

1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

To develop a natural hazard mitigation plan that reflects Paulding County's true hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities, the Paulding County EMA utilized a comprehensive, whole community planning process that involved jurisdictions and stakeholders from across the county. [Input and feedback methods were designed to meet the needs of various stakeholders, providing options for both in-person and digital participation due to personal schedules and circumstances.](#) This section describes the process utilized to develop the plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were [involved and included](#) throughout the plan development process.

1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

From the outset of the project, the EMA understood that development of [updating](#) the mitigation plan would be about a twelve-month process. This timeframe was necessary to administer the grant, research hazards and risks, develop mitigation strategies and actions, include jurisdictions and stakeholders in the planning process, [conduct a series of meeting, distribute online surveys,](#) and complete the state and federal plan review process prior to adoption. Each phase of plan development included specific activities and steps, as described below. [They also realized that the update was going to occur in the context of new federal standards, and that Paulding County would be one of the first counties to experience plan review under these changes. They realized this could extend the time to approval as guidance was interpreted and administered for the first time.](#)

1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning Process

Paulding County's most recent mitigation plan was adopted on [June 13, 2018](#) and expired on [June 26, 2023](#). [Paulding County EMA was awarded a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program grant on June 22, 2022 to update this plan as part of the required five-year approval process.](#) The application identified the jurisdictions in Paulding County that would participate in the planning process. [Most officials were familiar with the mitigation plan process because they were involved in the development of the current plan.](#)

Upon award of the grant, Paulding County EMA completed the approved procurement process to identify a contractor to manage the plan update process. The Paulding County EMA Director met with Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch mitigation planner to review the requirements for plan development. He proceeded to submit the required documentation to the State of Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch.

The Paulding County Commissioners and the EMA Director met with Resource Solutions Associates LLC on [August 17, 2022](#) to discuss the potential contractor's specific work plan to update the current mitigation plan. On [August 24, 2022](#), the county entered into a contract Resource Solutions Associates, LLC to coordinate the project, work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to collect information, and develop the new plan. Approval of the new plan was

anticipated for late 2023, given new mitigation guidance is in place and may cause the process to take longer than in the past.

The EMA Director and the Contractor then met on [September 7, 2022](#) to develop a project timeline and to discuss specific methods and processes for the project. [They discussed new mitigation guidance that would be in effect at the time the plan was to be submitted, and how those requirements would add to the core planning committee requirements and meeting discussions.](#)

The timeline began with planning meetings scheduled for [October 12, 13, 19 and 20, 2022](#), with additional meetings following in January, 2023. Various surveys would be part of the process, and meetings at the close of the project would be done as needed. The process culminated with a completed plan submitted to Ohio EMA and FEMA for review in October 2023. This timeline provided that an approved updated plan could be in place by the end of 2023, with all adoptions for specific jurisdictions completed as well.

The timeline was extended to allow for additional time during the development and review process to accommodate additional requirements in new mitigation guidance. The Contractor advised the county that review under very new guidance takes more time than when the guidance has been in place. Therefore, she felt it was reasonable to anticipate additional time. This meant that the new plan would likely not be approved by the time the current one expired. With no known mitigation projects in process and none in the planning stages, that was acceptable to Paulding County.

1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings

Upon completion of all necessary grant agreements, contracts, and administrative requirements, the Contractor coordinated with the EMA Director to develop an initial list of planning team members. This list included representatives from all jurisdictions and a broad range of community organizations and agencies. The complete list of invited stakeholders is included as table 1-3 later in this section.

This group was charged with providing input for all jurisdictions in Paulding County as the basis for the new hazard mitigation plan. These meetings covered several phases of the mitigation planning process: project planning, risk assessment, mitigation strategy development, and plan maintenance, plan update, and adoption. The 2023 federal mitigation planning guidance provided the standards for the project; there are no additional State of Ohio requirements.

Project Initiation

The EMA Director kicked off the project through electronic communication to the jurisdictions and others who were part of the core committee. Because the county has such a small population, many individuals serve as a local elected official in one of the communities, and also are employed by the county or a village, school system, or other agency. Many participants, therefore, represent more than one entity as they participate in mitigation

meetings. Additionally, they may be farmers or business owners themselves, representing agriculture or another industry as well.

The mayors and administrators of villages were the key contacts in each jurisdiction. They were the officials who received this project notification, and they were asked to select staff and volunteers from their jurisdiction to participate in the process. They were also asked to be champions of the project to encourage others' participation in the planning activities. They were advised that most communication would be channeled through them, and they should relay those pieces of information to council members, village officials, and others as part of the planning implementation.

Township trustees were notified of the plan update meetings, and were invited to participate. Their participation was not mandatory, as was the municipal participation, but it was highly encouraged. Township trustees almost always work for another entity or own farms themselves. Therefore, they are experts in knowing how storms damage rural properties and affect natural resources. Their input and feedback would be documented collectively as part of "Paulding County" plan sections.

Social agencies, adjacent emergency managers, and community development officials were invited to participate. This group also included behavioral and physical health professionals and organizations, as well as private practitioners. The local community foundation and the economic development organization were key invitees due to their overall awareness of social needs and groups of individuals in the county. All relevant county elected officials and appointed department leaders were asked to help with the process. Other key employees such as floodplain managers and GIS coordinators were invited directly. All invitees were told that all meetings were open to the public, and requested that they ask anyone with an interest to attend.

