

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Under Section 322 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) enacted under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K), Pinellas County is required to have a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved hazard mitigation plan in order to be eligible for federal hazard mitigation funding. The purpose of the County Hazard Mitigation Plan, more commonly called the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) in Florida communities, is to reduce death, injuries, and property losses caused by natural hazards in Pinellas County. The 2020 Plan identifies hazards based on the history of disasters within the county and lists goals, objectives, strategies, and actions for reducing future losses. Implementation of planned, pre-identified, and cost-effective mitigation measures not only helps to reduce losses to lives, property, and the environment but it also streamlines the disaster recovery process. This is a 5-year update of the countywide LMS that was last approved in May of 2015. While the document may refer to specific historical events for context, the plan update focuses on changes to the communities and their vulnerabilities over the last 5 years and provides an update to capabilities, programs, and actions that the participants intend to utilize to reduce exposure or consequences from the identified hazards. Hazard mitigation is most effective when based on an inclusive, comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed before a disaster occurs.

The LMS serves several purposes; including providing an explanation of how Pinellas County and its 24 municipalities identify strategies to implement an effective, comprehensive countywide Local Mitigation Strategy. The communities participating in this plan include the Unincorporated County and all its municipalities:

- Pinellas, Unincorporated
- Belleair, Town of
- Belleair Beach, City of
- Belleair Bluffs, City of
- Belleair Shore, Town of
- Clearwater, City of
- Dunedin, City of
- Gulfport, City of
- Indian Rocks Beach, City of
- Indian Shores, Town of
- Kenneth City, City of
- Largo, City of
- Madeira Beach, City of
- North Redington Beach, Town of
- Oldsmar, City of
- Pinellas Park, City of
- Redington Beach, Town of
- Redington Shores, Town of
- Safety Harbor, City of
- St. Pete Beach, City of
- St. Petersburg, City of
- Seminole, City of
- South Pasadena, City of
- Tarpon Springs, City of
- Treasure Island, City of

The 2020 Plan is coordinated through appropriate state, local, and regional agencies, as well as non-governmental interest groups. This plan, and its future revisions, will provide guidance in merging the planning efforts of all local governments, the private sector, and non-profit organizations within Pinellas County into one viable, comprehensive, mitigation program.

The scope of the LMS is broad. The plan explains the way in which the communities implement mitigation activities within the county in coordination with local agencies. Additionally, as required by statute, the Risk Assessment portion of the LMS identifies natural hazards, as well as technological and human-caused

hazards. The Risk Assessment portion analyzes vulnerability of the County in countywide terms as well as results and capabilities at the municipal level.

The purpose of the 2020 LMS is to:

- Reduce risk to people, property, and the critical infrastructure.
- Increase public awareness and education about the plan and planning process.
- Maintain grant eligibility for participating jurisdictions.
- Update the plan in accordance with Community Rating System (CRS) requirements.
- Maintain compliance with state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.
- Complete an update of information in the plan to demonstrate progress and reflect current conditions.

Pinellas County is vulnerable to both natural hazards and technological and human-caused hazards. The most common hazards to Florida are wildfires and floods; however, hurricanes have historically inflicted catastrophic destruction.

Planning Process and Maintenance Section

There are 10 primary steps that comprise the LMS planning process. The process defines not only who should be involved, but how the process is going to work, and an understanding of how the process facilitates the production of the final product.

- Step 1: The Planning Organization – The development of a mitigation strategy requires the involvement of representatives from the public, private, and governmental sectors.
- Step 2: Involving the Public – An important component of the mitigation planning process involves public participation.
- Step 3: Coordination – Coordinate activities within the County and to bring back perspectives of their constituency.
- Step 4: Assessing the Hazard – Conduct and maintain a hazard identification and vulnerability assessment.
- Step 5: Assessing the Problem – Quantify the impact of the hazards identified in the previous step on the community.
- Step 6: Goals and Objectives – Revisit goals and objectives and make adjustments as appropriate.
- Step 7: Possible Activities: Mitigation Opportunities and Initiatives – Identification of potential mitigation opportunities and initiatives.
- Step 8: An Action Plan – Objectives were identified for each goal to specifically identify action items and are reflected in six categories of mitigation activities.
- Step 9: Adoption of the Strategy – Officially adopt the LMS.
- Step 10: Implementation, Evaluation, and Revision – The LMS is intended to be a dynamic document that will be updated regularly.

There are two main working groups responsible for the LMS planning process. The LMS Working Group (WG) consists of representatives of the jurisdictions, private sector, and non-profits as well as any members of the public as all meetings are advertised on the County's website and calendar. The Flood Risk and Mitigation Public Information Working Group (FRMPIWG) is a group of public and private stakeholders formed to supplement input into the planning process.

The County's first LMS began its planning process in March of 1998 and took approximately 15 months to complete. The plan was then updated again in 2004, 2009, and 2015. This is the fourth update of the plan and the focus of the update was on adding new risk assessments, refining objectives, and refreshing the project list.

