

II. LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

Importance and Advantages of Public Participation

Public participation in the Local Mitigation Strategy process begins with education about the importance of hazard mitigation. A diverse community of interests will benefit from hazard mitigation planning, particularly when a local government's Mitigation Strategy addresses needs identified by a group that is educated in emergency management issues. Since its inception in 1998, the Levy County Local Mitigation has participated in various hazard mitigation training sessions conducted by the Florida Department of Community Affairs. The working group has maintained quarterly meetings and an active project list.

Public involvement helps to guarantee that the public is knowledgeable of and has worked to establish ownership of the Strategy. The Levy County LMS Working Group meetings are noticed on the Levy County Emergency Management website, www.LevyDisaster.com and are open to the public. The meetings have been attended by area media personnel giving publicity to the Strategy. Several community partners have also participated such as local religious groups and those involved in economic strategy.

The handouts given to the members emphasize the importance of getting information to the public in a timely manner, encouraging citizens to attend public meetings, and putting together wide-ranging outreach projects. The working group members were asked to make public presentations in their respective communities and the chamber of commerce representatives were asked to do presentations to their respective business communities.

Involving the public in the planning process succeeds if the right people are involved. The involvement of the public helps support an effective program that better fits their needs as they are able to provide more local knowledge of historical flooding. Involving the public in the process helps them to become invested in the outcome.

Formation of the Working Group

An initial public education effort is required to ensure that community leaders are informed of the importance of hazard mitigation planning. The next step toward developing the Local Mitigation Strategy is to establish a Working Group (WG) to oversee the strategic planning process. The Levy County WG typically includes a core of people that represent agencies of local government, including emergency management, community development, public works, building departments, planning department, fire departments and elected officials as well as private sector representatives from three chambers of commerce as a broad-based group tasked to develop the Local Mitigation Strategy. Outreach to local chambers of commerce, businesses, academia and other private sector members was extended for the 2009 update though resulted in very limited participation. The working group is created by appointments from the elected officials at the municipal level and the heads of the Building, Planning and Emergency Management Departments at the County level. The working group membership is a continuation of these members from the previous and existing strategy members. The WG is the heart and soul of the Local Mitigation Strategy.

As a part of its training from Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council staff ,the Levy County WG was given a copies of the guidance materials for the Local Mitigation Strategy as provided by Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Florida Department of Emergency Management. The Guidebooks listed several principal goals for the WG to work toward and focus on as part of the development of this document such as:

- Identify policies to establish a local mitigation Working Group to oversee the development of the Local Mitigation Strategy.
- Identify procedures to ensure that a cross-section of the community has input in the planning process.
- Identify procedures to coordinate local government mitigation activities with those of the business communities.
- Identify procedures for formally recognizing the Local Mitigation Strategy, such as through adopting the plans and policies that constitute the Strategy.

The operational Working Group was used to develop procedures encouraging public participation in the development and revision of the Local Mitigation Strategy. The principal task of the Working Group was to identify criteria to rank mitigation projects submitted for inclusion in the LMS and to rank those projects. In addition to guiding the Strategy, the Working Group also took further measures to increase private sector participation through the various chambers of commerce in Levy County including educational materials on developing a Business Continuation Plan to local business owners. The necessary public participation in the mitigation process should be maintained through ongoing educational efforts.

Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group 2004

Each jurisdiction in Levy County was given an option to participate in the 2004 updates of the LMS. The initial contact was provided in both a call and a letter presentation. Their responsibility was simply to designate a voting member to the existing Working Group. That person would attend approximately 5-8 meetings at the Levy County Emergency Operations Center. At the appropriate time the member would be responsible for presenting projects from the jurisdiction they represented and vote on the ranking of these projects. Each of the voting members also has an alternate that can perform all of the same duties as the voting member. Each of the jurisdictions had 1 voting member and 1 alternate. There were 2 Levy County representatives and 2 alternates.

The local jurisdictions exist primarily in the same organizational pattern as state and regional bodies. Inclusion of the neighboring communities, regional, state and other interested parties were excellent in Levy County. The involvement came in the form of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council being used as the facilitators of the Working Group meetings, the water management district sent a representative to most meetings, the Forestry Division also had a participating representative, the American Red Cross also had a representative at most meetings and the economic development jurisdiction had a participating representative. These representatives were included in the discussion for their expertise in a variety of areas. The meetings were announced at neighboring counties' LMS meetings. If they had an interest in participating the opportunities were presented. Due to the nature of competitiveness for the grants there are few overlaps in the participation of neighboring jurisdictions.

The other major area of participation was to come from the public. In Levy County there were a few public participants at each of the meetings. This provided good insight because they came from a variety of fields including economic development and the non-profit arena.

Several of the jurisdictions invited did not participate as well as much of the general public. These meetings were announced at a variety of similar meetings, conducted by participating members and the WRPC in a facilitation role. There were letters, emails and calls placed regarding the LMS document and each of the meetings.