Work Sessions

Because this process involved updating a current mitigation plan and not creating a new one, the EMA Director and Contractor decided to take a comprehensive approach to the meetings. Most stakeholders had a good understanding of the mitigation plan development process, so efficient use of their time was going to be a significant consideration in obtaining adequate participation. Instead of asking participants to attend multiple meetings to discuss individual topics, they would plan for longer meetings with a progressive approach to mitigation components and discussion topics, including the whole spectrum of mitigation concerns in one meeting.

The meetings would begin with identification of all applicable hazards, including potential new hazards, and determination of the county's risks for each one; they would continue with identifying the county's social vulnerability and community resilience to each hazard. Changes in the local climate would be discussed and relevant observations noted. Once those two areas of concern were covered, strategies to prevent damages, fill response gaps, and lower social

and physical vulnerabilities would be identified and discussed. How damages might change in the future, as well as how to prevent increasing damages at the same time the community grows, was a topic of consideration. Meetings would wrap up with a review of the update process, adoption, and funding for strategy implementation once the updated plan was approved. Because most stakeholders had participated the last time, and to accommodate their personal and professional schedules, it was anticipated to be more effective using this methodology.

A digital survey was used to provide additional information about hazards and risk assessment for each jurisdiction. Each village was asked to review the survey with village council and any village employees, and to complete the survey online giving those answers. There were 13 groups of village officials and employees who completed the form. All twelve villages plus two groups of Paulding County employees/residents filled out this survey.

The status of current mitigation strategies was done by hand-scored survey. Each jurisdiction was asked to meet with jurisdictional leadership, in most cases the village council, to discuss each one and the status of that action. Those villages that employ workers were asked to include their employees in the group. They completed forms as a group and submitted them to the EMA Director or the Contractor. Feedback about continuation of each strategy was included in that discussion, and recorded as such in Section 03 Mitigation Strategies.

Surveys were available for completion from April through July. Access was open to everyone and all surveys completed were tallied as part of the responses.

Meetings were held during mornings, afternoons, and evenings to meet the needs of all stakeholders, yet to allow for ample time to discuss multiple topics. County and municipal representatives, agency representatives, and special district workers like school employees were likely to participate as part of their daytime employment, but township trustees, volunteer public safety officers, individuals, and social organization volunteers, especially those who work outside Paulding County during the day, would need evening meetings. To accommodate this, meetings were scheduled for various times of day.

Work sessions were conducted on October 12, 13, 19, and 20, 2022 and January 19 and 20, 2023. Invitations were sent early and reminders were sent shortly before the meetings by the EMA Director. Sessions were offered from morning, afternoon, and evening to allow for all participants to attend at a convenient time. Each of these sessions focused on hazard identification and risk assessment as well as strategy development. Extended discussion was offered to review climate issues like how storms are changing in characteristics, and how damages are changing along with that. There was generous discussion about new requirements that included assessment of response priorities and capacity, and the identification of underserved and special populations that might require additional assistance. The county's capacity to respond to a catastrophic incident was discussed at length, focusing not only on possible resource shortages, but also on options to fill those gaps.

As participants reviewed the natural hazards for Paulding County, they collectively decided to add invasive species and land subsidence to the list of hazards, making a list of ten natural hazards. They felt that various noxious weeds and pestilence had appeared recently and caused damages, so it was prudent to add that to the list. They also remarked frequently that various examples of erosion were taking place, and loss of land along waterways and disappearing soil in residential areas along the Auglaize River were becoming a problem. The common belief was that as weather patterns change and storms become more intense and rapidly-occurring, these problems will likely increase.

With release of the National Dam Inventory, there were significant changes to the dam failure hazard which included the addition of high-hazard dam requirements. Also among those changes was the dropping of ODNR dam inventory and a wide variety of what the State of Ohio refers to as “Class IV” dams which are small, generally privately owned and very low risk structures. This change allowed for attention to focus on the high-hazard dams where the potential for damages and/or casualties is high should failure occur. The National Levee Inventory did not list any levees for Paulding County, so there was no change in that risk.

All in all, input from all groups was very consistent. That input is documented in detail in Section 02 Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment. Strategy input is documented in 03 Mitigation Strategies.

Final Plan Review

The updated Paulding County Hazard Mitigation Plan was ready for public review on Thursday, September 14, 2023. It was printed and available in hard copy at the EMA offices at 451 McDonald Pike, Paulding. It was also available on the contractor’s website at www.consultrsa.com/Paulding. There was no access control and the plan was open to everyone. This was both published in the local paper and sent by email to all officials and others who either participated in the planning efforts or were key individuals notified of plan activity.

The release of the plan included a description of how to find the plan and access it, and offered for the EMA Director and/or Contractor to meet with anyone who had questions or concerns about the content. Comments were requested by email or phone call.

Because all review, adoption, and implementation had been discussed at October and January meetings, there was no pre-planned countywide face-to-face meeting to repeat this information. Electronic communication was sent to the jurisdictions and the local news media with information about how to find the plan and review it.

The plan remained open for public review through Wednesday, October 4, 2023. The review period was a total of three full weeks in duration.

A news release was sent to all local media and posted on the Paulding County EMA website and at the Paulding County Administration Building as well as the downtown Court House on

September 5, 2023. This release defined the purpose of the plan, the need for public input and review, and the public review period dates. A hard copy of the plan was available at the Paulding County Administration Building for this entire three-week period.

