

This section of the LMS describes the goals established by the Task Force and the current programs, policies and plans that support mitigation. In addition, a catalog of organizations with mitigation functions is provided.

Goals for the Mitigation Plan

The county has established a number of goals to guide its work in the development of this plan and focus the efforts of the group in the mitigation planning effort to achieve an end result that matches the unique needs, capabilities and desires of the participating jurisdictions. The goals selected by the Task Force for the planning process are those listed below in Table 5.1. They are related to the broad mitigation needs and capabilities of the communities involved, rather than addressing a specific hazard type or category. Therefore, the county’s mitigation goals, by definition, are “multi-hazard” in scope and can be described as statements of the desired “mitigation-related capabilities” that will be present in each participating jurisdiction in the future as the goals are achieved.” The following table, Table 5.2 demonstrates how these mitigation goals are reflected in other current policies.

In the planning approach used by the Task Force, the goals are established for the entire planning area and all of the participating jurisdictions in a process that can be described as follows: Each Task Force member was provided with a worksheet of potential county goals, extracted from other local planning documents and county’s 1999 LMS. In an effort to solicit input from the general public regarding mitigation goals, attendees of the Task Force were asked to develop their own goals if they were not listed on the worksheet. Task Force members ranked each goal from most important to least important, omitting goals that should not be part of the LMS planning process or revising goal wording to suit the county’s specific needs. Completed worksheets were returned to the Task Force support staff, which compiled the ranked goals. This approach clearly creates a framework for “goal-based” planning by the Task Force, focusing the group’s efforts on proposing and implementing mitigation initiatives intended to achieve the mitigation goals established by the county and municipalities.

As the LMS is reviewed and updated by the Task Force the goals are also reviewed to ensure they are still applicable to meeting the unique needs, interests and desires of the county.

Table # 5.1

Ranked Mitigation Goals

Ranking	Goal
# 1	Protect the health, safety and welfare of the community's residents and visitors from disasters.



2. Support effective hazard mitigation programming throughout the community with local government policies and regulations.

...the unified development code...requires land development to be compatible with the topography, natural resources, soil conditions, and availability of facilities and services.	Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Element Objective 1.1
Gulf County will promote the redevelopment and renewal of blighted areas within the county by continuing to provide funding at or above existing levels for infrastructure improvements, housing rehabilitation, and related programs.	Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Element Objective 1.2
County shall endeavor to provide for safe, convenient, and efficient motorized and non-motorized traffic flow by implementing the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.	Comprehensive Plan, Traffic Circulation Element Objective 1.1
County will conserve its potable water resources...(by coordinating with NFWFMD to develop conservation strategies, Policy 1.4.1, and by adopting procedures for emergency water conservation, Policy 1.4.2).	Comprehensive Plan, Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water, and Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge Element. Objective 1.4

3. Local government will have the non-delegable duty to develop, implement, and maintain effective mitigation programs.

4. Minimize property damage to homes, institutions, and places of employment in the community.

to help maintain a stable tax base by providing for the sound use and development of flood prone areas in such a manner as to minimize flood blight areas;	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(6)
County will seek to eliminate substandard housing conditions and encourage the structural and aesthetic improvement of existing housing by adopting a minimum housing code.	Comprehensive Plan, Housing Element Objective 1.2
County will develop and implement a program for housing conservation, rehabilitation, or demolition as local conditions dictate.	Comprehensive Plan, Housing Element Objective 1.5

5. Maintain the condition of coastal and riverine environmental systems, especially those that provide natural protection and have economic value.



