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44 Code of Federal Regulations	
44 CFR §201.6(b)(1):	The planning process shall include an opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval.
44 CFR §201.6(b)(2):	An opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia and other private and non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process.
44 CFR §201.6(b)(3):	Review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information.
44 CFR §201.6(c)(1):	Documentation of the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved.

Overview

Local hazard mitigation planning is the process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks and determining how to best minimize or manage those risks. This process culminates in a hazard mitigation plan that identifies specific mitigation actions, each designed to achieve both short-term planning objectives and a long-term community vision.

To ensure the functionality of a hazard mitigation plan, responsibility is assigned for each proposed mitigation action to a specific individual, department, or agency along with a schedule or target completion date for its implementation (See Section VII: Plan Maintenance and Evaluation). The LMS Plan includes plan maintenance procedures for the routine monitoring of implementation progress as well as the evaluation and enhancement of the mitigation plan. These plan maintenance procedures ensure that the Plan remains a current, dynamic, and effective planning document over time that becomes integrated into the routine local decision making process.

Communities that participate in hazard mitigation planning may experience many potential benefits, including:

- Saving lives and property;
- Saving money;
- Accelerating recovery following disasters;
- Reducing future vulnerability through wise development and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction;
- Expediting the receipt of pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding; and
- Demonstrating a firm commitment to improving community health and safety.

Typically, mitigation planning is described as having the potential to produce long-term and recurring benefits by breaking the repetitive cycle of disaster loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation is that the investments made before a hazard event will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery, and reconstruction. Furthermore, mitigation practices will enable local residents, businesses, and industries to re-establish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the community economy back on track sooner and with less interruption.

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The benefits of mitigation planning go beyond reducing hazard vulnerability. Measures such as the acquisition or regulation of land in known hazard areas can help achieve multiple community goals, such as preserving open space, maintaining environmental health, and enhancing recreational opportunities. Thus, it is vitally important that any local mitigation planning process be integrated with other concurrent local planning efforts, and any proposed mitigation strategies take into account other existing community goals or initiatives that will either complement or hinder their future implementation.

History of Hazard Mitigation in Polk County

Polk County and its jurisdictions formally adopted the Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) in 1999. The Florida Department of Community Affairs/Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDCA/FDEM) funded initial development of the LMS Plan, in part, with FEMA funds earmarked for the development of comprehensive hazard mitigation planning.

The LMS Plan was established and continues to operate in accordance with prevailing federal, state, and local guidelines and requirements. In 2010, the County and its jurisdictions updated the LMS in accordance with all FEMA and State of Florida guidelines. The Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group met annually to review the LMS Plan including the list of mitigation projects. Email announcements and agendas for these meetings are included in Appendix B. The 2015 Update to the Polk County Multi-jurisdictional LMS Plan has been prepared in coordination with FEMA Region IV and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to ensure that the Plan meets all applicable DMA 2000 and State requirements.

The 2015 LMS Update

The Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group prepared the 2015 LMS update with assistance from the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). The LMS Working Group Chair, Paul Womble, Polk County Emergency Management, led the update process. The update of the Polk County LMS Plan began in August 2014.

The Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group utilized the mitigation planning process recommended by FEMA (Publication Series 386) and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to complete the update of the Polk County LMS Plan. A Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk, found in Appendix D, provides a detailed summary of FEMA's current minimum standards of acceptability for compliance with the DMA 2000 and notes the location of each requirement within the Plan. FEMA's Interim Final Rule as published in the Federal Register in Part 201 of the 44 Code of Federal Regulations is the standard for the requirements.

The update process involved identifying additional hazards, updating the risk assessment using the most recent and best data available, and evaluating existing mitigation goals, projects, and programs for overall effectiveness. The hazard analysis includes the hazards from the 2010 LMS hazard profile, information from the August 2013 Florida State Risk Assessment, and hazards identified in other emergency management plans for Polk County. The LMS Plan Update utilizes the best and most current available data that has been gathered from sources included in Section IX: Information Resources. The Plan update closely follows FEMA's 2014 Crosswalk and the associated planning guidance.

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The 2015 LMS Plan Update was prepared using and incorporating relevant content from the 2010 Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy. The LMS Working Group updated relevant sections of the LMS Plan.