The EMA Director and the Contractor reviewed all comments and questions received from stakeholders and the public; appropriate revisions were incorporated into the plan. After final revisions were complete, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch for review on October 5, 2023.

Upon state and federal approval, the formal adoption process began. This process explained in section 4.0 Plan Adoption.

Table 1-1 includes a complete list of planning team meetings and work sessions conducted throughout the planning process.

Table 1-1: Planning Team Meetings

Date	Location	Purpose/Audience
10/12/2022	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
10/13/2022	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
10/19/2022	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
10/20/2022	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
01/19/2023	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
01/20/2022	Paulding County EMA	Public Meetings at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. for comprehensive plan input
April – July, 2023	Online	Digital Survey Available for HIRA, Social Vulnerability, and Resilience assessment
April – July, 2023	Printed Hand Survey	Hard Copy Current Strategy Survey Available to all Jurisdictions (County, Villages)
Sept. 5 – 26, 2023	Public Review Period	Online plan available at www.consultrsa.com/Paulding and print copy available at 451 McDonald Pike, Paulding.
Sept. 29, 2023	Plan Submitted to OEMA for Review	State/Federal Review of Draft Plan
TBD	Paulding County Adoption of 2023 HMP	
TBD	Final Approval of Paulding County Hazard Mitigation Plan	

1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

With eleven incorporated villages and a population of approximately 18,806, many stakeholders in Paulding County were identified as having a role in the mitigation planning process. The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team included broad participation from these identified stakeholders. In some cases, due to the small population, individuals wore more than one hat, so to speak, in the planning process. With only so many individuals to assume leadership tasks, most of them filled multiple roles in community leadership.

From the beginning of the planning process, the EMA attempted to include the whole community in the mitigation planning process. The input and opinions of the general public were viewed as critical to the process, as were the opinions of elected and appointed officials and key community leaders. A broad, inclusive list of planning team members was developed with the intention of including any, every, and all agencies with an interest or role in emergency management, and thus in disaster mitigation. As the process unfolded and planning began, a whole community planning approach was used to achieve these goals.

The initial invitation to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was extended to the following officials, leaders, and stakeholders from Paulding County and adjacent jurisdictions:

- Incorporated jurisdictions
- Township representatives
- Specialized disciplines, including fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, business and industry, education and academia, nonprofits, social agencies, and stakeholders as part of the general public
- Specific appointed officials, including the county floodplain manager, GIS mapping specialist, conservation specialists, regional planning, building and zoning officials, development officials, fire chiefs, police chiefs, public health commissioners, extension agents
- Economic development organizations such as economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and tourism and visitor's bureaus
- Key elected officials such as the county auditor, treasurer, engineer, and commissioners
- Emergency management officials from the adjacent counties
- Non-profit agencies including American Red Cross and United Way as well as community action groups
- Special interest groups such as watershed coalitions, conservancy districts, federal partners, state agencies with facilities in the county, and others with a special interest in the well-being of Paulding County
- Residents, businesses, and stakeholders from the general public

1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation

All incorporated jurisdictions in Paulding County chose to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. Participating jurisdictions included the villages of Antwerp, Broughton, Cecil, Grover Hill, Haviland, Latty, Melrose, Oakwood, Paulding (county seat), Payne, and Scott.

Paulding County participated on behalf of all other areas, but participation was solicited through both county officials and the township sub-structure of government to reach those community members who live in the rural areas. This methodology assured the rural interests would be included in the mitigation plan.

In Ohio, every county is divided into sub-sections called “townships”. Townships are small sections of land, sometimes as small as six square miles. Incorporated jurisdictions (villages and cities) lay on top of the townships, and supersede the township authority as governance for those parcels is absorbed by the municipality. In general, the remaining land outside the municipalities is considered “township”, and the elected officials’ duties are primarily road upkeep and cemetery maintenance. Historically, in Ohio, many trustees of townships have been farmers who used their own equipment to plow snow from roadways.

Townships originally provided a means to identify plats of land and to create the verbiage to create documents like deeds. In Ohio, townships may choose to be zoned, but other land use planning is done by the county level of government. Townships can provide very basic services such as plowing snow from tertiary roads and maintaining cemeteries. Townships do not have the same full authorities as municipalities and counties. Townships cannot levy taxes, and must participate in most programs as an unincorporated area of the county, through the county government officials.

County government handles services including ditch maintenance, plowing and repair of main and secondary roadways, bridge and culvert maintenance, most land use planning, community development, emergency management, and many other humanitarian and financial functions on behalf of the township. Many daily functions of government are handled by the county because townships must, by law, meet at least annually.

Residents living outside incorporated jurisdictions were contacted through the township trustees because that was the best way to reach out to the rural areas in an organized and comprehensive fashion, and to ensure that the entire rural community was included in the planning process. Paulding County did not intend that townships be required to adopt the mitigation plan because that is consistent with other programs of similar nature, including community planning, economic development, emergency management, law enforcement, and other forms of grant administration.

Paulding County has twelve townships: Auglaize, Benton, Blue Creek, Brown, Carryall, Crane, Emerald, Harrison, Jackson, Latty, Paulding, and Washington. While the county will officially adopt the plan on behalf of these townships, trustees, fiscal officers, and other officials were invited to planning team meetings and encouraged to participate in the planning process because of their knowledge of and connection with residents in unincorporated areas. They were asked to invite other residents of the townships to attend meetings with them.

