft Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices

Review comments were incorporated in the Draft HMP Updates and the documents provided to New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) and FEMA Region II representatives for review. After addressing NJOEM and FEMA review comments, the Draft Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices were designated as “approvable pending adoption.”

Milestone 7: Final NJ4 HMP Approval and Adoption

Final NJ4 HMP documents were prepared and distributed to the participating counties, municipalities, and institutions for adoption. Support for adoption of the Final HMP Update was provided including:

- Adoption Resolution templates designating responsible parties for on-going implementation of mitigation strategies and plan maintenance.
- Final NJ4 HMP to all participants in both digital and hard copies.

⁹ <http://nj4hmp.com>

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Milestone 8: Workshops

Workshops were provided to further ensure the success of HMP implementation. The workshop topics were identified during the planning process based on interviews and surveys conducted during the Working Group Work Sessions as well as discussions with the Steering Committee. Workshops topics included:

- Multi-jurisdictional Implementation Efforts – bringing together representatives of concerned and potentially involved jurisdictions and agencies to discuss priorities and implementation strategies for projects that potentially benefit multiple jurisdictions and/or may represent municipal priorities but require other levels of government to implement.
- Plan Maintenance and Implementation – helping municipalities institutionalize methodologies beyond the typical five-year cycle, e.g., incorporating on-going data collection efforts into everyday government functions like permitting or property assessments and providing information about project scoping activities involving preliminary engineering feasibility, Benefit-Cost Analysis, and environmental impact analyses.
- Funding for Hazard Mitigation Measures – looking beyond FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs to find other public and private sector funding sources.
- Critical Facilities – describing the process for conducting site and facility assessments using the results of the Critical Facility Hazard Exposure Assessment.
- Repetitive and Severe Repetitive Loss Mitigation Measures – including providing Working Groups and Floodplain Administrators with the most current information about the National Flood Insurance Program, mitigation options for property owners, and potential local, state, and federal funding opportunities.
- CRS – focused on identifying and taking full advantage of individual community CRS program potential and / or familiarizing municipalities with the changes in the current *CRS Coordinator's Manual*.
- Climate Change and Adaptation Planning – keeping abreast of information and best practices in a dynamic situation.

2.2 Working Group Participation

The need to mobilize a Working Group was identified from the beginning of the planning process starting with the Project Kick-off Meetings and continuing throughout the Work Sessions. Each participating county, municipality, and institution made an effort to invite and incorporate the involvement of individuals, groups, and organizations from the community as part of their respective Working Groups.

The following was used as a list of potential members of the Municipal Working Groups:

- Elected Officials
- Municipal Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Coordinator
- Floodplain Administrator/Manager
- Land Use / Economic Development Planner
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) / Information Technology (IT) Specialist
- Building Code / Construction Official
- Engineering, Public Works, and Transportation Department Directors / Supervisors
- Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services
- Business associations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)
- Community / Faith-based organizations
- Environmental organizations (e.g., watershed or waterway-based non-profit advocacy groups)
- Non-governmental organizations (e.g., American Red Cross)
- Critical infrastructure and key resources (e.g., utilities)

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- Major employers and businesses
- Healthcare institutions
- Education institutions including school boards and local trade schools, community colleges, universities, etc.

A similar list was used to identify potential members of the County Working Groups:

- Board of Chosen Freeholders
- County Administrator's Office
- County Land Use / Economic Development Planner
- County GIS / IT Specialist
- County Soil & Water Conservation District
- County Engineering, Public Works, and Transportation Department Directors / Supervisors
- County Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services Coordinators
- County Volunteers Active in Disasters
- County Long-term Community Recovery Planning Committee

All of these positions, agencies, or organizations did not exist in every county or municipality. In addition, some individuals assume multiple roles and may have several of these responsibilities.

Together, more than 900 individuals participated as part of the county, municipal, and institutional Working Groups for the NJ4 HMP. *Part 2.1: Working Group Participation* in the Appendices itemizes the members of each participating county, municipality, and institution.

Working Group members reviewed briefing materials in advance of Work Sessions, contributed during Work Sessions, and reviewed NJ4 HMP documents. The duties and responsibilities of the Working Groups consisted of representing their communities' interests, and completing necessary planning tasks:

- Data collection - to provide background information and existing plans.
- Identification of critical facilities – to provide inventory information.¹⁰
- Identification of mitigation measures –to identify and document specific mitigation measures.¹¹
- Reviewing the Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices.

The general sequence for the Working Groups' participation included:

- Project Kick-off Meeting – attended by County and Municipal OEM Coordinators who served as the organizers and points-of-contact for the County and Municipal Working Groups.
- Round 1 and 2 Work Sessions – to develop and review work-in-progress.
- Preliminary Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices reviews – including soliciting public comment and compiling review comments from the Working Groups.
- Consideration and approval of any changes made in the Final NJ4 HMP as a result of NJOEM or FEMA review comments.

In all, more than 200 Work Sessions and meetings were conducted during the planning process. *Annex C: Planning Process* contains example documentation for Work Sessions and meetings including agendas, sign-up sheets, presentation materials, and meeting notes where appropriate.

