

Santa Rosa County
Flood Mitigation Plan Task Force Meeting
August 24, 2009, 1:00 pm
Milton, Florida

ATTENDEES:

Sheila Harris, Grants Coordinator/ Special Projects for Santa Rosa County (SRC) will be leading the meeting today.

Warren Brown, Resident of Navarre

Stephen Furman, SRC Assistant Public Works Director

Dewayne Ashworth, District Technician, sitting in for Trent Matthews, District Conservationist, United States Department of Agriculture and Natural Resource Conservation Services, Blackwater SWCD

Karen Thornhill, SRC Floodplain Manager

Linda Bauer, Department of Environmental Protection, Stormwater Section

Larry O'Donnell, DEP in Pensacola, Wetlands and Special projects

Paul Miller, SRC Planning and Zoning, Long range comprehensive planning

William R. Semaine, Gulf Breeze Resident

Lou Greene, Navarre CERT

Scott Foster, Navarre CERT

Daniel Hahn, SRC Emergency Management

Don Richards, President, United Peninsula Association, representing the South End

Tom Scott, Milton Resident, Blackwater Pyrates

Ken Cromer, American Red Cross

Doug Lasater, Milton Resident, Bagdad Waterfronts

Kyle Holley, North End Tourism Development Council

Sheila Harris started the meeting telling that the meeting's topic is "setting goals". (See handouts for process explanation.) We've previously done steps 1-5, about the flooding hazard overall and specific problems in Santa Rosa County (SRC). In the next two meetings we will look at the specific projects we can implement, or list, in the Plan.

Step 6 is *Setting Goals*. I've included in the packet pages from the Community Rating System Manual, pages 510-15 and 16 (*Setting Goals*). Also attached are draft goals to consider for comparison, including the goals from the SRC Local Mitigation Strategy, which is the current plan adopted by SRC that guides our mitigation actions. Also attached are the goals from the City of Hallandale Beach, Florida and Roseville, California, which is the only jurisdiction in the United States that is a Class 1 in the CRS program, to show the type of information we're looking for.

The difference between goals and objectives is that goals are very general in nature, long-term policy statements that explain what is to be achieved. These goals will guide the remainder of the planning process. Objectives are a bit more specific and can be measured.

Stephen Furman added that a good goal would be to achieve a better CRS rating for an increased discount on flood insurance. Because the CRS is going to affect everybody in the county's pocketbook, from the individual who has a home, to the business, and the County itself, economically it should be at the top of the list. That makes the whole thing we're doing more palatable to the average citizen.

Sheila will comprise all the goals today and see where the improving the CRS score will fit in.

Karen Thornhill explained that with every class that we improve in the CRS program, we save the people that have flood insurance policies in unincorporated SRC, in total, \$300,000, or about \$70 per policy.

Daniel Hahn thinks that we don't need to address the SRC Local Mitigation Strategy goals as they are much too wordy and are multi-hazard, versus just flooding. Sheila pointed out that our Flood Mitigation Plan goals must be consistent with the SRC LMS goals, as well as the Comprehensive Plan and other plans that the County has.

Sheila asks that they focus on the Draft Goals, summarized as:

- Protect people
- Protect private property
- Improve quality of life

Goal 3 - Protect the continuity of local government to ensure no significant disruption of services during or due to a disaster. In other words, protect critical infrastructure from flooding. If the lift stations are flooded, sewage backs up into the houses. The lift stations fall under that private property category.

It was brought to the attention of the meeting that the goals must be palatable to the public, the average citizen, that they can accept and endorse, not something arbitrary, like, "improve the quality of life".

During this planning process is a good time to review the land use regulations and/or zoning regulations. Paul Miller advised that we're in the process of reviewing those now. Part of what we're looking at is trying to get all of our five plans talking the same language and addressing similar points. Obviously this Plan is in more detail than the land development code and what the Comprehensive Plan has, but one of the objectives here is to mesh all of that so that when we do write these goals, they fall in line with the rest of the County's Plans. Sheila Harris explained that if we identify something about a regulation or ordinance as a result of this planning process that we feel should be changed, then there is a process for that. There are public hearings involved. This Task Force can't make a change to a regulation. Karen further explained that the ultimate responsibility for the floodplain management lies with the Building Official, Mr. Tolbert and he would present the idea to the Board, for approval or consideration, for an ordinance change.