<p>County will protect the functions of natural groundwater recharge areas and natural drainage features...</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan, Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water, and Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge Element. Objective 1.5</p>
<p>Conventional septic tank systems shall be prohibited within 150 feet from coastal waters and wetlands (including salt marsh areas) within the Bayside area depicted on the revised Future Land Use Map, and shall be prohibited within 75 feet of coastal waters and wetlands (including salt marsh areas) within the Gulf side area depicted on the revised Future Land Use Map. Lots or parcels of record which existed prior to January 14, 1992, which cannot be developed without placement of the septic tank within the 150 foot setback, may be exempted from the 150 foot setback requirement, but the septic tank shall be placed as far landward as possible. The minimum setback distance for buffering other Gulf County wetlands or water bodies shall be 75 feet as required by Florida Statutes 381-.031</p>	<p>Septic Tank Setbacks{LDR 4.01.04(E), page IV-7}</p>
<p>The coastal resources of Gulf County, including wetlands, living marine resources, coastal barriers, and wildlife habitats shall be protected, conserved, or enhanced through the implementation of land development regulations...</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan Coastal Management Element Objective 1.1</p>
<p>Gulf County shall maintain or improve estuarine environmental quality ...</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan Coastal Management Element Objective 1.2</p>
<p>Gulf County shall develop and adopt criteria for prioritizing shoreline uses which give priority to water-dependent and water-related uses.</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan Coastal Management Element Objective 1.3</p>
<p>Gulf County shall protect beach and dune systems by preparing, adopting and enforcing construction standards which minimize the impacts of development on these systems and establishes a shoreline restoration policy.</p>	<p>Comprehensive Plan Coastal Management Element Objective 1.4</p>
<p>6. Maintain the availability and functioning of the community's infrastructure during a disaster.</p>	



County will ensure the provision of adequate drainage facilities to minimize adverse impacts from stormwater and stormwater runoff...	Comprehensive Plan, Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water, and Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge Element Objective 1.6
7. Seek preventative measures that would reduce loss and the need for response and recovery measures.	
8. Promote the economic vitality of the community.	
to minimize prolonged business interruptions;	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(4)
9. Protect scenic, historical and recreational community resources.	
Gulf County shall protect and restore natural and historic resources by implementing Policies 1.4.1 through 1.4.10 and by continuing to enforce existing regulations. (named resources include wellfields, aquifer recharge areas, areas subject to flooding, environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and floodplains, open spaces, and identified historic and archaeological resources).	Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Objective 1.4
Gulf County will adopt land development regulations ... which encourage the protection or sensitive reuse of historic resources.	Comprehensive Plan Coastal Management Element Objective 1.6
10. Promote community awareness of local hazards and the techniques to minimize vulnerability to those hazards.	
to insure that potential homebuyers are notified that property is in a flood area.	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(7)
11. Coordinate with other government agencies to enhance regional mitigation efforts.	
12. Minimize government expenditures for public goods and services.	
to minimize expenditure of public money for costly flood control projects;	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(2)
to minimize the need for rescue and relief efforts associated with flooding and generally undertaken at the expense of the general public;	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(3)



to minimize damage to public facilities and utilities such as water and gas mains, electric, telephone and sewer lines, streets and bridges located in the floodplains	Gulf County Floodplain Ordinance Objectives {LDR 4.04.01(C), page IV-9}(5)
13. Maintain continuity of local government operations after disasters.	
14. Maintain emergency response readiness.	

It can be seen from an examination of Table 5.2, that there are Mitigation Goals in the LMS that are not reflected in adopted county or municipal policy plans.

Organizations with Mitigation Functions

An essential part of getting things done is coordinating with others. This means knowing what agencies are available to help, what it is that those agencies do and how their operations are supposed to work with others. Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 are lists of federal, state, regional and local organizations with descriptions of the mitigation functions they perform. Table 5.7 also catalogs utility companies in the area and indicates their infrastructure functions.

Table # 5.3 **Federal Organizations and Mitigation Functions**

Organization	Mitigation Functions
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Post-disaster relief and assistance, National Flood Insurance Program, Community Rating System, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Repair and Restoration of Disaster-Damaged Historic Properties program. Hazardous Materials Training Program for Implementation of the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act makes funding available to provide training designed to improve emergency planning, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities associated with hazardous chemicals.
US Army Corps of Engineers	Intercoastal waterways, dam maintenance, dredge and fill permitting, wetland permitting, emergency protection from erosion caused by flooding.
US Department of Defense	Post-disaster relief and assistance.
US Department of Commerce	Small Business Administration loans for individual relocation and repair or floodproofing. Fisheries Development and Utilization Research and Development Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program makes grants for enhancement of sustainable fishing industries.