The officials identified in table 1-2 served as the primary contact for each jurisdiction. They were asked to notify other officials and stakeholders within their jurisdiction of meetings and

work sessions and invite any other residents or officials to participate in the planning meetings. These jurisdictions were invited to the initial project meetings in October 2022 and in January 2023. Jurisdictions were asked to review the draft plan and participate in the final plan review prior to the plan's submission to state reviewers. These individuals coordinated with the EMA Director and Contractor to invite relevant stakeholders.

Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdictions and Representatives

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Bluecreek Township	Chris Laukhuf	Fiscal Clerk
Auglaize Township	Sue Ann Becher	Fiscal Clerk
Benton Township	Rachael Head	Fiscal Clerk
Brown Township	Kevin Hornish	Fiscal Clerk
Carryall Township	Deborah Wyckoff	Fiscal Clerk
Crane Township	Carol Razo	Fiscal Clerk
Emerald Township	Samuel Hatcher	Fiscal Clerk
Harrison Township	Kathy Feasby	Fiscal Clerk
Jackson Township	Mary Howard	Fiscal Officer
Latty Township	Susan Hinchcliff	Fiscal Clerk
Paulding Township	Jane Buchman	Fiscal Clerk
Washington Township	Neil Beining	Fiscal Clerk
Village of Antwerp	Jan Reeb	Mayor
Village of Antwerp	Brian Davis	Administrator
Village of Boughton	Donna Greear	Mayor
Village of Cecil	Gene Sheets	Mayor
Village of Grover Hill	John Moon	Mayor
Village of Haviland	Edwin Ruger	Mayor
Village of Latty	Shawn Gerber	Mayor
Village of Melrose	Janet Stroup	Mayor
Village of Oakwood	Brian Ripke	Mayor
	John Keyes	Village Administrator
Village of Paulding	Greg White	Mayor
	Jason Vance	Village Administrator
Village of Payne	Austin Scheiner	Mayor
Village of Scott	Jeremy Akom	Mayor
Paulding County	Lisa McClure	County Commissioner
Paulding County	Michael Weible	County Commissioner
Paulding County	Mark Holtsberry	County Commissioner
Paulding County	Edward Bohn	EMA Director

1.2.2 Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

Because Paulding County's intention was to encourage broad participation in the planning process, an expansive initial invitation list was developed. Using information from multiple sources, including EMA contact lists, jurisdiction and agency websites, the Board of Elections, and general online information, a master planning team of almost ninety invitees was developed. For each contact, this master list identified name, position, agency or jurisdiction, e-mail address, and telephone number. This list included representation from business and

industry, community services, economic and community development, education, government, infrastructure and engineering, natural resources and agriculture, and public safety. To meet new mitigation guidance, social agencies and organizations that provide assistance to underserved and disadvantaged populations were invited to participate. Emergency management officials from adjacent counties were also included on the list. For Paulding County, this included county EMA officials in Ohio and Indiana. The complete list of invited and participating stakeholders is provided in table 1-3.

Table 1-3: Participating and Invited Stakeholders

Agency/Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Cooper Farms	Representative	Greg Cooper
Farm Service Agency	Executive Director	Neil Beining
Paulding County Farm Bureau	Org. Director	Samantha Bluhm
OSU Extension Service	Ag Agent	Sarah Noggle
Alex Products Inc.	Business Mgr.	Clint Reagle
LaFarge North America	Rep.	Tim Weible
Defiance/Paulding Job & Family Services	Director	Amy Simonis
Paulding County Auditor	Auditor	Claudia Fickel
Western Buckeye Educational Service Center	Superintendent	Taylor Thomas
Antwerp Chamber of Commerce	Director	Denise Coleman
Antwerp Village	Zoning Inspector	Gabe Oberlin
Paulding Chamber of Commerce	Director	Erica Noggle
Paulding Co. Library and Historical Society	Director	Cory Walker
Paulding County Economic Development Office	Director	Tim Copsey
Paulding County Engineer/ Planning Commission	Director	Travis McGarvey
Paulding County Floodplain Manager	Floodplain Manager	Tony Windsor Brian Harder
Paulding County Engineer	Administrator	Aaron Timm
Paulding County Waste Management Educ. & Aware.	Director	Shannon Ruschel
Paulding Village	Zoning Inspector	Ron Schmidt
United Way of Paulding County	Director	Lora Lyons
Black Swamp Conservancy	Executive Director	Rob Krain
Conservation Action Project	Multi Agency Coordinator	Todd Hesterman
Maumee River Advisory County and State Scenic River	NW Ohio Manager	Cherie Blair
Maumee River Basin Partnership of Local Govt.	MS4 Coordinator	Jennifer English
Natural Resource Conservations Service – USDA	Conservationist	Ken Kottenbrock
Paulding Co Soil and Water Conservation District	Administrator	Daniel Foust
Paulding County Health Department	Emergency Prep Coordinator	Bill Edwards
Paulding County Hospital	CEO	Ron Goedde
Antwerp Village	Mayor	Jan Reeb
Antwerp Village	Councilman	Steve Jordan
Grover Hill Village	Mayor	John Moon