¹⁰ See *Part 3.4: Critical Facilities Inventory and Hazard Exposure Assessment* in the Appendices.

¹¹ See *Part 4.3: Mitigation Measures – Identification*, *Part 4.4: Mitigation Measures – Implementation*, and *Part 4.5: Multi-Jurisdictional Mitigation Measures* in the Appendices.

2.3 Public Participation

During development of the NJ4 HMP, a variety of opportunities were provided for the general public and interested parties to be involved and participate:

- Project Website - located at <http://nj4hmp.com>, the Project Website provided access to project status information and documents for public review and an opportunity to submit comments and questions. Participating counties, municipalities, and institutions provided links to the Project Website from their respective websites during the planning process and specifically to announce the availability of the Preliminary Appendices for public review.
- Flyers - explaining the on-going planning process were posted at municipal administrative offices and other locations in the communities.
- Public Education and Outreach Activities – conducted via community newsletters and/or at local schools, places of worship, and at established events such as county and local fairs, community service club meetings, etc.
- Working Group Work Sessions and Meetings – conducted in a forum that was open to the public.
- Public Meetings – including information items about the on-going planning process on the agendas for regularly scheduled public meetings of elected governing bodies or appointed officials and during the Preliminary Appendix review process.
- Public Adoption Proceedings¹² - the governing bodies of all participating jurisdictions adopted the NJ4 HMP. Meetings of the governing bodies occurred at open public meetings during which the public had an opportunity to voice support or concerns regarding the content of the NJ4 HMP.

Notice was sent to adjacent jurisdictions and other interested parties that the Draft and Final NJ4 HMP documents were available for review prior to adoption by the participating counties, municipalities, and institutions.

See *Part 2.1: Public Participation* and *Attachment A: Public Comments* of the Appendices for specific public comments received and how this information was incorporated into the NJ4 HMP.

2.4 Plan Integration

The NJ4 HMP planning process included examining municipal hazard mitigation capabilities; potential for improving capabilities and coordination within and between jurisdictions; and plan integration considerations. *Section 4: Mitigation Measures* and related portions of *Annex F: Plan Implementation* of the NJ4 HMP Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan include summary observations and recommendations concerning:

- Hazard mitigation planning and mitigation measure implementation capabilities at the regional, county, and municipal levels.
- Coordination within municipal governments, between municipal governments and their communities, and between municipal, county, and state agencies responsible for hazard mitigation.
- Integration of hazard mitigation data, goals, measures, and/or recommendations with existing plans and programs at the municipal level.

¹² See *Section 2.5: Plan Adoption and Approval*.

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Specific documents obtained during the plan update process from the Municipal Working Groups that were incorporated into these observations and recommendations regarding plan integration included:

- Emergency Operations Plans
- Master Plans and Reexamination Reports
- Land Development Regulations including Floodplain Management Ordinances and Zoning Ordinances
- Stormwater Management Plans and Ordinances
- Wildland Fire Management Plans
- Capital Improvement Budgets and Capital Improvement Programs

Other special reports and plans incorporated into the observations and recommendations included:

- Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan
- NJDEP Coastal Community Resilience Evaluations

2.5 Adoption and Approval

In the State of New Jersey, counties and municipalities are empowered to manage their own affairs via an elected governing body. For counties, the governing body is known as the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Municipalities are categorized as cities, townships, and boroughs. The governing body for cities and boroughs is typically referred as the City or Borough Council while townships usually convene a Township Committee.

The following is an excerpt from the relevant portion of the New Jersey Statutes Annotated (NJSa 40:20 et seq.)¹³:

The property, finances, and affairs of every county shall be managed, controlled and governed by a board elected therein, to be known as "the board of chosen freeholders of the county of [County name] and the executive and legislative powers of the county shall be vested in that board of chosen freeholders, except where by law any specific powers or duties are imposed or vested in a Constitutional officer.

The adoption and approval sequence applicable to all participating jurisdictions is as follows:

- FEMA Region II, in consultation with NJOEM, determined that the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices of the NJ4 HMP were "approvable pending adoption."
- The Working Groups reviewed the Final Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices and recommended that the corresponding governing body should adopt the NJ4 HMP.
- The Final Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Appendices was submitted to the governing body for each participating jurisdiction for review and adoption.
- The resulting Adoption Resolutions were then submitted to FEMA Region II (via the corresponding County Office of Emergency Management and NJOEM) for approval.
- FEMA subsequently issued formal approval letters to NJOEM for each participating county, municipality, and institution that adopted the Plan.
- NJOEM, in turn issued approval letters to the approved jurisdictions.

¹³ New Jersey Office of the Attorney General.

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Part 1.2 of the Appendices identifies the dates when the NJ4 HMP was adopted and approved for each participating county, municipality, and institution.

Attachment B: Adoption Resolution of the NJ4 HMP Appendices contains the signed Adoption Resolution for each participating county, municipality, and institution.

Attachment C: Approval Letter of the NJ4 HMP Appendices contains the formal Approval Letters for each participating county, municipality, and institution.

Draft