US Department of Agriculture	Soil Conservation Service is a possible source for Wetland Reserve program, flood hazard studies, and levee infrastructure improvement funds. Rural Development program provides low cost loans to rural communities for public services and infrastructure.
US Environmental Protection Agency	Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Technical Assistance Grants Program provides funds for chemical accident prevention activities and emergency preparedness for chemical accidents. Pollution Prevention Grants Program provides grants to implement pollution prevention projects. Sustainable Development Challenge Grants encourage partnerships among community, business, and government entities to work cooperatively to develop flexible, locally-oriented approaches that link environmental management and quality of life activities with sustainable development and revitalization.
National Estuarine Research Reserve	Promotes preservation of the Port St. Joe River basin and estuary; Provides information on ecological health of estuary.
US Department of Housing and Urban Development	The Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), although administered by the state, originates from the HUD. The CDBG program provides funds to local governments under a variety of programs (neighborhood revitalization, commercial revitalization, economic development, and housing rehabilitation). Congress may allocate additional funds for post-disaster recovery. All projects must benefit primarily (51%) low to moderate-income people.
General Services Administration	Disposal of Federal Surplus Real Property program provides equipment to local government at discounts up to 100%.

Table # 5.4 State Organizations and Mitigation Functions

Organization	Mitigation Functions
Governors Office of Planning and Budgeting	Review of federal assistance applications, intergovernmental coordination.
Florida Department of Community Affairs	Local planning assistance and review, comprehensive plan amendments and evaluation, disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.
Florida Communities Trust Program	Provides financial and technical assistance to acquire lands that conserve natural resources, correct undesirable development patterns, restore degraded natural areas, enhance resource values, restore deteriorated urban



	waterfronts, reserve lands for later purchase, use innovative land acquisition methods, and provide public access to surface waters. Land acquisition grants, loans, and matching grants are available through the P-2000 program.
Florida Coastal Management Grants Program	Local governments within Florida's 35 coastal counties are eligible to apply for about \$1,200,000 for project subgrants for planning small-scale capital improvements, acquisition, and technical assistance.
Waterfronts Florida	Designated communities receive a combination of technical assistance and limited financial assistance for the purpose of developing a plan for revitalizing traditional working waterfronts.
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Community project grants are awarded to applicants on a funds available basis according to a project score that depends on the degree the project benefits very low, low, and low to moderate-income populations within the community.
Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA)	Provides competitive grants to state or regional agencies, local governments, and private non-profit organizations to implement projects that will further state and local emergency management objectives.
State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP)	Funding for improving local housing for low-income households.
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	Environmental studies, water facilities (stormwater, potable water, wastewater), wetland permitting, landfill permitting. Drinking or waste water system loans. Fisheries management.
Florida Department of Transportation	Local transportation planning assistance, long-term (five year) state transportation planning.
Florida Department of Health	Public health services, septic tank permitting.
Florida National Guard	Post-disaster relief and assistance
Florida Division of Forestry	Forest management, prescribed burning, fire-fighting, agricultural support, fire hazard awareness programs, burn permits, fire-fighting equipment, aerial surveillance equipment.
Flood Mitigation Assistance	Federally funded state program providing 75% of cost to elevate or relocate repetitively damaged properties in NFIP communities.