- **Public Involvement**

To facilitate increased public involvement, the LMS Working Group will sponsor two Community Workshops held during the drafting stage and review stage of the document. In addition, the LMS Working Group created a dedicated project website, facilitated coordination with local jurisdictions for access to their websites, and encouraged the use of social media.

- **Plan Format**

The 2015 LMS Plan update includes reformatting of the document to increase its access to the public. By incorporating graphics and images, the document would be more inviting to readers.

- **Hazard Identification**

The LMS Working Group intends for the Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment of the LMS Plan to serve as the Risk Assessment for all plans in the County. To accomplish this, the Hazard Identification section must address all risks as included in other emergency preparedness and response plans (e.g., Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Emergency Response Plan, Emergency Action Plan, etc.). The Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment Sections are expanded to include anthropogenic (man-made) hazards.

- **Goals and Objectives**

The LMS Working Group reviewed the Goals and Objectives and determined that reorganization and amendments were needed.

- **STAPLEE System**

The LMS Working Group reviewed the cost-benefit review system (STAPLEE System) and determined the system is working well for the County and should be continued. The LMS Working Group agreed to make adjustments to incorporate additional measures and provide clarification statements to assist LMS Working Group members with the project review and ranking process. The clarification statements will also provide further information to members of the public to allow them to better understand the process.

For the 2015 LMS Plan Update, staff met with local planners, agencies, and other organizations to gather information and review concepts during the planning phase of the LMS Update. The Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group (LMS Working Group) held public meetings throughout the Plan Update process to review the existing plan and discuss potential options for amendments. The meetings included representatives from various participating jurisdictions and community organizations, which provided input at key stages of the process. Efforts to involve municipal and county departments and community organizations that may have a role in the implementation of the mitigation actions or policies included invitations to attend meetings and serve on the LMS Working Group, access to the project website, e-mail updates, strategy development workshops, plus opportunities for input and comment on all draft deliverables. Appendix B includes sign-in sheets and meeting summaries for each of the LMS Working Group meetings.

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Multi-Jurisdictional Participation

The Polk County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan includes one county, its unincorporated areas, seventeen incorporated municipalities, and the Polk County School Board. To satisfy multi-jurisdictional participation requirements, the county and participating jurisdictions were required to perform the following tasks:

- Participate in mitigation planning workshops;
- Provide data for the Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment, as needed;
- Identify completed mitigation projects, if applicable; and
- Adopt the Updated Local Mitigation Strategy Plan.

Each of the jurisdictions listed below participated in the planning process and are seeking approval of the Plan. The following jurisdictions will adopt the Polk County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Polk County | • City of Eagle Lake | • Town of Lake Hamilton |
| • Polk County School Board | • City of Fort Meade | • City of Lake Wales |
| • City of Auburndale | • City of Frostproof | • City of Lakeland |
| • City of Bartow | • City of Haines City | • City of Mulberry |
| • City of Davenport | • Village of Highland Park | • City of Polk City |
| • Town of Dundee | • Town of Hillcrest Heights | • City of Winter Haven |
| | • City of Lake Alfred | |



Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group

The Polk County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group (LMS Working Group) is a partnership of government entities, public and private organizations, and individuals with a shared interest in producing proactive initiatives for prevention and protection from hazards. The LMS Working Group serves as an umbrella organization for coordinating all mitigation programs and activities, supplies the staffing for all committees of the LMS, and is the primary mechanism and forum for exchanging information and mobilizing the vast expertise and resources of the community. The LMS Working Group helps collect and disseminate information and policies relevant to the community. The LMS Working Group acts as the lead coordinating and facilitating body for hazard mitigation in the County and continues to serve as the focal point for community, private, and public



Figure 2.1: LMS Working Group

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involvement in hazard mitigation activities in Polk County. All meetings of the LMS Working Group are open to the public. Appendix B includes a list of the Polk County LMS Working Group participants.

Public Involvement and Citizen Input

An important component of this planning process is the opportunity for the general public to provide input. Individual citizen and community-based input provides the planning team with a greater understanding of local concerns and increases the likelihood of successfully implementing mitigation actions by developing community support from those directly affected by the decisions of public officials. As citizens become more involved in decisions that affect their safety, they are more likely to gain a greater appreciation of the natural hazards present in their community and take the steps necessary to reduce their impacts. Public awareness is a key component of any community's overall mitigation strategy aimed at making a home, neighborhood, school, business, or city safer from the potential effects of natural hazards. Public input was sought using a variety of methods as discussed below.