We're trying to focus on flood mitigation so we need to talk about the aspects of limiting what happens when we do have a flood, and at the same time protecting the natural environment.

A comment was made that one of the things we can do is publish flood levels, especially for people who are in the northern section of the County, so that when they build up there, they're above the flood level. Karen adds that is one of the goals she wants to see in the plan is to find money to map those flood areas, and to assign base flood elevations to them. As of now the only thing we've got in the north end of the county is what they call approximate A Zones, and those are basically where they followed the national wetland inventory maps for some areas and drew in flood zones. These areas have never been studied. We don't know if they are still wetlands, and whether that wetland area is bigger or smaller. In contrast, the coastal areas are done with LiDAR and studied very well. The coastal areas are going to be studied within the next four years. They've already gotten \$7 million to do it, with LiDAR. Once we do this, in the north, a person who lives in those zones will know if they are at risk or not. Most of these homes were built before we even talked about floods.

The upper river floods when you least expect it, and a lot of people are getting flooded out. The majority of those people are high enough now, but there are people that are going to build homes that have no clue. Karen asked if he was talking about River Road area, Pat Brown Road? She explained that all of that area has been mapped and the County does have elevation requirements. Those maps are on the County website. Karen stated that if the realtors don't tell buyers about the flood hazard, they could be sued.

Mr. Scott said that he has been with the Blackwater Pyrates for years. It's a river organization that protects the river, and they do social events with the community. We go out on special calls and help the people who have gotten flooded. We look for their lost possessions down the river for them. It is important that we educate the public and make them more aware of what the hazard is. Public education should be a big part of this. Karen Thornhill explained that this plan will have an *outreach strategy* and that she would like Mr. Scott's input because he has a lot of good ideas. Having an outreach strategy is extremely important,

not just for the riverine areas, but also for the coastal areas. Having people from the DEP, the Forestry Dept and the Red Cross, etc. that have an interest in getting information about the flood hazard out, and that are comfortable talking about it is very important to the Plan.

Sheila explains that there is a lot of mitigation funding out there, especially in the State of Florida. They have more money set aside for mitigation than local governments can even spend right now. So it's really important that we have a Plan that explains that these are the things that we want to do, and then having the specific projects that we want to do listed. We must have this Plan to be able to access the money that is available from grants.

It was added that the goals in our plan are not going to affect our ability to apply for and receive a grant. What's going to impede that is the 25% match, which may or may not be required, for either the citizen or the government to come up with. That's the impediment.

Sheila wants to be sure that we make it clear that we are minimizing the impact to the environment through our mitigation activities.

A question was raised about the new signs that say, "You are now entering the Santa Rosa Sound Floodplain Area"? Stephen answered that they were from an education grant that was available. If people realize that this is the Escambia Bay Watershed, or the Pond Creek Watershed they may feel like, that's my watershed because I live in this area, so they're less likely to litter there. It also provides an opportunity to explain to someone when they ask about the sign, what a watershed is, and to tell them that if you put pollutants down your storm drain it's going to end-up downstream. In my personal experience, it's had some success.

Sheila explained that the County must have a Local Mitigation Strategy Plan in order to be eligible for mitigation funding. We already have that multi-hazard plan in place, but it is not very specific to flooding. So we felt that if we could develop a Flood Mitigation Plan it would be substantial enough to help guide the efforts of the grants office; it would help Karen's department with their floodplain management; it would help the citizens that bought property in a floodplain if they have questions. If I'm asking for grant money to do an objective in our Flood Mitigation Plan, they may view that more favorably than an applicant that doesn't have that laid out as an objective in a Plan. Because we also have a project list that will come out of this it will help guide me when we look for funding. We see this as a way to help guide our efforts related to grants as one of the main purposes. Karen adds that they want backup documentation in writing. We're giving them the backup so we can get the money.