Table # 5.5**Regional Organizations and Mitigation Functions**

Organization	Mitigation Functions
Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC)	Local planning assistance, grant writing assistance, grant program administration.
Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWMD)	Regional and local water studies/planning assistance, wetland permitting, dam/impoundment permitting. Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program provides compensation to counties
Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)	Planning, regional coordination, education and awareness regarding hazardous materials public safety issues. LEPC is organized in conjunction with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council.
American Red Cross	Disaster planning, disaster awareness, disaster response training and post-disaster assistance.
Salvation Army	Post-disaster assistance

Table # 5.6**Local Organizations and Mitigation Functions**

Organization	Mitigation Functions
City of Port St. Joe	Local land use planning, conduit for local hazard information, public works, drainage, sewer system, water system.
City of Wewahitchka	Local land use planning, conduit for local hazard information, water system, sewer system, local drainage maintenance.
County Planning and Community Development	Local land use planning, community development, conduit for local hazard information and community analysis.
County Planning and Building department	Enforcement of local building codes including anchoring of manufactured housing, registration of mobile homes, permit elevated of structures in flood zones, site review.
County Health Department	Medical laboratory, water testing, soil testing, immunizations, distributes health related information and emergency medical staff.
County EMS Department	Emergency medical technical services.
County Senior Citizens Association	Advocate for senior issues, conduit for information.
County School District	Placement of schools, use of schools as shelters.



County Sheriff's Office	Law enforcement, evacuation support, traffic control.
County Emergency Management Department	Coordination of local disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.
County Road and Public Works Department	Local road repair, bridge maintenance, culvert maintenance, debris removal, sewer maintenance, water system maintenance.
County Volunteer Fire Departments	Fire fighting and first responders to hazardous material spills.
County Extension Service	Information on how to prevent soil erosion.

Table # 5.7 Utility Companies and Infrastructure Functions

Utilities	Infrastructure Function
Gulf Coast Electric Coop	Electric
Progress Energy	Electric
West Florida Electric Inc	Electric and water
Gulf Aires Sewer System Inc	Wastewater system
Barrier Dunes Sewer System Inc	Wastewater system
Lighthouse Utilities Co	Drinking water system
Highland View Water System Inc	Drinking water system
St. Joe Beach Water System Inc	Drinking water system
Gulf Forestry Camp	Drinking water system

Plans, Programs and Policies Examination

Immediately following is a quick overview of the key policy issues with respect to mitigation that should be addressed in the LMS and eventually incorporated into the county's long-term planning process. Descriptions of Federal, State, regional, and local (county and city) policies that pertain to hazard mitigation can be found in Appendix D: Evaluation of Mitigation Policies. Although these policies exist in source plans and documents, they have been summarized as an accessible support to mitigation planning and funding. Many grant applications require that proposed projects conform to existing policies. Thus, these policy summaries can be used to find the policy support needed for a local project or initiative. These mitigation policies have also been evaluated in terms of how well they are being implemented within each jurisdiction. These evaluations can serve as a review of local mitigation policy implementation.



Evaluation of Local Policies Relating to Hazard Mitigation

Coastal High Hazard Area: The county's Comprehensive Plan, Coastal Element Policy 2.1.1 defines the Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) "as the area seaward of currently established CCCL and shall include FEMA designated V zones (V = velocity zone, the area where wave action is most destructive)." This definition of the CHHA is adequate for describing the most active area of the coast for the purposes of establishing where building codes must be most stringent to prevent the destruction of coastal structures from the wave action of coastal storms. However, it may be useful to consider other kinds of vulnerability. For example, the CHHA could be based on the evacuation zone of a category 1 hurricane. This would reflect the hazard posed by coastal flooding from a common low magnitude hurricane. Another possible enhancement could be a policy to review and update of CHHA after a hurricane to include areas where a high level of storm damage occurred. This review and revision process could also be part of the review and revision of the LMS.