Agency/Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Grover Hill Village	Councilman	Traci Poling
Latty Village	Mayor	Shawn Gerber
Latty Village	Councilman	Beth Stoller
Paulding County Commissioners	Commissioner	Mark Holtsberry
Paulding County Commissioners	Commissioner	Mike Weible
Paulding County Emergency Management Agency	Director	Ed Bohn
Paulding County Sheriff's Office	Sheriff	Jason Landers
Defiance County EMA	Director	Julie Rittenhouse
Putnam County EMA	Director	Brian Hilvers
Van Wert County EMA	Director	Rick McCoy
Paulding County Engineer	Engineer	Travis McGarvey
Antwerp Local Schools	Superintendent	Martin Miller
Antwerp Village	Mayor	Brian Davis
Divine Mercy Catholic School	Principal	Joe Linder
Oakwood Village	Mayor	Brian Ripke
Oakwood Village	Councilman	Joshua Duslak
Paulding Exempted Village Schools	Superintendent	Kenneth Amstutz
Paulding Village	Mayor	Greg White
Payne Village	Mayor	Austin Scheiber
Scott Village	Fiscal Clerk	Hillary Yoder
Wayne Trace Local Schools	Superintendent	Paul Jones
Paulding County Senior Center	Director	Marsha Yeutter
Broughton Village	Representative	John Daeger
Cecil Village	Mayor	Gene Sheets
Haviland Village	Mayor	Edwin Ruger
Haviland Village	Councilman	Ronald Ruger
Melrose Village	Mayor	Janet Stroup
Paulding Village	Councilman	David Burtch
Paulding Village	Administrator	Jason Vance
American Red Cross	RDM	Leslie Montgomery
NW Ohio Community Action Commission	Director	Angie Franklin
Paulding Foundation	Director	Lisa McClure
Tri-County ADAMHS Board	Executive Director	Sandy Goodwin
Western Buckeye Educational Service Center	Superintendent	Taylor Thomas
Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development	Executive Director (Paulding County)	Tim Copsey
Maumee Valley Planning Organization	Paulding County Representatives	Tim Copsey Greg White Mike Weible

1.2.3 Planning Team Engagement

The plan development schedule included six days of local meetings and work sessions, and multiple periods of reviews, sharing of draft documents, and formal public review. Because

achieving meaningful participation from a wide range of partners through these sessions was important to the EMA and Contractor, the meeting schedule was developed to provide as many opportunities as possible for stakeholders to participate. Some individuals wore multiple hats in the process, and attended similar sessions more than once to participate from varied perspectives. Meetings were held at the Paulding County Administrative Building in the EMA/EOC because it was convenient for most people and times were variable to accommodate their work and volunteer schedules.

Surveys were provided in two formats, for two different purposes. One was a printed or digital PDF copy that was easy to mark and return, either in printed form or digitally. This survey collected information about the status of the mitigation strategies in the 2018 HMP from each jurisdiction. The other was a Survey Monkey digital survey that was provided by direct link to the document, filled out online and automatically submitted, regarding hazards, consequences of storms, and damages from storms. Hazard identification surveys were accepted with or without identification of the person who completed them; village councils were asked to complete the mitigation strategy status survey as a group and to identify their jurisdiction.

Invitations to meetings and work sessions were sent to stakeholders by e-mail. If anyone notified the EMA or Contractor that they did not have e-mail access, postal mail was the alternative notification method. If an email was returned as undelivered, follow-up was initiated for corrective action by the EMA office. Any continuing communication issues were addressed individually. The EMA director and the Contractor monitored email receipts and returns for the duration of the project to assure notifications were delivered effectively. Individual meetings were conducted when schedules did not allow participants to attend group sessions, and phone calls or online meetings were used to fill in gaps due to conflicts.

Planning team members were reminded to share the information they were given in meetings with additional colleagues and community members who may wish to participate. Additional handouts were available at all meetings, or by request. When surveys were used, either additional copies were always available, or the online link to the survey was shared with anyone who expressed an interest in filling it out.

Dates and times of meetings, with their location, was openly shared with jurisdictions. When invitations were sent, they included invitations to guests and additional parties, as well as welcoming substitutes when the primary representative was unavailable to attend. All meetings were open to the public.

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Garnering broad community participation in the mitigation planning process was a focus of both the EMA and the Contractor. Utilizing FEMA's Whole Community Planning concept, the EMA reached out to a broad scope of community partners, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and stakeholders. These representatives were invited to participate and provide input throughout the planning process. This began with the development of a broad and inclusive planning team invitation. A significant amount of time was dedicated to identifying

contacts across all areas and segments of the county and creating an accurate contact list of those individuals. Invitations and reminders were sent to the planning team multiple times. Participants were encouraged to share meeting information with colleagues and community members and encourage others to participate in the planning process. During planning team meetings and work sessions, notices were posted on doors to notify the public that the session was taking place and assist people in locating the sessions.

To provide easy, convenient access to planning information for the committee and general public, a project website was created on the Contractor's website. This was used to post draft sections of the plan for public review, and to inform reviewers of how to submit questions, concerns or suggested changes. There was open access to this site, and no accounts or passwords were necessary for access. Documents were posted in PDF format, but were downloadable for reader convenience, or available to read without download. The entire plan was posted on Thursday, September 13, 2023 and left for open review through Wednesday, October 4, 2023.

Stakeholders were encouraged to actively engage in the review process and to submit any thoughts or comments to the Contractor or the EMA Director by email or phone call.

