

# SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Section I: Introduction provides a general introduction to natural hazard mitigation planning in Polk County. In addition, it addresses the planning process requirements contained in 44 CFR 201.6(b) thereby meeting the planning process documentation requirement contained in 44 CFR 201.6(c)(1). The section concludes with a general description of how the plan is organized.

## What is Natural Hazard Mitigation?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines mitigation as “. . . the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters . . . through risk analysis, which results in information that provides a foundation for mitigation activities that reduce risk.”<sup>1</sup> Said another way, natural hazard mitigation is a method of permanently reducing or alleviating the losses of life, property, and injuries resulting from natural hazards through long and short-term strategies. Example strategies include policy changes, such as updated ordinances, projects, seismic retrofits to critical facilities, and education and outreach to targeted audiences, such as Spanish speaking residents or the elderly. Natural hazard mitigation is the responsibility of the “Whole Community”; individuals, private businesses and industries, state and local governments, and the federal government.

Engaging in mitigation activities provides jurisdictions with a number of benefits, including reduced loss of life, property, essential services, critical facilities and economic hardship; reduced short-term and long-term recovery and reconstruction costs; increased cooperation and communication within the community through the planning process; and increased potential for state and federal funding for recovery and reconstruction projects.

## Why Develop a Mitigation Plan?

Polk County developed this Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP or Plan) in an effort to reduce future loss of life and damage to property resulting from natural hazards. It is impossible to predict exactly when natural hazard events will occur, or the extent to which they will affect community assets. However, with careful planning and collaboration among public agencies, private sector organizations, and citizens within the community, it is possible to minimize the losses that can result from natural hazards.

In addition to establishing a comprehensive community-level mitigation strategy, the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) and the regulations contained in 44 CFR 201, require that jurisdictions maintain an approved NHMP in order to receive federal funds for mitigation projects. Local and federal approval of this plan ensures that the county and listed cities will remain eligible for pre- and post-disaster mitigation project grants.

---

<sup>1</sup> FEMA, *What is Mitigation?* <http://www.fema.gov/what-mitigation>

## What Federal Requirements Does This Plan Address?

DMA2K is the latest federal legislation addressing mitigation planning. It reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and emphasizes planning for natural hazards before they occur. As such, this Act established the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant program and new requirements for the national post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Section 322 of the Act specifically addresses mitigation planning at the state and local levels. State and local jurisdictions must have approved mitigation plans in place in order to qualify to receive post-disaster HMGP funds. Mitigation plans must demonstrate that State and local jurisdictions' proposed mitigation measures are based on a sound planning process that accounts for the risk to the individual and State and local jurisdictions' capabilities.

Chapter 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 201.6, also requires a local government to have an approved mitigation plan in order to receive HMGP project grants.<sup>2</sup> Pursuant of Chapter 44 CFR, the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan planning processes shall include opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during review, and the updated Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan shall include documentation of the public planning process used to develop the plan.<sup>3</sup> The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan update must also contain a risk assessment, mitigation strategy and a plan maintenance process that has been formally adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan must be submitted to Oregon Military Department – Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for initial plan review, and then federal approval.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, a recent change in the way OEM administers the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), which helps fund local emergency management programs, also requires a FEMA-approved NHMP.

## What is the Policy Framework for Natural Hazards Planning in Oregon?

Planning for natural hazards is an integral element of Oregon's statewide land use planning program, which began in 1973. All Oregon cities and counties have comprehensive plans (Comprehensive Plans) and implementing ordinances that are required to comply with the statewide planning goals. The challenge faced by state and local governments is to keep this network of local plans coordinated in response to the changing conditions and needs of Oregon communities.

Statewide land use planning Goal 7: Areas Subject to Natural Hazards calls for local plans to include inventories, policies and ordinances to guide development in or away from hazard areas. Goal 7, along with other land use planning goals, has helped to reduce losses from natural hazards. Through risk identification and the recommendation of risk-reduction actions, this plan aligns with the goals of the jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan, and helps each jurisdiction meet the requirements of statewide land use planning Goal 7.

---

<sup>2</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 44. Section 201.6, subsection (a), 2015

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, subsection (b). 2015

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, subsection (c). 2015

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, subsection (d). 2015

The primary responsibility for the development and implementation of risk reduction strategies and policies lies with local jurisdictions. However, additional resources exist at the state and federal levels. Some of the key agencies in this area include Oregon Military Department – Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Oregon Building Codes Division (BCD), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), and the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD).