Development in the Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA): Land use within the CHHA has been consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies favoring location of water-dependent uses in the port area and low-density residential development (1 unit per acre) on Bay and Gulf front property. The problem areas for development are the high erosion areas of Cape San Blas (near Stump Hole or the area of the Cape where it takes a sharp turn westward towards the Cape San Blas State Park). The road in this area was washed out from Hurricane Opal and could be washed out again from any modest hurricane. The vulnerability of the road to erosion also affects all the property owners who live beyond this point. State building codes take into account the long-term erosion rates and should be adequate to establish building setbacks for new construction. However, some undeveloped lots in the Stump Hole area have already experienced erosion to the degree that the lots may not have sufficient setback space to legally build a useful structure. The county is looking into acquiring some of these lots to prevent land use that could accelerate erosion in this vulnerable area. There is a possibility that the peninsula could be breached eventually, which would require the construction of a bridge to continue road service to the far end of the Cape. In addition, some older existing housing on the Cape are vulnerable to long-term erosion. In terms of long-term planning, the county will face a choice between expensive beach re-nourishment projects to continually rebuild the beach that is lost to erosion, and facing additional loss of beachfront property.

Regarding vulnerable community assets, there is a need to mitigate (strengthen or relocate) two critical facilities existing in areas of the county subject to coastal flooding: The Highland View Elementary School and the telephone router in the FairPoint Communications Inc telephone building.

Local Development Codes: The county has implemented coastal development codes but has not imposed stricter standards than the state because it lacks the resources to



enforce regulations. Issues that need addressing and coordination with state agencies for remediation and mitigation are:

- Enclosure of the area underneath the elevated portion of coastal structures.
- Location and design of septic systems in erosion prone areas.
- Enforcement of stormwater permits.

From the county's point of view, these issues might be solved with more vigorous enforcement of state rules and permits by state agencies. Coordination between local governments and state agencies might improve the ability to understand the areas of jurisdiction and improve enforcement or implementation of existing policies.

Building Codes: Codes are implemented and enforced. A possible enhancement would be to extend the coastal building zone to encompass the entire coastal community. This zone currently extends 1,500' from the shore and buildings within this zone require a variety of specific building techniques (such as number of nails per foot and anchoring techniques) to make structures more weather resistant. Building in excess of 2000 square feet must also be engineered (certified by an engineer to meet minimum requirements for weather resistance). Extending the coastal building zone to the Gulf Canal would allow the zone to encompass the entire coastal community.

Post-Storm Redevelopment: There is not a specific post-storm redevelopment plan other than the usual provisions to favor particular land uses and avoid infrastructure and critical facilities in the CHHA. The LMS could identify specific mitigation measures and policies for post-storm redevelopment. In addition the LMS, or a portion thereof, could serve as the redevelopment portion of the county's Comprehensive Plan.

Flood hazards and Stormwater: Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) are not entirely accurate. Several designated C zones (areas of minimal flooding) are easily flooded.

Port St. Joe experiences stormwater or flash flooding during heavy rainfall along US Hwy 98, northern sections of the city, and in the Gulfview Pines area. Current stormwater regulations are minimal and the county relies on state enforcement of stormwater permits to address potential stormwater problems with respect to new development. However, state regulations only address larger developments (5 acres or more). A stormwater plan may be necessary as development accelerates to avoid or reduce additional localized flooding.

Evacuation: Policies exist for evacuation on St Rd 71. In practice, most evacuation coordination occurs through county's Board of County Commissioners and Emergency Management Department. The traffic capacity on St Rd 71 should be increased to facilitate the evacuation of residents from the county's coastal region. In addition, evacuation consideration needs to be given anticipation of future development in the county's coastal region.



Non-Flood Hazards: The county's Comprehensive Plan does not address non-flood hazards. Non-flood hazards are addressed in the County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) but no specific county-wide land use or development policies that consider mitigation of non-flood hazards exist. The LMS should identify policies to minimize non-flood hazards such as fire, hazardous materials, transportation accidents and severe wind.

Hazard Awareness: No policies substantially address hazard awareness, although the county's Emergency Management Department publishes hurricane and flooding awareness materials. Additional measures might include posting high water marks along river banks and shore lines, publishing insurance rates for improved building standards, and posting evacuation information in rental properties, resort properties and real estate sales contracts.