Also a big part of having this Flood Mitigation Plan is to help with the County's CRS recertification. The CRS is the easiest way to save taxpayers money. It would be best to include that in the narrative. The purpose and intent of the Flood Mitigation Plan is to improve our CRS rating and passing along insurance discounts to our homeowners. It should be in the narrative or a vision statement

Mr. Semaine noted that the local newspaper should be involved in the public education aspect of flood mitigation. Sheila answered that all of the news outlets that would generally get news releases from the county all received news releases on the planning effort and some of the papers did pick it up and publish articles about the effort.

In a discussion about objectives it was noted that these are either pro-active or re-active types of objectives, and maybe that's a way to break them out. Pro-active would be public education, instruction, ensure the residents are given adequate warning. Reactive would be after flood events.

Sheila notes that within our Flood Mitigation Plan there will be a narrative on how we will maintain the plan. A Task Force member commented that one of the things that we need to consider when we're talking about reviewing is population growth in this county, because every time we build a new house we reduce perc. If you reduce an acre of perc, you add an acre of runoff.

A speaker reiterated that the Plan objectives must be worded in a way that the average citizen can relate to and understand.

After a discussion of possible goals and objectives, Sheila said that she will take the changes to the “Draft Goals” that were discussed, and put it into a format as I understood and as Paul wrote down, and then when we come to the next meeting we’ll look at this again. We’ll have time to finish up our goals and objectives. Then, if we have time at the next meeting we’ll move to the next step, which is *reviewing possible activities* and that will be our micro level.

The next meeting day will be Monday, September 14 at 1:00 pm to finish-up the goals and go on to possible activities. Then we’ll meet again on September 28th.

We have a consultant transcribing the minutes of our meetings. They will take everything that we discuss and they are actually drafting the plan, which will hopefully incorporate accurately everything that we’ve agreed upon. We’ll see it in writing and have every opportunity to make changes and revisions. This consultant has been successful in helping other communities improve their CRS rating, which is what they specialize in. I’m hoping they will be at the next meeting to help tie up the process.

The sign-in sheet was copied and distributed. A request was made to keep the side-conversations to a minimum, as they are distracting.

The revised draft of the goals and objectives that were discussed at this meeting are attached to these minutes.

Adjourned. Meeting time 1:30

Santa Rosa County Flood Mitigation Plan

Draft GOALS – Revision #1

Goal 1. Protect people from the safety and health hazards caused by flooding.

Objective 1.1 Ensure that residents are given adequate *notification and* warning of floods and hurricanes.

Objective 1.2 Provide ~~and assure~~ appropriate ~~instruction~~ assistance before, during and after major flooding events.

Objective 1.3 Provide appropriate education and information regarding flooding to various groups through appropriate and pre-established channels.

Goal 2. Protect public and private property from damage by floods.

Objective 2.1 ~~Continually provide mechanisms for~~ *Implement effective procedures and processes that advance* local government jurisdictions and the public's ability to accomplish mitigation activities in Santa Rosa County.

Objective 2.2 Reduce or eliminate flooding hazards identified to at risk locations, including repetitive loss areas *and critical facilities*, in the County and its municipalities.

Objective 2.3. Ensure that new development reduces the possibility of property damage from flooding by retaining and managing stormwater and building to safe elevations.

Objective 2.4. Reduce flooding hazard through strategic planning and implementations, including updating the Flood Mitigation Plan, as necessary.

Objective 2.5 Assist property owners, residents, businesses, non-profits and others in understanding and knowing of their eligibility for grants, loans and services that may help to mitigate hazards that directly affect their interests.

~~Objective 2.6 Maintain communication to coordinate intra and inter departmental mitigation activities among various jurisdictions, and with the public.~~

Goal 3. Improve the quality of life in Santa Rosa County *by maintaining, enhancing, and restoring the natural environment's capacity to deal with the impacts of flooding.*

Objective 3.1. Protect by regulation, acquisition and/or restoration, existing natural areas, particularly in the floodplain.

Objective 3.2. Ensure preservation of open space.

Objective 3.3. Minimize destructive erosion.