Community Meetings and Workshops

Community public meetings occurred at two stages of the planning process: during the document drafting stage and following the completion of the draft plan prior to LMS Plan approval. The purpose of the community public meetings was to present the findings of the risk and capability assessments and to garner input regarding unique hazard concerns and possible mitigation actions that could be included in the LMS Plan, including ideas for both policies and projects. This public outreach effort was also an opportunity for neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, businesses, academia, nonprofits, and other interested parties to be involved in the planning process.

February 3, 2015

On February 3, 2015, the LMS Working Group hosted a Community Open House Workshop to present the hazard analysis information to the public and receive comments. This meeting provided an opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage. Notice of the meeting occurred through a press release in *The Ledger*, posting at county and municipal offices, and notice placed on the project's website, the County's website, and jurisdiction websites. In addition, Facebook posts provided information for the event (Appendix B). The *Ledger* has widespread local and regional circulation, ensuring local officials, residents, businesses, academia, and other private interests in Polk County and its neighboring communities were notified on how to be involved in the local mitigation planning process.



Figure 2.2a: Community Workshop



Figure 2.2b: Community Workshop

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June 10, 2015

Staff presented information, answered questions, and obtained comments from the public on the draft update to the Polk County Multi-jurisdictional LMS Plan at the Flying Tigers Emergency Preparedness Night. Minor League Baseball partners with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Ready Campaign and Citizen Corps Program to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. This is the fifth season the Flying Tigers have participated in the campaign. This event provides an opportunity for the public to comment on the Plan prior to its approval and adoption. Notification for this event will occur through newspaper advertisements and articles, flyers, website notification, and the use of social media outlets. A flyer for the event is included in Appendix B.

Website

To facilitate review and participation by the LMS Working Group and to provide other avenues for public involvement, staff developed a dedicated website to the update of the Local Mitigation Strategy: www.polkcountylms.org. The website provides information on the purpose of the LMS Plan, the update process, meetings and events, and opportunities for participation. The different elements of the draft plan are available for review and comment. Business cards providing the website information and a QR code for scanning were distributed (See Appendix B).

In addition to the dedicated project website, information relating to the LMS Update and specific LMS Update events has been included on websites of participating jurisdictions.



Figure 2.3: LMS Website

Local Government Meetings

Staff coordinated with County staff to allow public viewing of the Local Mitigation Strategy update information at a Board of County Commissioner's meeting on June 2, 2015. A viewing and information station was placed in the lobby so people attending the meeting and people with general business in the County Administration Building could review and comment on the information. During the Board of County Commissioners meeting, staff presented information regarding the update process and solicited comments from the public. The Board of County Commissioners meeting is televised. Sign-in sheets and minutes from the event are included in Appendix B.

In August 2015, the planners for each of the participating jurisdictions and the School Board were invited to a meeting to discuss the proposed changes to the LMS and future incorporation of the LMS into local plans. A sign-in sheet for the meeting will be included in Appendix B. At the meeting, the planners provided comments and input on the plan.

FIRM Map Update Meetings

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) is in the process of updating the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for Polk County. They held three information meetings throughout the County to inform citizens of the proposed changes to the FIRM maps. Staff coordinated with SWFWMD

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to incorporate materials from the LMS Plan Update at each of these meetings to facilitate further dissemination of the information to the public and allow for increased public review and comment. The meetings were held on May 12th, May 13th, and May 14th. Sign in sheets from the events are included in Appendix B.

Facebook and Social Media

Staff is utilizing social media to increase the exposure of the LMS Update to larger aspects of the public. Tom Palmer of The Ledger wrote about the LMS Plan Update in his blog. The County staff posted information related to the LMS Plan Update Community Workshop on Polk County's Facebook page and that post carried through to other Facebook pages. Appendix B includes samples of blogs and Facebook posts discovered by staff through this process.

Incorporation of Public Comments and Feedback

Throughout the drafting and review process, input from the public has been sought through a variety of means as described above. The majority of the feedback received related to the information presented on the maps and in the figures and graphs. People were most interested in the impacts and risks related to sinkholes. Comments were received related to proposed projects. These comments were forwarded to the LMS Working Group for consideration.

