

# Larimer County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020 Update

## Kickoff Webinar Summary

1pm - 3 pm  
April 10, 2020

### Introductions and Opening Remarks

This document summarizes the kickoff webinar for the Larimer County Hazard Mitigation Plan update for 2020. The webinar was facilitated by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. (Wood), the consulting firm hired to facilitate the planning process and develop the updated County plan. This type of meeting is ideally conducted in-person, however in this instance the meeting was done in a webinar format in order to comply with social distancing requirements as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Scott Field, Project Manager at Wood, began the meeting with introductions. Scott first introduced the other members of the Wood team along with Mark Thompson of the Colorado Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHSEM). Fifty-two persons attended the webinar representing a mix of County departments, participating jurisdictions and stakeholders. The key discussion is summarized below; additional details can be found in the meeting PowerPoint presentation and webinar recording.

### Hazard Mitigation Overview

Mark (DHSEM) outlined what hazard mitigation is and why mitigation it is important. Mark explained hazard mitigation should be an ongoing effort integrated into both day-to-day operations and long-term planning. Mark noted that FEMA is only concerned with natural hazards being profiled within these plans but explained this does not preclude communities from including human-caused hazards in order to have a one-stop plan for all types of hazards that pose a risk to the community. Mark continued by explaining a hazard mitigation plan is not a regulatory document and is not a set-in-stone commitment of resources. The overall purpose of a local hazard mitigation plan is to prevent knowable hazards from having an impact on the community.

Mark stated there are two main types of benefits a community gains from having a FEMA approved hazard mitigation plan (HMP); (1) bringing people together in the community; (2) eligibility for FEMA mitigation grants (Pre-Disaster Mitigation, Flood Mitigation Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program-Post-Disaster). He noted that any requests for FEMA mitigation funding need to be based on the hazards and mitigation strategy in the HMP. He added that information from the hazard mitigation plan, specifically the vulnerability assessment and mitigation strategy, can be used in other hazard related plans such as community wildfire protection plans.

FEMA will only fund mitigation projects that will reduce future demand for and the costs of disaster response and recovery, such as retrofitting a critical facility, enforcing building codes, land use planning, or removing a structure from a hazard area. Mitigation funding cannot be used for response actions such as purchasing vehicles for fire or police departments. Mark continued by briefly reviewing the benefit cost relationship of

mitigation projects. He shared statistics from the 2017 National Institute of Building Science Report which showed that mitigation grants funded through select federal government agencies, on average, can save the nation \$6 in future disaster costs for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation. Since 2011, Colorado has had 136 projects awarded FEMA funding for mitigation projects. Mark continued by sharing examples of Colorado communities that have successfully used mitigation grant funding through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program to complete projects that have mitigated their risks from existing hazards.

## **Hazard Mitigation Planning Process and Requirements**

Scott continued the meeting with the specific planning requirements the County will have to meet in order to have a FEMA approved plan. Scott reviewed the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 Requirements and explained that the Larimer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) will be updated in accordance with these requirements. The planning process involves a 4 Phase approach with 9 tasks per FEMA guidance updated in 2013. The kickoff webinar is the first step in the process and also covers tasks 1-3 (Determine the planning area and resources; Build the planning team; Create an outreach strategy).

## **Role of the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (HMPC)**

The first step in getting organized is to determine the hazard mitigation planning committee members, which has already started with those in attendance at the kickoff webinar. Scott gave those present additional recommendations of who could also be invited to be on the committee, starting with those who were on the committee for the 2016 planning process. Scott noted that special districts could also be considered jurisdictions and be eligible for FEMA funding on their own or have the option to participate as a stakeholder. As a stakeholder they would not need to adopt the plan but could not apply directly to FEMA for grant funding.

Scott emphasized that local input, and participation from the county, municipalities, and special districts is required for full approval from FEMA. Participation includes the following:

- Attend meetings and participate in the planning process
- Provide requested information to update or develop jurisdictional information
- Review drafts and provide comments
- Identify mitigation projects specific to jurisdiction, provide status
- Assist with and participate in the public input process
- Coordinate formal adoption

Stakeholders include other local, state and federal agencies with a stake in hazard mitigation in the County or may include academic institutions and local business and industry. State and federal stakeholders may include the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Colorado Department of Public Health (CDPHE), Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The HMPC noted the National Parks Service, Front Range Fire Protection District, Peaks to People Water Fund and Colorado Forest Restoration Institute should also be included as stakeholders in their process. Neighboring counties will also be notified about the update and given an opportunity to provide input into the process.

Stakeholders have various options and levels of participation including:

- Attend HMPC meetings or stay in loop via email list
- Provide data/information
- Partner on mitigation efforts
- Review draft plan

## Plan Update Requirements, Key Elements and Schedule

Aspects of the planning process include:

- Engage the participants to take part in planning process and efforts
- Raise awareness and engage the public
- Update hazards and baseline development data to reflect current conditions
- Update the mitigation strategy
- Document progress and note changes in priorities

An important requirement of the hazard mitigation planning process is to involve the public in the process. FEMA requires two opportunities for public involvement: once during the drafting stage and once more prior to plan approval. FEMA does not prescribe how to involve the public at either of these steps. There are several advantages to involving the public including developing solutions that fit local needs better, strengthening local support for the plan and ensuring a fair process in the development of the plan. It was acknowledged that it can be challenging to get the public to attend meetings and shared that Wood has had success with using online surveys to receive good feedback. It is also recommended to “piggyback” public meetings and outreach with other related meetings or webinars.

