



MEMORANDUM

Date: 09-20-21
To: CHARLOTTE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
From: Bradley Geelen, Emergency Management Specialist
Subject: Floodplain Management Plan Progress Report

The Charlotte County Local Mitigation Strategy has been adopted by the Board of County Commissioners by resolution as the Floodplain Management Plan for Charlotte County. The LMS is maintained by a committee of government and non-government employees who monitor and revise the plan as needed. The following is a progress report for 2020/2021. A copy of this memorandum is being made available to the public through a posting on the county's website at <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/public-safety/emergency-management/flood/index.stm>

1. Background

The Charlotte County Office of Emergency Management initiated the LMS process in 1999. The original plan was revised to comply with the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The LMS has since been reviewed in 2020 by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and re-adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The plan is based on a risk analysis of the most common causes of flooding that may affect Charlotte County.

The LMS identifies projects that can reduce the impact of flooding and reduce the losses that can occur. Properties identified by the National Flood Insurance Program as Repetitive Loss Properties and Severe Repetitive Loss Properties have been included as an action item in the LMS since its inception.

The LMS relies on grant funding to achieve many of its goals. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Fund, awarded after a federal declaration, is the most significant source of funding. Since the adoption of the LMS as the Floodplain Management Plan the county has been granted funding as a result of tropical systems that affected the area. The largest amount of funding was received from Hurricane Charley in 2004, which made landfall in Charlotte County. Many of the mitigation projects listed in the LMS were funded subsequent to that storm, including hardening of county facilities, schools, and



shelters. The HMGP also allowed for the City of Punta Gorda to undertake a major storm water project. In 2017 Charlotte County was impacted by Hurricane Irma. The LMS Committee continues to review and revise the plan to address the current needs and seek funding from wherever possible.

2. LMS Action Item Review

The order of the following action items does not reflect prioritization which is decided separately by the LMS Working Group.

Objective 1: Reduce the vulnerability of persons and property from losses from natural disasters.

Status: Ongoing. Tropical cyclones are the most likely threat to cause significant and widespread loss of life and property damage to Charlotte County. The county addresses this objective in several ways. All new construction must comply with strict building codes that require both wind and flood protection. Per the Florida Building Code, all new construction within the Special Flood Hazard Area, including mobile homes, is required to have the lowest habitable floor 1' above the base flood elevation. Structures within the SFHA are also required to obtain base flood elevations as part of the permitting process. All new construction is also required to be elevated 18 inches above the crown of the roadway to maximize the open drainage system in use in the majority of the county. Preparing for the possibility of storm surge is a major component of the Office of Emergency Management, which has instituted several programs to provide flood warning to Charlotte County residents and visitors. Reflective collars with the color of the evacuation zone that corresponds to a given area have been installed on approximately 9,000 stop signs. A webpage, "Know Your Zone", is given prominence on the county website each year allowing for residents to easily determine their evacuation zone and the appropriate actions to take if their area is threatened. The Office of Emergency Management maintains Twitter and Facebook accounts to distribute and receive information from social media. The county also has the ability to send communication to its citizens through the Alert Charlotte communication system.

The county, through the Community Development Department and the Office of Emergency Management, has identified areas of repetitive loss that include repetitive loss properties. We monitor them, offer mitigation advice to all owners within these areas, and notify them when funding can be secured to aid in eliminating the hazard.

Objective 2: Ensure cooperation between government and non-government entities to enhance mitigation activities.



Status: Ongoing. The LMS Working Group is representative of the community through its members. Invitations are extended to county and city departments, civic organizations, and the general public. Projects are discussed, selected, and prioritized by consensus. Should the county experience a natural hazard, all segments of government and response organizations are represented in the Emergency Operations Center. A continual program of training and exercising is in place to address preparedness and response activities. The county also maintains an interlocal agreement with the City of Punta Gorda, the county's only incorporated entity that accepts the LMS as the Floodplain Management Plan and agrees to cooperatively address mitigation efforts. The interlocal agreement was reaffirmed and resolved by both political subdivisions with the adoption of the 2020 LMS.

Objective 3: Reduce the vulnerability of critical, public, and historic facilities.

Status: Ongoing. All projects funded through the 2004 HMGP grants have been completed. Additionally, using both public and private funds, two historic structures in the City of Punta Gorda have been retrofitted to a higher standard. All fire stations, the county administration building, and the majority of school facilities, have either been constructed to a higher than code standard or retrofitted since 2004. This past year, when the Hurricane Michael HMGP funding was announced the county applied for two grants to reduce the vulnerability in Charlotte County and in the city of Punta Gorda. These grants are awaiting notice of funding.

Objective 4: Strengthen Plans for Post Disaster, Recovery, and Mitigation Plans.

Status: Ongoing. The Charlotte County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan is updated annually and will be sent to the state for five-year review in 2025. The complete plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners as the all-hazards response and recovery plan for the county. The CEMP was reviewed and approved by the Florida Division of Emergency Management. The Local Mitigation Strategy group has just completed the process of updating the current Local Mitigation Strategy for the 2020 review. It is adopted by the county and the City of Punta Gorda.

Objective 5: Public outreach and education to ensure residents are aware of changes and any options they have to mitigate or reduce their risk.



Status: Ongoing. The Office of Emergency Management has a continuing public awareness program to promote preparedness and response to hazardous weather. The office produces and distributes thousands of all-hazard guides annually, conducts numerous expos and seminars, and maintains a public website:

<https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/public-safety/emergency-management/> that provides preparedness information. The Community Development Department maintains the Community Rating System for the NFIP and is also managing the FEMA Coastal Risk flood map update and anticipate these preliminary flood maps to become effective in 2022. Community Development regularly contacts owners of repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss properties and offers flood safety and protective construction methods seminars. Citizens with flood questions are able to reach out to the floodplain coordinator for further assistance.

Objective 6: Protect and acquire unique natural habitats and wetlands as part of the flood protection system.

Status: Ongoing. In the last several years, the county has acquired 2,534+ acres of unique natural habitats and wetlands to be preserved as green space. These areas, along with more than 40,000 acres of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park, protects more than 50 miles of Charlotte County's shoreline. All the preserved areas are in in both AE and VE zones, with base flood elevations ranging from a low of eight feet up to a maximum of 26 feet above sea level.

3. Community Rating System

The Community Development is responsible for the maintenance of the Community Rating System. Charlotte County began the CRS in 1993 and currently has a rating of 6.

4. Prioritized Project Status

Repetitive loss properties are always included in the prioritized projects in the LMS. Funding has been secured through Severe Repetitive Loss Grant to demolish, elevate, and rebuild a residence in Charlotte Harbor. The LMS Committee has met and discussed funding opportunities, reviewed the prioritized project list, removed the projects that have been completed, added new projects, and reprioritized the list.



5. Recommendations

Homeowners in the SFHA are continuously being sought in an effort to submit their property for mitigation grants. Available grant options include two federal programs: The Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, the Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities Program, and one State program: The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The Office of Emergency Management and the Community Development Department will continue to seek projects and funding sources to mitigate the County's hazard vulnerability. The county submitted five HMGP applications in 2018. Four of those applications have been approved for mitigation project impacting the entire county and its municipality.

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LMS Chair