

The Task Force is made up of a number of local government agencies, business interests, community organizations and institutions. This section describes the local jurisdictions and organizations participating in the Task Force and discusses the organizational structure used to complete the public planning process. It also explains 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. Furthermore, there is a summary of the current status of planning activities by the participants.

### **The Task Force Organizational Structure**

The Task Force encourages participation by all interested local jurisdictions, agencies, organizations and individuals. Broad community representation is promoted in the Task Force, through public meetings and the use of the internet to provide ample opportunity for public commentary and consideration of the local mitigation strategy. The organization is intended to represent a partnership between the public and private sectors of the community, working together to create a disaster resistant community. The proposed mitigation initiatives developed by the Task Force and listed in this plan, when implemented, are intended to make the entire community safer from the impacts of future disasters, for the benefit of every individual, neighborhood, business, and institution.

The responsibilities and duties of this organizational structure are provided in Appendix A: Task Force Bylaws. The 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.

Although the Disaster Resistant Communities Group (DRCG) has been primarily responsible for updating the LMS, the Task Force assists DRCG in making official decisions regarding the planning process. Most importantly for this document however, was the Task Force's role to be responsible for approval of proposed mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the plan, for determining the priorities for implementation of those initiatives, and for removing or terminating initiatives that are no longer desirable for implementation. The Task Force also coordinates the actual technical analyses and planning activities that are fundamental to development of this plan. These activities include conducting the hazard identification and vulnerability assessment processes, as well as receiving and coordinating the mitigation initiatives for incorporation into this plan.

The Task Force represents all of the local jurisdictions and key organizations participating in the planning process. The Task Force includes representatives from the planning and zoning department, building department, emergency management



department, insurance agencies, real estate, and the general public. Members of the city and county commission, as well as, the local chamber of commerce and non-governmental organizations were also involved. Individual jurisdictions, and their agencies and local organizations, were essential to accomplishing the planning process.

Each public and private entity that has been contacted thus far in the planning process is listed in Table 2.1. Members of each organization were sent invitation letters and e-mails explaining the importance of the LMS and requesting cooperation. Sample invitation letters to the jurisdictions and several community organizations are provided in Appendix B: Documentation of the Planning Process. The Task Force benefited from the assistance and support of its many members.

Participation on the Task Force is not limited in any manner, and all members of the community, whether representing the public or private sector, are welcome to participate. The public is encouraged to become involved with the LMS to gauge plan effectiveness and help identify local hazards to be placed on the county project list. Participation from interested parties, including local / adjacent government representatives and citizens, is solicited via the LMS Web, public meeting advertisements in The Star newspaper (documented in Appendix B: Documentation of the Planning Process) and articles in the Gulf County Chamber of Commerce newsletter.

Copies of all the Task Force's documents are maintained on the LMS Web and at the county's Emergency Management Department. Comments regarding the LMS can be made via the LMS Web or by contacting the county's Emergency Management Department via phone, letter, or e-mail. Public notices were placed in The Star newspaper (documented in Appendix B: Documentation of the Planning Process) advising interested parties that the draft mitigation strategies are available for comment at the appropriate locations. Interested parties can provide comments at any time, which will be incorporated into drafts of the local mitigation strategy.

As other potential stakeholders are identified, they will be contacted and asked to join the Task Force. The county will continually update its Task Force membership by providing updates at Board of County Commission meetings.

## Summary of the Planning Process

The Task Force scheduled to meet several times during the review and revision process Table 2.2.

The purpose of the LMS Public Hearing was to solicit formal public comments regarding the completed plan prior to its approval by the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and each participating jurisdiction.



It is important to emphasize that the procedure used by the Task Force was based on the following important concepts:

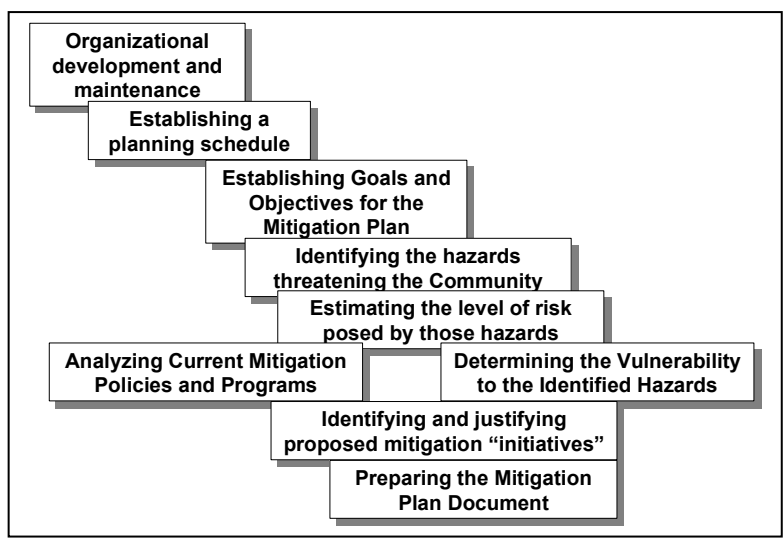
- A multi-organizational, multi-jurisdictional planning group establishes specific goals and objectives to address the community’s vulnerabilities to all types of hazards.
- It utilizes a logical, stepwise process of hazard identification, risk evaluation and vulnerability assessment, as well as review 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 are 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.

### The Task Force’s Operating Procedures

The planning process undertaken by the Task Force is generally described in the operating procedures of the group, which are enclosed in this section. 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 LMS. The general technical analysis process is that identified below.

**Figure # 2.1 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 establishes a planning schedule for the upcoming planning period that allows the participants to anticipate their involvement in the technical analyses and evaluations that they will be asked to do. 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. The goals and objectives established by the Task Force for this planning period are described in Section 5: Mitigation Goals and Policies.