All agency and jurisdiction representatives who participated on the planning team were notified of the review period by email. An official notice was also sent to each participating jurisdiction by postal mail. To notify the public, the EMA placed a news release in *The Paulding Progress* (Paulding). The EMA provided a link to the plan on their agency website and asked other organizations to do the same. All notifications included a link to the website where the plan was posted, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Paulding County EMA during regular business hours for anyone wishing to view and comment on the plan but with limited computer access, special needs, or other accessibility challenges.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

A significant amount of research was performed to develop the hazard mitigation plan, which is based on multiple sources of information. Research was conducted through reviews of existing data, plans, and reports and through interviews and conversations with county stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

Since Paulding County's most recent plan was approved in 2018, the Contractor obtained hazard information and data from 2018 through 2023 to ensure that the new plan included current, relevant, and accurate hazard and risk information. Information contained in the previous plan was maintained as part of this plan. All mitigation goals strategies identified in the previous plan were evaluated and outcomes documented; those findings appear in the first part of Section 3.0 of this plan.

Additional information was identified through research of recorded events from the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database. Incidents that were researched included past ones included in former plans simply for verification, and new incidents after 2018 so that the most recent storms were included. Data was presented to the stakeholders represented on the planning team. Their knowledge of the impact, consequences, and recovery efforts of any past disaster incident was documented. These anecdotal points were included as appropriate in the revised plan.

The county profile includes information discovered through the study of various county documents. Information about community development, business and industry, land use regulations, and community life were researched and findings that were relevant to mitigation planning were included as parts of narratives and explanations. Online sources like US Census Bureau data were accessed for statistical data. Federal, state, and local government agency websites and reports were utilized for statistical and historic information.

The hazard identification was developed through research of actual recorded events based on records from the Storm Events Database of the National Climatic Data Center. Supporting data was obtained from the Ohio EMA, FEMA, Tornado History Project, Stanford University Dam Program, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and other sources. Planning team members provided additional detail, context, and descriptions of the community impact for many historical incidents. The most significant events for each hazard are described in narrative form in the HIRA. Appendix A includes a complete list of all recorded occurrences of each hazard, organized by type of hazard.

The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis were informed by multiple data sources. HAZUS projections helped establish potential losses in flood and earthquake incidents. The auditor provided property valuations for residential, commercial, agricultural, and exempt properties and mapping information. Current critical facility and key resource inventories were used to project loss estimates for those facilities. The 2006 Paulding County Hazard Mitigation Plan contained information that was still reflective of risks, vulnerabilities, and conditions, which were retained in this plan where applicable. FEMA documents were referenced to identify how many losses were reported, when, and because of what impact in the past. Included in this estimation were possibility, probability, magnitude, and frequency of each category of hazard and its potential impact upon Paulding County.

Watershed Discovery Reports were used to facilitate discussion about waterway and watershed management issues. There were many issues of agricultural interest as the reports were applied to Paulding County and specific points were discussed. The reports were referenced, and meeting participants were informed of those findings. Copies of the plan and online locations were offered to participants, and some natural resources stakeholders were already familiar with the Discovery Reports. Discussions took place regarding the mitigation actions and management practices that were recommended in the Discovery Reports. In some cases, local stakeholders agreed with the reports, and mitigation actions were crafted to support and facilitate the Discovery Report recommendations. In some cases, local stakeholders felt the

report was not entirely accurate, or the mitigation action was not feasible. In those cases, the mitigation actions were not included in this plan. The mitigation strategies in this plan are reflective of the plan participant input.

New mitigation standards require research and identification of social vulnerabilities for communities. Information was obtained from a variety of new online resources, as listed in Table 1-4 that follows. Discussions with local stakeholders also identified and verified this information during the work sessions that were held. Discussions included identification of underserved and disadvantaged populations, the needs and circumstances that would require assistance, and the possible sources of those assistance efforts. Where gaps in capabilities were identified, or shortages based upon escalated after-storm needs, potential additional resources and alternate providers were discussed.

There was significant discussion about changing weather patterns and the potential for climate change to affect Paulding County. Changes in how and when storms strike, the amount of precipitation or the force of winds was covered in detail. Discussion included considerations of very minimal urban sprawl into Paulding County, as well as the absence of metropolitan industrial influence on the community. These discussions, when compared to ClimRR and other online climate projections, were in sync.

Significant discussion ensued regarding resources needed during and after catastrophic level events. Because of the incredibly low population, all stakeholders expressed doubts that Paulding County would receive outside resources in an event that involved other counties. As the fifth smallest county in the state, the pervasive opinion was that Paulding County will generally have to fend for themselves. Therefore, in-depth conversations took place about a lack of interest in volunteerism, especially in the public safety organizations. An emphasis upon mutual aid agreements, department planning for equipment purchases in collaboration with adjoining departments, and other forms of collaboration were believed to be best practices for local entities. The exodus of adequate sheltering and family assistance by social organizations that used to help after residents were displaced from homes is a huge concern for Paulding County. They now receive assistance from Ft. Wayne Indiana, and since storms generally hit the western-most communities first, there were lengthy discussions about how Paulding County residents, last in the line of moving storms, would get help.

Table 1-4 provides a list of the sources utilized in the research phase of this project.