A public forum was conducted to review the draft of the 2004 annex to the LMS document. This was advertised with a letter to each of the jurisdictions, a mention on the website and a draft of the final copy placed on the website – to contact the WRPC with any possible comments or changes.

Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group 2009

As with the previous 2004 LMS Working Group, each jurisdiction in Levy County was asked to participate in the 2009 updates of the LMS. The working group had been retained from 2004 and with several changes throughout the years, had maintained a functioning working group roster and yearly updates. In March 2009, an initial invitation was sent to all working group contacts as well as various community partners known to work with Levy County Emergency Management. The invitation to participate in the plan update process was provided through phone calls, email correspondence, and a notice on the County website.

Existing and new members were asked to designate a voting member to the existing Working Group. That person would attend approximately 6-10 meetings at the Levy County Emergency Operations Center in Bronson. During these meetings, members of the working group would be responsible for presenting projects from the jurisdiction they represented and consequently vote to rank these projects. Each of the voting members also had the option to appoint an alternate that can perform all of the same duties as the voting member. Each of the jurisdictions was granted 1 voting member and 1 alternate. County departments also had the same opportunity as each jurisdiction to join the working group.

The local jurisdictions exist primarily in the same organizational pattern as state and regional bodies. Inclusion of the neighboring communities, regional, state and other interested parties were excellent in Levy County. Coordination came in the form of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council acting as the facilitators of the Working Group meetings. Meeting attendees included representatives from the majority of cities and towns in the county. However the Town of Otter Creek, the Forestry Division, the American Red Cross and the Nature Coast Business Development Council were notably absent from the 2009 working group. No new agencies were present in the working group. These representatives were included in the discussion for their expertise in a variety of areas. The meetings were announced on the internet for neighboring counties to be aware of the process. Fanning Springs participated in both the Levy County and the Gilchrist County LMS and served as a liaison. Lastly, there was significant participation from the public. In Levy County there were a few public participants at each of the meetings. As with the past plan, staff of the Withlacoochee Regional planning Council led the development of the plan for Levy County.

Planning Process

All participating agencies, municipalities, interested citizens and organizations represented on the working group roster participated were involved in the current planning process. These efforts were led by Levy County Emergency Management Director, Mark Johnson who served as chairman for the Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group. In addition to the Chairman and all participating members, staff of the Withlacoochee regional Planning Council was contracted to provide technical services. All working group members were also part of the plan review team. Members of the working group served as the Plan Review Committee. They provided review, analysis and recommendations for all changes made to the plan during the review process. As each section is updated by staff, a copy of the section is provided out to the working group for review and recommendations. All sections of the plan were reviewed and updated for compliance with the latest crosswalk.

Section XVI, meeting Minutes and Agendas displays dates and topics discussed for review. It was the decision of the working group members and staff to review each section as a group during the regular working group meetings to allow all to see and make recommendations. At the end of each meeting a motion was made to adopt all changes made and to allow staff to make necessary changes for the review process. Due to the quality of the 2004 plan, the working group found that minimal changes were needed. At all times, the plan is available at both the Levy County Emergency Operations Center in Bronson as well as at the offices of the Withlacoochee regional Planning Council in Ocala for review by the public. In accordance with Florida sunshine laws members of the Local Mitigation Strategy working group are instructed in their behaviors and refraining from outside discussion of agenda items. In addition, all participating local governments will adopt the plan by resolution and make periodic updates to their elected officials at a publically noticed meeting. The working group had representation of interested citizen to ensure public input. Although no media attention was given during the plan process, county staff issued notices at the court house and the planning process was noticed on the county Emergency Management website www.levydisaster.com.

In addition to working from a previously approved Local Mitigation Strategy plan from 2004, staff and the working group considered many existing plans. Representation from the county planning and building department ensured the county comprehensive plan and land development regulations were both supported by the plan and reflect existing plans and regulatory codes. These plans included the County Comprehensive Plan, Land development Regulations, any existing Floodplain Ordinances or Regulations, Local Building Codes including the Florida Building Code, Utility Codes and Water and Sewer Service ordinances and Authorities. These reviews and the members of the working group are critical in the Local Mitigation Strategy fitting into the larger framework of planning mechanisms.

Representation

The following table includes the names, affiliation, and contact information of all participating agencies, municipalities, interested citizens and organizations on the Levy County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group.