The 2020 LMS update began in the fall of 2018 when the County assessed its current plan and assessed it for improvement opportunities. When the plan update began, the LMS WG was presented with results of the assessment for concurrence on a path forward.

During the timeline of the plan update, the County and its jurisdictions also combined several other groups to supplement input into the planning process. Pinellas is a strong advocate of the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System and had a few outreach groups in place to support those activities. A countywide Program for Public Information was installed over the past 12 months to facilitate consistent messaging across communities and provide tools for jurisdictions with limited resources. As the mitigation planning process was happening concurrently, this group of public and private stakeholders met three times over the year and became known as the Flood Risk and Mitigation Public Information Working Group (FRMPIWG). The FRMPIWG developed the following mission statement:

- Increase disaster resiliency across the county through the development and dissemination of public information and educational outreach about identified flood risks, minimization of those risks through mitigation and the efficacy of obtaining appropriate flood insurance coverage.
- Ensure attainment of flood insurance savings for residents and businesses within the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county through effective participation in the Community Rating System.
- Engage and educate community stakeholders to enhance planning efforts by ensuring diverse representation and to provide stakeholders the opportunity to become more knowledgeable in the subject of mitigation and to expand reach while improving their ability to provide improved customer service.
- Develop strategies, concepts and projects for reducing flooding impacts that can become part of the county Local Mitigation Strategy plan.

The FRMPIWG meetings (typically over 70 participants with representatives from all municipalities) had a briefing from the LMS Working Group at every meeting to update them on recent activities. Likewise, the feedback from the FRMPIWG was provided to the LMS WG to be evaluated and included in the LMS update process.

After the 2020 LMS Plan Update underwent final revisions, and the plan was completed to the satisfaction of the State Hazard Mitigation Office (SHMO), which reviews the Plan for compliance on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the plan was officially adopted by Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners by adoption of a resolution. The 2020 LMS update was submitted to the Board of

County Commissioners on 9/9/2020 and approved on 9/9/2020. The plan will be in effect from May 6, 2020 until May 5, 2025. Each jurisdiction also approved the Plan within their community as identified in Appendix F.

Risk Assessment Section

The risk assessment for Pinellas County was intentionally structured to align with the State of Florida Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) and provides the factual basis for developing a mitigation strategy for the county. This section profiles the natural, human-caused, and technological hazards that could possibly affect Pinellas communities. This risk assessment is used not only for the LMS, but also supports the County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Each natural hazard profile includes a discussion of the geographic areas affected, the historical occurrences in the county, an impact analysis, the probability, and the vulnerability and loss estimation by county critical facilities, and a discussion of overall vulnerability. Alternatively, the human-caused and technological hazards include similar topics of discussion, but not all aspects are able to be quantified. This is because of the limited data available and the imprecise nature of the human-caused and technological hazards.

The risk assessment identifies 22 hazards based on an examination of past disasters, probability of occurrence, possible impacts, and vulnerability. The hazards include:

Natural Hazards

- Flood
- Tropical Cyclones
- Severe Storms
- Wildfire
- Erosion
- Drought
- Extreme Heat
- Geological
- Winter Storm
- Seismic
- Tsunami
- Red Tide

Technological Hazards

- Transportation Incident
- Cyber Incident
- Hazardous Materials Incident
- Space Weather Incident
- Radiological Incident
- Terrorism
- Agricultural Disruption
- Biological Incident
- Mass Migration Incident
- Civil Disturbance Incident

Mitigation Strategy Section

The LMS details goals and objectives for achieving loss reduction in Pinellas County. The six goals are listed below.

1. Become a More Disaster Resilient Community.
2. Minimize Coastal Flooding Losses in the CHHA, Coastal Storm Area and Hurricane Vulnerability Zone.
3. Minimize Riverine or Inland Flooding Losses in the 25, 50, and 100-year Flood Zone.
4. Minimize Storm Wind Losses in the County.

5. Minimize Losses from Hazardous Material Incidents.
6. Minimize Vulnerability to Technological Hazards.

Additional information on the LMS goals and objectives can be found in this section.

Pinellas County has policies, programs, and capabilities designed to help mitigate the impacts of hazard events. Each community has its own policies, programs, and capabilities. These depend on factors such as the size of the geographic area, its population, or the amount of funding available through local resources. Regardless of size or wealth, each community has a unique core set of policies, programs, and capabilities at its disposal related to hazard reduction and mitigation including building codes, land use plans, and regulations, which are discussed in this section.

Potential Funding Sources Section

The county uses a variety of programs and funds to achieve its mitigation goals, including federal grant programs such as HMGP, Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM), Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA), and the state grant Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program (HLMP). Various grants and programs are discussed throughout this section.

Appendices

Many documents are included with the LMS as appendices. These appendices are referenced throughout the plan and support the plan.

- Appendix A: Planning Process Documentation
- Appendix B: Risk Assessment Tables
- Appendix C: CRS 610
- Appendix D: Mitigation Initiatives
- Appendix E: FL Review Tool
- Appendix F: Plan Adoption
- Appendix G: Plan Maintenance
- Appendix H: Program for Public Information
- Appendix I: Repetitive Loss Area Analysis