Another requirement of the plan update process is performing a community capability assessment. This is an assessment of the communities existing plans, regulations, fiscal abilities, administrative and technical abilities. Identifying fiscal abilities early on is important because FEMA requires a 25% match of local funds. Early identification will help to understand potential funding sources now that could be used to possibly match the federal funds. Additionally, it is important that participating jurisdictions track any time in which they are engaged in the Hazard Mitigation Process and provide this information to the Project Lead as this time can be used to meet this match requirement.

Conducting a risk assessment is a key aspect of a hazard mitigation plan and involves two components: hazard identification (what can happen here) and the vulnerability assessment (what will be affected). The HMP update will be based on existing documents and studies, with the Larimer County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2016) providing the baseline for identified hazards and the groundwork for goals, policies and actions for hazard mitigation.

The HMP will be updated over the next six months, with at least two more meetings with the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee. Wood will be updating the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) in the next couple of months, with input from the HMPC. Three drafts of the HMP will be created: the first for review by HMPC committee, a second for public review, and a third for state and FEMA review. The tentative project schedule is shown below, although these dates may need to be adjusted based on the ongoing pandemic situation.

<u>Project Milestone</u>	<u>Anticipated Timeline</u>
• HMPC Meeting #2 – HIRA Review	May 2020
• HMPC Meeting #3 – Mitigation Strategy	June 2020
• Updated HIRA	July 2020
• HMPC Meeting #4 – Plan Review	August 2020
• HMPC Review Draft	September 2020
• Public Review Draft	September – October 2020
• CO DHSEM Review	October 2020
• FEMA Review (estimated)	October – December 2020
• Final Approved HMP for local adoption	January 2021

## Overview of 2016 Larimer County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Based on hazards from the previous plan, the list of potential hazards was reviewed. Amy Carr, Hazard Mitigation Planner at Wood, listed the hazards in the 2016 HMP. Amy noted that the significance level of some hazards may vary across the County, and some hazards may not be applicable to all jurisdictions.

- Biological Hazards
- Civil Disturbance
- Earthquake
- Erosion/Deposition
- Fire – Wildland
- Flood
- Hazmat
- Landslide/Rockslide
- Spring/Summer Storm
- Tornado
- Utility Disruption
- Winter Storm

Amy asked the group to review the list of hazards and comment on how they could be enhanced or updated with:

- Historic incidents
- Incident logs
- Public perception
- Scientific studies
- Other plans and reports (e.g., flood and drainage studies, CWPPs, Internet databases)
- Recent disasters

## Coordinating with Other Agencies, Related Planning Efforts, and Recent Studies

A discussion on recent studies of hazards in other documents and reports followed the identified hazards discussion. Opportunities for coordinating and cross-referencing the HMP were discussed. HMPC members shared the following recent studies and related planning efforts:

- Larimer County Strategic Plan
- City of Loveland Mitigation Master Plan
- Town of Wellington Comprehensive Plan and Stormwater Master Plan (*both undergoing updates in 2020*)
- Big Thompson River Master Plan (*being developed and to be completed in June 2021*)
- City of Fort Collins's Climate Action Plan and Road to Zero Waste and Energy Policy Update (*both undergoing updates this year*)

Representatives from the City of Fort Collins added that they can likely include information from the risk assessment update and potentially link this process to the City's update to the Climate Action Plan, *Our Climate Future*.

## Community Rating System (CRS) Requirements

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary program that recognizes activities above and beyond the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The goals of the CRS programs are: Reduce flood damage to insurable property, Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP, and Encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management. One benefit of CRS participation is providing community discounts on flood insurance premiums.

CRS credits for Activity 510 *Floodplain Management Planning* can be achieved through the planning process for the County's Hazard Mitigation Planning update in 2020. Currently, only the City of Fort Collins and City of Loveland participate in the CRS program. Both will be working with the consultant to receive CRS credits through this process.

## Initial Information Needs and Next steps

Scott discussed initial information needs and next steps. Wood will be sending a Data Collection Guide requesting input on:

- Recent hazard events (since 2016) – damages, incident logs, damage assessments, etc.
- Growth and development trends
- Recent updated plans and policies

Where available online, Wood will try to obtain the updated plans previously noted. Scott encouraged the group to send other information that might not be readily accessible online.

A Google Share Drive has been set up for the project to share large documents and general project milestones. A GIS needs list was provided to the County to assist with data collection, which is already in progress. The County will provide the meeting summary, handouts, presentation and sign in sheet by email so that other HMPC members that could not attend today's meeting could get up to speed. Scott noted that he will be in touch to follow-up on some of the previously identified data sources and plans.

Wood will begin work in the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment update and develop a public survey that can be used online, with a hardcopy version for dissemination at local events. The next HMPC webinar is tentatively planned for May following the update of the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment section of the plan. However, the project schedule may need to be adjusted due to the current pandemic situation. Meeting dates and other deadlines will be shared when available.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 pm

scott.field@woodplc.com  
303-742-5320