Table II-1
Levy County Local Mitigation Working Group
2009

| <i>Name/Title</i> | <i>Affiliation</i> | <i>Address</i> | <i>Telephone</i> | <i>Email</i> |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Mark Johnson*</i> <i>Chair</i> | <i>Levy County Emergency Management, Director</i> | <i>P.O. Box 221 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5213 FAX: 486-5152</i> | <i>lcrep@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Leatha Keene (alt.)</i> | <i>Levy County Emergency Management</i> | <i>P.O. Box 221 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5213</i> | <i>lcdem@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Rob Corbitt*</i> | <i>Levy County Zoning/Building Adm.</i> | <i>P.O. Box 672 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5198 FAX: 486-5246</i> | <i>levybz@fdt.net</i> |
| <i>Grace Benton (alt.)</i> | <i>Levy County Zoning/Building Adm.</i> | <i>P.O. Box 672 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5198 FAX: 486-5246</i> | |
| <i>Shenley Neely</i> | <i>Levy County Planning Director</i> | <i>P.O. Box 1373 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5405 FAX: 486-5549</i> | <i>levyplng@fdt.net</i> |
| <i>Tina Horne (alt.)</i> | <i>Levy County Planning Staff</i> | <i>P.O. Box 1373 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5405 FAX: 486-5549</i> | |
| <i>Kelli Brettel</i> | <i>City of Bronson Town Clerk</i> | <i>P.O. Box 266 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-2354 FAX: 486-6262</i> | <i>bronsonclerk@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Jimmy Dunford (alt.)</i> | <i>Bronson Public Works</i> | <i>P.O. Box 266 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-2354 FAX: 486-6262</i> | <i>jdunford@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Pat Oneal</i> | <i>City of Cedar Key Commissioner</i> | <i>P.O. Box 925 Cedar Key, FL 32625</i> | <i>543-5198 FAX: 543-5199</i> | <i>Pat.Oneal@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Josh Wilson (alt.)</i> | <i>City of Cedar Key</i> | <i>P.O. Box 925 Cedar Key, FL 32625</i> | <i>543-6539 FAX: 543-5560</i> | <i>CKGIStech@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Bill Hammond*</i> | <i>City of Chiefland Building & Zoning, Director</i> | <i>214 Park Avenue Chiefland, FL 32626</i> | <i>493-6711 FAX: 493-6714</i> | <i>bill@chieflandfla.com</i> |
| <i>Laurie Copeland (alt.)</i> | <i>City of Chiefland Building & Zoning</i> | <i>214 Park Avenue Chiefland, FL 32626</i> | <i>493-6711 FAX: 493-6714</i> | <i>laurie@chieflandfla.com</i> |
| <i>Cheryl Nekola</i> | <i>City of Fanning Springs Mayor</i> | <i>17651 N.W. 90th Court Fanning Springs, FL 32693</i> | <i>463-2855</i> | |

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|-----------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Robert Kerr</i> | <i>City of Fanning Springs Fire Chief</i> | <i>P.O. Box 367 Trenton, FL 32693</i> | <i>463-3198</i> | |
| <i>Dick Kellman*</i> | <i>Town of Inglis Town Commissioner</i> | <i>P.O. Drawer 429 Inglis, FL 34449</i> | <i>447-3057</i> | <i>kellman@infionline.net</i> |
| <i>Bob Allen (alt.)</i> | <i>Town of Inglis Planning Commissioner</i> | <i>P.O. Drawer 429 Inglis, FL 34449</i> | <i>447-4858</i> | <i>ideaco@bellsouth.net</i> |
| <i>Appointee Needed</i> | <i>Otter Creek Town Clerk</i> | <i>P.O. Box 65 Otter Creek, FL 32683</i> | <i>486-4413</i> | <i>townofottercreek@peoplepc.com</i> |
| <i>Marcus Collins*</i> | <i>City of Williston City Manager</i> | <i>P.O. Drawer 160 Williston, FL 32696</i> | <i>528-3060 FAX: 528-2877</i> | <i>MarcusC@williston.fl.us</i> |
| <i>Danny Wallace (alt.)</i> | <i>City of Williston</i> | <i>P.O. Drawer 160 Williston, FL 32696</i> | <i>528-5003 FAX: 528-0955</i> | <i>WallaceD@willistonfire.org</i> |
| <i>Dawn Marie Clary*</i> | <i>Town of Yankeetown Mayor</i> | <i>P.O. Box 280 Yankeetown, FL 34498</i> | <i>447-2511 FAX: 447-0774</i> | |
| <i>Larry Feldhusen (alt.)</i> | <i>Town of Yankeetown Town Clerk</i> | <i>P.O. Box 280 Yankeetown, FL 34498</i> | <i>447-2511 FAX: 447-0774</i> | <i>seapuppy@xtalwind.net</i> |
| <i>Ron Grant*</i> | <i>Levy County Citizen</i> | <i>5350 N.E. 200 Terrace Williston, FL 32696</i> | <i>528-0812</i> | <i>rgrant6@juno.com</i> |
| <i>Amanda Douglas</i> | <i>Levy County NCBD Council, Director</i> | <i>P.O. Box 1112 Bronson, FL 32621</i> | <i>486-5470</i> | <i>Adouglas1@naturecoast.org</i> |
| <i>Sara Creel</i> | <i>Levy County Forester</i> | <i>5450 N.W. Highway 19 Chiefland, FL 32626</i> | <i>493-6060 FAX: 486-5481</i> | <i>watsond@doacs.state.fl.us</i> |

*Note: * Indicates Voting Member
(alt.) Indicates Alternate to Voting Member*