
BY-LAWS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

3.1 Introduction

This section of the Santa Rosa County LMS Plan describes the characteristics of the Task Force as an organization, as defined in its bylaws, and the basic procedures for conducting the planning process, which are described in the Task Force's operating procedures. Both of these documents are provided in this section, and summarized below.

The Santa Rosa County Local Mitigation Strategy Task Force consists of two components: A Steering Committee and a Working Group.

3.2 The Bylaws of the Task Force

(See Appendix 3.2 to view the LMS Task Force Bylaws)

The Santa Rosa County LMS Task Force has adopted bylaws to establish its purpose and responsibility, to create a structure for the organization, and to establish the other fundamental characteristics of the Task Force as a community service organization. The Bylaws are provided as an appendix to this document, along with an attachment that identifies the members and their alternates.

The Bylaws establish two components that develop and promote mitigation programs in the County and the three municipalities. These two components are the Steering Committee and the Working Group.

The Steering Committee consists of appointed members. This includes membership from each local government jurisdiction, the County's school district, American Red Cross, and other entities. This Committee establishes policy for the Task Force and has the power to approve changes/revisions to the LMS Plan, including approval of initiatives on the priorities listing of projects.

The Working Group consists of citizens, businesses, non-profits, and other representation. Its purpose is to provide a forum of discussion and to make recommendations to the Steering Committee concerning issues that come before the LMS Committee.

3.3 Operating Procedures in Developing the LMS Plan

The planning process undertaken by the Task Force is generally described in the operating procedures of the group, which are enclosed in this section as the Bylaws. The process described in the procedures mainly addresses how hazard mitigation initiatives are to be developed and processed. These procedures involve both a technical approach to the planning and an organizational methodology for incorporating mitigation initiatives into the Santa Rosa County LMS Plan. The general technical analysis process is that identified here:

Santa Rosa County Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

The planning process has been started with the development of the Task Force as an organization and obtaining participation from the local government jurisdictions and key organizations and institutions. The planning work conducted to develop this document relies heavily on the expertise and authorities of the participating agencies and organizations, rather than on detailed scientific or engineering studies. The Task Force is confident that the best judgment of the participating individuals, because of their role in the community, can achieve a level of detail in the analysis that is more than adequate for purposes of local mitigation planning. As the planning process described herein continues, more detailed and costly scientific studies of the mitigation needs of the community can be defined as initiatives for incorporation into the plan and implemented as resources become available to do so.

Establishing the planning schedule

As indicated in the exhibit, the Task Force initially established a planning schedule for the upcoming planning period that allows the participants to anticipate their involvement in the technical analyses and evaluations. At the outset of the planning period, the Task Force defined the goals that the planning process is attempting to achieve, as well as the specific objectives within each goal that will help to focus the planning efforts.

Conducting the needed analyses and then formulating proposed mitigation initiatives to avoid or minimize each and every vulnerability of the community to future disasters is an enormous effort. The effort must take place over a long period of time. Therefore, for any one planning period, the goals and objectives set by the Task Force were intended to help focus the effort of the participants, for example, by directing attention to certain types of facilities or neighborhoods, or by emphasizing implementation of selected types of proposed mitigation initiatives.

Hazard Identification and Risk Estimation

The Task Force then identifies the natural, technological and societal hazards that threaten all or portions of the community. Where possible, specific geographic areas subject to the impacts of the identified hazards are delineated. The Task Force also uses general information to estimate the relative risk of the various hazards as an additional method to focus their analysis and planning efforts. The Task Force compares the likelihood or probability that a hazard will impact an area, as well as the consequences of that impact to public health and safety, property, the economy, and the environment. This comparison of the consequences of an event with its probability of occurrence is a measure of the risk posed by that hazard to the community. The Task Force compares the estimated relative risks of the different hazards it has identified to highlight which hazards should be of greatest concern during the upcoming mitigation planning process.

Depending on the participating jurisdiction, a variety of information resources regarding hazard identification and risk estimation have been available. The planners

representing the jurisdiction have attempted to incorporate consideration of hazard specific maps, including flood plain delineation maps, whenever applicable, and have attempted to avail themselves of GIS-based analyses of hazard areas and the locations of critical facilities, infrastructure components and other properties located within the defined hazard areas.

Estimating the relative risk of different hazards is followed by the assessment of the vulnerabilities in the likely areas of impact to the types of physical or operational agents potentially resulting from a hazard event. Two methods are available to the Task Force to assess the communities' vulnerabilities to future disasters.

Vulnerability Assessment

The first avenue is a methodical, qualitative examination of the vulnerabilities of important facilities, systems and neighborhoods to the impacts of future disasters. For the participating jurisdictions and organizations, this is accomplished by the individuals most familiar with the facility, system or neighborhood through a guided, objective assessment process. The process ranks both the hazards to which the facility, system or neighborhood is most vulnerable, as well as the consequences to the community should it be disrupted or damaged by a disaster. This process typically results in identification of specific vulnerabilities that can be addressed by specific mitigation initiatives that can be proposed and incorporated into this plan. As an associated process, the Task Force also reviews past experiences with disasters to see if those events highlighted the need for specific mitigation initiatives based on the type or location of damage they caused. Again, these experiences can result in the formulation and characterization of specific mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the plan.

The second avenue for assessment of community vulnerabilities, as illustrated in the exhibit, involves comparison of the existing policy, program and regulatory framework promulgated by local jurisdictions to control growth, development and facility operations in a manner that minimizes vulnerability to future disasters. The Task Force members can assess the individual jurisdictions' existing codes, plans, and programs to compare their provisions and requirements against the hazards posing the greatest risk to that community. If indicated, the participating jurisdiction can then propose development of additional codes, plans or policies as mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the Santa Rosa County Local Mitigation Plan for future implementation when it is appropriate to do so.