Table 1-4: Studies, Reports, and References

Document	Author/Agency	Date
Auglaize River Watershed Discovery Report	FEMA	2011
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)	United States Department of Agriculture	2019
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2023
Ground Water Potential Pollution Study	US Geological Service	2004
HAZUS Earthquake and Flood data	Ohio EMA	2023

Document	Author/Agency	Date
Lower Auglaize River Study Plan	Ohio EPA	2014
Paulding County Community Health Needs Assessment	Paulding County Health Department and Paulding County Hospital	2019
Paulding County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2018	Paulding County EMA	2018
Soil Survey of Paulding County	USDA	1979
State of Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019
Storm Events Database	NOAA	2023
Study Plan for the Lower Auglaize River Tributaries	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	2014
Study Plan for the Maumee River Basin Select Tributaries	Ohio EPA	2015
United States Census	US Census Bureau	2020
Western Ohio Cropland Values	Ohio State University	2014
2023 Community Economic Development Strategy	Maumee Valley Planning Organization	2023
Paulding County EMA Storm Notes	Anecdotal Notes	2018-2023
National Risk Index	FEMA	2023
Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	FEMA	2020
Resilience Analysis Planning Tool (RAPT)	FEMA	2022
Climate and Risk Resilience Portal (ClimRR)	FEMA	2022
National Inventory of Dams	FEMA	2023
National Levee Inventory	FEMA	2023
Ohio Department of Natural Resources GIS Maps	ODNR	2023
Ohio Department of Agriculture Invasive Species	ODA	2022
National Agricultural Statistics Service Bulletin	USDA	2017
Ohio County Profile	Ohio Office of Research	2021

1.5 PLAN MAINTENANCE

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan. Diligent plan maintenance establishes a schedule to re-engage stakeholders in the mitigation plan at regular intervals [during the plan’s validity period](#), and lays a solid groundwork for the required five-year update. By reviewing disaster occurrences on an annual basis and frequently assessing the county’s progress on mitigation activities, a five-year update can be a quick and efficient process. Upon approval of this plan, Paulding County is determined to follow a regular plan maintenance schedule. The EMA will lead this effort and involve stakeholders, jurisdictions, and the community, laying a solid foundation for the plan update in 2028.

1.5.1 Plan Maintenance Methodology

A significant challenge in conducting annual plan review is the difficulty in holding meetings that are well attended. Many stakeholders perceive these meetings as unnecessary or not critical and do not attend. Government officials, community leaders, and other key stakeholders also have busy schedules and competing demands on their time and must and prioritize their attendance at different events. In rural Paulding County, most jurisdictions and

organizations have only a few employees. In the villages and townships, many elected and appointed officials serve in a part-time or volunteer capacity. These staffing realities often make conducting community-wide meetings a challenge. Paulding County's plan maintenance strategy attempts to address these barriers by incorporating other communication and data-collection methods throughout the five-year life of the plan.

Traditional face-to-face meetings have been the most common method to discuss disaster responses, catastrophic incidents, and storms. [The COVID-19 Pandemic made face-to-face meetings impossible, and people became accustomed to online meetings, written or digital surveys, and email communication.](#) This familiarity has led to acceptance of alternatives to meeting in person, and those digital and remote options will be considered in the coming five years. The EMA will also consider asking each village to review their plan sections and submit comments each year, doing this as a small community rather than a whole county. [The EMA Director can then compile these reports and share across the entire county.](#) Records of participation, copies of results, and other communication surrounding these events will be maintained just as it would be for a meeting.

1.5.2 Annual Plan Review

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, on or about the anniversary of the plan approval date. Annual plan maintenance discussions may be conducted through traditional in-person meetings or remote meetings, electronic surveys, questionnaires, or other forms of communication. The choice of methodology will be at the discretion of the EMA Director based on what best meets the needs of stakeholders and ensures that mitigation strategies are considered on a regular basis. All information-gathering efforts will include evaluation of the past year's disaster incidents and a summary of the resulting damages, costs, and recovery efforts. Status reports on any mitigation projects in process and an update on progress towards achieving the mitigation strategies and actions developed by each jurisdiction will also be included. The EMA will maintain records of these annual discussions.

As part of the annual review process, jurisdictions will be asked to conduct an internal analysis of the mitigation strategies developed by their jurisdiction and submit a short report to the EMA with their findings. The report will include an assessment of any disaster incidents that occurred during the year, a summary of damages and recovery efforts, and a status report on the status of adopted mitigation strategies as a result of those incidents. If a strategy has been completed, the jurisdiction will evaluate its effectiveness at reducing losses. This information will be shared with the countywide planning team during the annual countywide review process. The EMA will maintain a summary of these reports and findings.

The EMA may choose to convene a planning team meeting after any significant disaster or large-scale emergency to review and document any changes, needs, additions, or deletions that should be considered at the five-year update. Any time a disaster is declared in Paulding County, it is suggested that the planning team assemble after the incident is closed to review the plan with emphasis on the strategies and the status of each. [Given the direction of new](#)

mitigation guidance, the records of incidents will include social vulnerability concerns as well as physical damage information. Who served special needs, what organizations helped the underserved, and what gaps existed will be documented. Best practices and opportunities for improvement will be recorded and addressed. The EMA will maintain records of these meetings and findings.

At each review point, the EMA will review the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment for completeness and accuracy. Loss estimates will be evaluated for ongoing accuracy and any significant developments will be added to the list and mitigation strategies will be reviewed for progress and effectiveness. All findings will be recorded and saved for the 2028 update process.