Conducting the needed analyses and then formulating proposed mitigation initiatives to avoid or minimize vulnerability of the community to future disasters is an enormous effort, and one that must take place over a long period of time. Therefore, for any one planning period, the goals and objectives set by the Task Force are 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 identified the natural, technological, and societal hazards that threaten all or portions of the community. Specific geographic areas, subject to the impacts of the identified hazards are delineated where possible. The Task Force also used 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 compared 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 compared the estimated relative risks of the different hazards it identified to highlight which hazards should be of greatest concern during the ongoing mitigation planning process.



Depending on the participating jurisdiction, a variety of information resources regarding hazard identification and risk estimation are available. The planners representing the jurisdictions 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 was 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 done by the individuals most familiar with the facility, system or neighborhood. 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 assessed the individual jurisdiction's 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 could then propose development of additional codes, plans or policies as mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the LMS for future implementation when it is appropriate to do so. The Task Force consulted the following documents:

- Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance
- Gulf County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- Gulf County Comprehensive Plan
- Port St. Joe Comprehensive Plan
- City of Wewahitchka Comprehensive Plan
- Apalachee Regional Planning Council Strategic Regional Policy Plan



- Northwest Water Management District Plan
- State Comprehensive Plan
- State Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Community Ranking System Plan
- Flood Mitigation Assistance Plan

### **Developing Hazard Mitigation Initiatives**

This process enables the Task Force participants to highlight the most significant vulnerabilities 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 identified specific mitigation initiatives for the plan that would eliminate or minimize those vulnerabilities.

The Task Force established 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 implemented, will be cost effective, feasible, 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 LMS**

Once the above procedure was completed by the agency or organization developing the proposed mitigation initiative, the information used to characterize the initiative was submitted to the Task Force for review and inter-jurisdictional coordination.

On receipt of a pending initiative, the Task Force first evaluated the merits of the proposal and the validity of the judgments and assumptions that went into its characterization, as well as considered its potential for conflict with other jurisdiction's programs or interests. The Task Force also assured that the proposal was 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 was such a difficulty with a proposed initiative, it was returned to the submitting organization for revision or reconsideration.

Once the Task Force has reviewed and coordinated the submitted initiative, and is satisfied regarding its merit, it is formally considered for incorporation into the LMS. The Task Force 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 Task Force then informally votes to incorporate the proposed initiative into the strategy.

During routine updates of the LMS, each mitigation initiative 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.

## **Implementation of Approved Mitigation Initiatives**

Once incorporated into the LMS, 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 Task Force because only the jurisdiction or organization itself has the authorities or responsibilities to implement its proposed mitigation initiatives.

## **Current Status of Participation in the Task Force**

In order to support the participating jurisdictions in the completion of the community profiles and vulnerability assessments, the Task Force sets a schedule for each



technical analysis step, provides training in the evaluations needed, and distributes the necessary forms for completion. The jurisdictions then complete the assignments and return the forms to the Task Force. The information provided on these forms is then used to create this plan.

During the review and revision process of the LMS the Task Force facilitated two meetings and one Public Hearing Table 2.2. During these meetings and hearings as well as via the LMS Web up-dates were recommended and incorporated in the current version of the LMS.

The participating jurisdictions, organizations, and individuals in the Task Force have all worked diligently to complete this plan, and will continue to do so in the future to create a truly disaster resistant community for the benefit of all its citizens.

**Table # 2.1** **Task Force Membership**

Organization	Membership Type
<b>Port St. Joe</b>	
City of Port St. Joe	Municipality
City of Port St. Joe Police Department	Law Enforcement
Costin Insurance Agency Inc	Business
Hannon Insurance Company Inc	Business
<b>Wewahitchka</b>	
City of Wewahitchka	Municipality
<b>Gulf County (Unincorporated)</b>	
American Red Cross	Volunteer Organization
Coastal Community Assoc	Non-Profit
Gulf Coast Community College	Institution
Gulf County Board of County Commissioners	County
Gulf County Building Department	County
Gulf County Chamber of Commerce	Business
Gulf County Clerk of Court	County
Gulf County Emergency Management Department	County
Gulf County Extension Service Office	County
Gulf County Grants Department	County
Gulf County GIS Department	County



Gulf County Health Department	County
Gulf County Mosquito Control and Solid Waste Department	County
Gulf County Planning and Building Department	County
Gulf County Property Appraiser's Office	County
Gulf County Public Works Department	County
Gulf County Road Department	County
Gulf County Tourist Development Council	Business
Gulf County Veterans' Service	County
Mexico Beach Community Development Council Inc	Non-Profit
Salvation Army	County

<b>Table # 2.2</b>	<b>Task Force Work Plan</b>
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Date	Activity
2/25/09	Task Force Meeting – Public Notice
3/17/09	<p>Gulf County / LMS Web</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were several reasons for placing the LMS on the internet.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Task Force members could follow the progress being made on during the review and revision process as working draft copies were constantly placed to the web site.</li> <li>2. To ensure the widest possible public access to the LMS review and revision process.</li> <li>3. Provide a web based platform for allowing Task Force members and the general public to make comments and submit mitigation initiative proposals.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
3/17/09	<p>Task Force Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Task Force policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Review hazard identification and recent disaster events.</li> <li>• Analysis current mitigation initiatives.</li> </ul>
4/23/09	<p>Task Force Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess previous mitigation activities.</li> <li>• Evaluate the mitigation measures.</li> </ul>
5/20/09	Public Hearing



9/5/09	Submit Final Draft of the LMS to the various city and county commissions.
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