## **How was the Plan Developed?**

The plan was developed by the Polk County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee and the Steering Committees for the cities of Dallas, Falls City, Monmouth, and Independence. The Polk County Steering Committee formally convened on three occasions to discuss and revise the plan. Each of the participating city Steering Committees met at least once formally. Steering Committee members contributed data and maps, and reviewed and updated the community profile, risk assessment, action items, and implementation and maintenance plan.

An open public involvement process is essential to the development of an effective plan. In order to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing the effects of natural disasters, the planning process shall include opportunity for the public, neighboring communities, local and regional agencies, as well as, private and non-profit entities to comment on the plan during review.<sup>6</sup> OPDR provided a publicly accessible project website for the general public to provide feedback on the draft NHMP via a web form. In addition, Polk County provided a press release on their website and in the Itemizer Observer to encourage the public to offer feedback on the plan update. The County and city websites continue to be a focal point for distribution natural hazard information through the use of hazard viewers, emergency alerts, hazard preparation, and annual natural hazard progress reports.

## **How is the Plan Organized?**

Each volume of the plan provides specific information and resources to assist readers in understanding the hazard-specific issues facing county and city residents, businesses, and the environment. Combined, the sections work in synergy to create a mitigation plan that furthers the community's mission to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and their property from hazards and their effects. This plan structure enables stakeholders to use the section(s) of interest to them.

### **Volume I: Basic Plan**

#### **Plan Summary**

The plan summary provides an overview of the FEMA requirements, planning process, and highlights the key elements of the risk assessment, mitigation strategy, and implementation and maintenance strategy.

---

<sup>6</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 44. Section 201.6, subsection (b). 2015

## Section 1: Introduction

The Introduction briefly describes the countywide mitigation planning efforts and the methodology used to develop the plan.

## Section 2: Risk Assessment

Section 2 provides the factual basis for the mitigation strategies contained in Section 3. (Additional information is included within Appendix B, which contains an overall description of Polk County and the cities of Dallas, Falls City, Monmouth, and Independence.) This section includes a brief description of community sensitivities and vulnerabilities. The Risk Assessment allows readers to gain an understanding of each jurisdiction's vulnerability and resilience to natural hazards.

A hazard summary is provided for each of the hazards addressed in the plan. The summary includes hazard history, location, extent, vulnerability, impacts, and probability. This NHMP addresses the following hazards:

- Drought
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Landslide
- Volcano
- Wildfire
- Windstorm
- Winter Storm

Additionally, this section provides information on the jurisdictions' participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

## Section 3: Mitigation Strategy

This section documents the plan vision, mission, goals, and actions (mitigation strategy) and also describes the components that guide implementation of the identified actions. Actions are based on community sensitivity and resilience factors, and the risk assessments in Section 2 and Volume II (City Addenda).

## Section 4: Plan Implementation and Maintenance

This section provides information on the implementation and maintenance of the plan. It describes the process for prioritizing projects, and includes a suggested list of tasks for updating the plan, to be completed at the semi-annual and five-year review meetings.

## Volume II: Jurisdictional Addenda

Volume II of the plan is reserved for any city or special district addenda developed through this multi-jurisdictional planning process. Each of the cities within the county participated in the NHMP process and created an addendum. As such, the five-year update cycle will be the same for all of the cities and the county. The cities of Salem (Marion) and Willamina (Yamhill) are the only incorporated city partially within Polk County that are not included within this MNHMP; the majority of Salem is within Marion County and the majority of Willamina is within Yamhill County. Salem has a stand-alone NHMP.

As such this plan includes addenda for the following jurisdictions: Dallas, Falls City, Independence, and Monmouth.

## **Volume III: Appendices**

The resource appendices are designed to provide the users of the Polk County NHMP with additional information to assist them in understanding the contents of the mitigation plan, and provide them with potential resources to assist with plan implementation.

### **Appendix A: Planning and Public Process**

This appendix includes documentation of all the countywide public processes utilized to develop the plan. It includes invitation lists, agendas, sign-in sheets, and summaries of Steering Committee meetings as well as any other public involvement methods.

### **Appendix B: Community Profile**

The community profile describes the county and participating cities from a number of perspectives in order to help define and understand the region's sensitivity and resilience to natural hazards. The information in this section represents a snapshot in time of the current sensitivity and resilience factors in the region when the plan was updated.

### **Appendix C: Economic Analysis of Natural Hazard Mitigation Projects**

This appendix describes the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) requirements for benefit cost analysis in natural hazards mitigation, as well as various approaches for conducting economic analysis of proposed mitigation activities.

### **Appendix D: Grant Programs and Resources**

This appendix lists state and federal resources and programs by hazard.

This page left intentionally blank.