Stakeholder Involvement

In addition to the LMS Working Group meetings, Polk County encouraged more open and widespread participation in the mitigation planning process through the design and posting of public notices and newspaper advertisements that promoted the open public meetings (described earlier in this section). The County also extended its local outreach efforts through the dedicated project website with the option to provide anonymous comments and through the use of social media. These efforts provided opportunities for local officials, residents, businesses, academia, and other private interests in the county to be involved and offer input throughout the local mitigation planning process.

Despite these outreach efforts, no additional stakeholders participated on the Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group other than those participants listed in Appendix B. A representative from the American Red Cross attended the LMS Working Group public meetings. Submissions of comments from the website may be made anonymously, so it is not possible to tell what, if any, stakeholders submitted comments.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), other Governmental Entities, and Stakeholders

Participation by non-governmental organizations, other governmental entities, and stakeholders is highly encouraged. In order to qualify for LMS grant sponsorship, these entities must:

- Have a duly executed letter of commitment to the LMS on file with the County; and
- In the judgment of the LMS Steering Committee, actively participate in, and otherwise support LMS activities.

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Adoption of LMS Plan

All jurisdictions wishing to participate in and share in the benefits deriving from the LMS program must complete and file a fully executed resolution which conforms to the adoption standards jointly established and amended by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) and the LMS Working Group. Section VII includes a sample resolution and the adoption resolutions of all the jurisdictions.

Integration with Other Plans

Review of Existing Plans and Information

Throughout the LMS Plan Update, review of existing plans, reports, and other sources of information occurred. In addition to the plans listed below, Section IX: Information Resources, includes a listing of information sources reviewed and utilized in the update process.

Local Plans

- Polk County Comprehensive Plan
- Polk County Unified Land Development Code
- City of Auburndale Comprehensive Plan
- City of Auburndale Land Development Regulations
- City of Bartow Comprehensive Plan
- City of Bartow Land Development Regulations
- City of Davenport Comprehensive Plan
- City of Davenport Land Development Regulations
- City of Eagle Lake Comprehensive Plan
- City of Eagle Lake Land Development Regulations
- City of Fort Meade Comprehensive Plan
- City of Fort Meade Land Development Regulations
- City of Frostproof Comprehensive Plan
- City of Frostproof Land Development Regulations
- City of Haines City Comprehensive Plan
- City of Haines City Land Development Regulations
- City of Lake Alfred Comprehensive Plan
- City of Lake Alfred Land Development Regulations
- City of Lake Wales Comprehensive Plan
- City of Lake Wales Land Development Regulations
- City of Lakeland Comprehensive Plan
- City of Lakeland Land Development Regulations
- City of Mulberry Comprehensive Plan
- City of Mulberry Land Development Regulations
- City of Polk City Comprehensive Plan
- City of Polk City Land Development Regulations
- City of Winter Haven Comprehensive Plan
- City of Winter Haven Land Development Regulations
- Town of Dundee Comprehensive Plan

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- Town of Dundee Land Development Regulations
- Town of Lake Hamilton Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Lake Hamilton Land Development Regulations
- Town of Hillcrest Heights Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Hillcrest Heights Land Development Regulations
- Village of Highland Park Comprehensive Plan
- Village of Highland Park Land Development Regulations
- Evaluation and Appraisal Reports of all jurisdictions
- Polk County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- Polk County 2035 Mobility Vision Plan
- Polk County Communitywide Wildfire Protection Plan
- Polk County Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan
- Polk County Disaster Debris Management Plan

Other Plans

- Florida's State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP)
- Recommended Integration Practices: Strengthening the Floodplain Management Plan Portions of the Local Mitigation Strategy
- Central Florida Regional Planning Council Strategic Regional Policy Plan
- Central Florida Region Economic Analysis and Disaster Resiliency Study
- Hydrology of Polk County Florida
- U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census
- Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse – Polk County Profile
- Florida Geological Survey information
- National Climatic Data Center storm reports
- Various newspaper articles

The 2015 LMS Plan Update incorporates all of the above listed plans, reports, and data sources, and utilized the information resources included in Section IX. These sources allowed staff and the LMS Working Group to measure existing mitigation-related activities already in place within the County, identify additional hazards, understand the community's existing vulnerability, predict future impacts, and establish a strategy to mitigate those impacts.

Incorporation of LMS into Other Plans

The LMS Plan is incorporated into a variety of plans in the jurisdictions, the County, and the Region. Section VIII: Plan Maintenance and Evaluation, provides those details. The LMS partners will continue to work to incorporate and/or reference the LMS Plan in other plans as appropriate.