Developing Hazard Mitigation Initiatives

This process enables the Task Force participants to highlight the most significant vulnerabilities, again to assist in prioritizing subsequent efforts to formulate and characterize specific hazard mitigation initiatives to eliminate or minimize those vulnerabilities. Once the highest priorities are defined, the Task Force participants can identify specific mitigation initiatives for the plan that would eliminate or minimize those vulnerabilities.

The LMS steering committee will establish a methodical, objective procedure for characterizing and justifying the mitigation initiative proposed by each participating jurisdiction for incorporation into this plan. This procedure involves describing the initiative, relating it to one of the goals and objectives established by the Task Force, and justifying its implementation on the basis of its economic benefits and/or protection of public health and safety, as well as valuable or irreplaceable resources. A “benefit to cost” ratio is established for each initiative to demonstrate that it would indeed be worthwhile to implement when or if the resources to do so became available. Further, each proposed mitigation initiative is “prioritized” for implementation in a consistent manner by each participating organization using a set of ten objective criteria.

In characterizing a mitigation initiative for incorporation into the Task Force’s plan, it is important to recognize that the level of analysis conducted by each organization involved has been intentionally designed to be appropriate for this stage in the planning process. That is, it is the interest of the Task Force to have a satisfactory level of confidence that a proposed mitigation initiative, when it is implemented, will be cost effective, feasible to implement, acceptable to the community, and technically effective in its purpose. To do this, the technical analyses conducted, including the development of a benefit to cost ratio for each proposal, have been based on a straightforward, streamlined approach, relying largely on the informed judgment of experienced local officials. The analyses have not been specifically designed to meet the known or anticipated requirements of any state or federal funding agency, due largely to the fact that such requirements can vary with the agency and type of proposal. Therefore, at the point when the organization proposing the initiative is applying for funding from any state or federal agency, or from any other public or private funding source, that organization will then address the specific informational or analytical requirements of the funding agency.

Each mitigation initiative proposed for incorporation into the plan is formulated and submitted to the Task Force for consideration by an agency, organization, business or individual that has the authority or responsibility for its implementation. This avoids the artificiality of proposing mitigation initiatives when it is unclear who would implement them and if the authority to do so is actually available.

Developing the Local Mitigation Plan

Once the above procedure is completed by the agency or organization developing the proposed mitigation initiative, the information used to characterize the initiative is submitted to the Task Force for review and inter-jurisdictional coordination. At this point, an initiative is considered to be a “pending initiative” that is being processed for incorporation into the plan, when it then becomes an “approved initiative.”

On receipt of a pending initiative, the Planning Committee first evaluates the merits of the proposal and the validity of the judgments and assumptions that went into its characterization, as well as considers its potential for conflict with other jurisdiction’s programs or interests. The Planning Committee also assures that the proposal is consistent with the goals and objectives established for the planning period and

confirms that it would not duplicate or harm a proposal submitted by another jurisdiction or agency. If there is such a difficulty with a proposed initiative, it is returned to the submitting organization for revision or reconsideration.

Once the Planning Committee has reviewed and coordinated the submitted initiative, and is satisfied regarding its merit, it is forwarded to the Steering Committee for formal consideration regarding incorporation into the Santa Rosa County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Steering Committee again can assure that the proposed initiative is consistent with the goals and objectives for the planning period and would be beneficial for the community as a whole if and when implemented. If so, the Steering Committee then votes to incorporate the proposed initiative into the strategy. The proposed initiative is then considered to be approved.

During routine updates of the Santa Rosa County LMS Plan, each mitigation strategy included in the plan is evaluated to determine if it is still valid or should be removed from the plan, or whether its implementation should be a priority or deferred until a later time.

Approval of the Current Edition of the Plan

At the end of each planning period, a plan document such as this is prepared for release to the community and for action by the governing bodies of the jurisdictions and organizations that participated in the planning process. To facilitate this action, Section 8 of the plan provides hazard assessment information and proposed initiatives in separate discussions grouped by jurisdiction or key organization. With this approach, the governing body only needs to approve, endorse or act on its own component of the plan, and to address the implementation of mitigation initiatives its own representatives proposed. Consequently, there is no need for one jurisdiction or organization to be concerned with acting on proposals made by and for another.

Implementation of Approved Mitigation Strategies

Once incorporated into the Santa Rosa County LMS Plan, the agency or organization proposing the initiative becomes responsible for its implementation. This may mean developing a budget for the effort, or making application to state and federal agencies for financial support for implementation. This is the approach utilized by the Santa Rosa County LMS Task Force because only the jurisdiction or organization itself has the authorities or responsibilities to implement its proposed mitigation initiatives. The current status of implementation of mitigation initiatives incorporated into the plan is discussed in the next section. If an initiative applies to more than one agency or organization, they will jointly be responsible for its implementation.

3.4 Benefits of the Planning Process

It is important to emphasize that the procedure used by the Santa Rosa County LMS Task Force is based on the following important concepts:

- A multi-organizational, multi-jurisdictional planning group establishes specific

goals and objectives to address the community's vulnerabilities to all types of hazards.

- It utilizes a logical, stepwise process of hazard identification, risk evaluation and vulnerability assessment, as well as review of past disaster events, that is consistently applied by all participants.
- Mitigation initiatives are proposed for incorporation into the plan only by those jurisdictions or organizations with the authorities and responsibilities for their implementation.
- The process encourages participants to propose specific mitigation initiatives that are feasible to implement and clearly directed at reducing specific vulnerabilities to future disasters.
- Proposed mitigation initiatives are characterized in a substantive manner, suitable for this level of planning, to assure their cost effectiveness and technical merit, as well as coordinated among jurisdictions to assure that conflicts or duplications are avoided.