1.5.3 Community Participation

While the EMA is responsible for leading the plan maintenance effort, that process only works if stakeholders are engaged. Ongoing consideration of hazard mitigation strategies is critical to creating a resilient and sustainable community. It is the EMA's intention that the stakeholders representing the municipalities, jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations involved in plan development will continue to participate in its ongoing review and maintenance. Without their participation, ongoing input will not be comprehensive or accurate. Therefore, all parties involved in developing this plan must perceive the annual review process as critical to the pre- and post-disaster welfare of the county.

Public involvement is an important component of ongoing mitigation planning efforts. To encourage public involvement in plan maintenance, notices of annual plan review activities will be published through local media and appropriate websites and social media accounts of participating jurisdictions and agencies. The general public will be invited to participate in these activities and provide input. Meeting announcements will include the date, time, and location of the session and adequate notice so that people have reasonable time to plan their attendance. As with all meetings conducted during plan development, annual update meetings will be open to the public and community input will be encouraged. If surveys and other electronic tools are utilized to collect feedback from stakeholders, these documents will also be made available to the community.

1.5.4 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms

Local government participation in plan maintenance activities is a major factor in the implementation and achievement of mitigation strategies as well as assessment for new and additional mitigation actions. This participation occurs during intentional mitigation plan review and, more importantly, during daily operations within each jurisdiction that guide the growth and development of specific communities. Villages in the county have planning commissions or a committee within the jurisdiction's elected council that addresses growth and development issues within the municipality. These commissions and committees are responsible to jurisdiction's top elected official, who is then responsible for working with the Paulding County officials who hold similar responsibility at the county government level.

An additional function of jurisdiction planning commissions and committees is to provide leadership for new development and business or residential growth in the community that complies with Paulding County development goals and standards. These entities determine what growth initiatives are implemented by the municipalities and provide leadership for recruiting, promoting, and securing new industries, businesses, and residential facilities. These groups work with the county officials who guide the construction of new buildings and homes, and who oversee and inspect new structures.

At the county level, Paulding County's economic development is a multi-agency effort to showcase, promote, and develop Paulding County by adding productive and innovative businesses to the economy. The Paulding County Engineer leads the Paulding County Planning Commission, and they are responsible for not only growth and development of business, but also development of building standards and construction regulations. [There are three county representatives to the Maumee Valley Planning Organization, the entity that completes the CEDS for Paulding County.](#) Township and village zoning inspectors work with them to establish and enforce land use rules and regulations where they are established. They also work with villages and townships to manage and facilitate physical development such as construction of buildings and installation of systems. The Paulding County Economic Development Office is the central recruiting partner, working to bring commerce and manufacturing ventures to this rural community. They are assisted by the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, the Paulding Chamber of Commerce, and the Community Improvement Corporation of Antwerp, Payne, and Paulding County.

The floodplain manager and tax map officer are part of the county Auditor's office. Lenders work with the floodplain manager to comply with flood prevention regulations as part of the lending process, and they use external commercial providers to validate floodplain status for mortgage purposes. The lending institutions work with the floodplain manager and county auditor to determine floodplain locations, and the zoning officers enforce land use regulations to manage construction of homes, farm facilities, and businesses. [Paulding County will soon have updated flood insurance maps, and local floodplain managers and developers will be able to use these to create effective development guidance and supports. Local floodplain managers work with updating and improving floodplain regulations, and keeping in step with county and state requirements.](#) The EMA Director works with the various county officials in a non-official capacity to advise and assist in disaster mitigation efforts regarding potential development projects.

Because Paulding County is a small community, there is not a strict structure to the inclusion of mitigation efforts in economic and community development activities. [With some development organizations and other agencies taking on a multi-county scope of services, Paulding County must work hard to maintain their own good efforts and defined benefits of these regulation and planning entities. It is up to the representatives to make sure Paulding County's voice is heard.](#) The county has determined that should consider hazard mitigation with all community planning efforts, especially in the comprehensive planning efforts, and intends to include information about hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities in all planning areas in future endeavors.

The EMA will share responsibility to integrate mitigation planning into economic development, land use planning, land use regulation, conservation, response plans, and other plans that are important to the daily operation of the county with other county officials. Disaster mitigation will be promoted as part of community development, making its way into a comprehensive array of disciplines and interests. Key stakeholders, including the County Commissioners, Economic Development, Regional Planning Commission, Floodplain Administrators, Engineer's Office, zoning officials, and public safety officers from across Paulding County will be important partners in this effort. These individuals will work through their respective agencies to promote mitigation planning and its inclusion in the plans, procedures, guidelines, and priorities of each agency, thus making mitigation a true community-wide effort.

1.5.5 Documentation of Plan Maintenance

Paulding County will consider communication with stakeholders and the public regarding hazard mitigation to be an annual necessity. The EMA will schedule, complete, and record these communications and the results of all meetings to facilitate an expeditious plan update in 2028. It will be the EMA's responsibility to maintain documentation of all ongoing plan maintenance activities. These records should include the date, time, and attendance at review meetings, findings of each review, and recommendations from stakeholders for changes, additions, or deletions at the next update. Results from any surveys and questionnaires used to collect information should be maintained, as well as reports submitted by jurisdictions. E-mail and written communication from stakeholders and the public should be saved for consideration during annual review activities. All reports, documents, and files can be saved electronically so that they are easier to find and less cumbersome to maintain.

1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle

Paulding County's Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2028. With generous documentation of ongoing plan maintenance, the county should be positioned to submit an updated plan well before the current plan's expiration date. To ensure the appropriate timeline is met, formal efforts to update the plan will begin in mid-2027. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.