

## **1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS**

To develop a multijurisdictional mitigation plan that reflects all of Wood County's unique hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities, the Wood County EMA utilized a comprehensive, whole community planning process. This process included robust participation from stakeholders and community members across the county, representing cities, villages, townships, county government departments, service agencies, and community organizations. This section describes the process utilized to develop the plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were included throughout the plan development process.

### **1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

The 2023 update of the mitigation plan was expected to be a six to ten-month process from the onset of the project. This timeframe was necessary to contract with a service provider, research hazards and risks, develop mitigation strategies and actions, include jurisdictions and stakeholders in the planning process, and complete the state and federal plan review process prior to adoption. While it was hopeful that the updated plan would be submitted and approved prior to expiration, the County realized that with new mitigation plan standards which applied significant changes to the federal requirements, this may not be possible. A contractor familiar with the county was chosen, and work began in early 2023. These efforts included development of an action plan to capture and analyze new information required by the new mitigation plan guidance which was now in full effect. Each phase of plan development included specific activities and steps, as described below

#### **1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning Process**

Wood County's most recent mitigation plan was approved on September 3, 2018 and expired September 3, 2023. Because of the scope of work necessary to update the plan and the new planning standards in effect, the EMA determined it would be most efficient to hire a contractor to conduct the project. In December 2022, the county entered into a contract with Resource Solutions Associates, LLC to coordinate the project, work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to collect information, and develop the new plan.

In early winter 2023, the EMA and Contractor developed a project timeline. They developed a new set of project goals based upon the new mitigation plan guidance from FEMA, and established a series of meetings to achieve those goals. Because they realized that participation might fluctuate based upon participants' availability, they built redundancy into the meetings to review the project at each meeting, spend time collecting the targeted information, establish a follow-up expectation for participant involvement, and discuss the eventual adoption process. They wanted it to be clear to participants that this project would require six to twelve months of involvement in meetings, review of documents, and jurisdictional action to adopt the final plan. Through consistent, repeated coverage of the entire process, they were hopeful that stakeholders would reach an understanding of the mitigation planning process as well as the importance of mitigation actions and strategies.

The timeline began with a focus on hazard identification and risk assessment in the spring, with writing to occur in summer and early fall. There would be a second wave of public meetings to

discuss and review mitigation actions which would be based upon the hazard and vulnerability findings. Submission to OEMA/FEMA would probably occur in late fall. While approval was remotely possible prior to the September expiration, there would more likely be a brief period of time without a currently approved plan, largely dependent upon the pace of approvals and adoptions under new standards which were, at that time, not yet implemented in reviews. Time lines would also be dependent upon willing participation by all jurisdictions and agencies, and robust attendance at project meetings.

**1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings**

The initial step in the planning process was development of a master list of stakeholders and community members to help identify and inspire the appropriate employees and workers from their jurisdiction to participate in planning activities. This group was referred to as the Stakeholder Planning Committee. They would be the ones to act as champions and cheerleaders of the mitigation project, and would serve to inspire others to engage in the project alongside them.

The Contractor and EMA staff developed the stakeholder contact list. The list included representatives from all jurisdictions (county, cities, villages, and townships) as well as broad range of community organizations and agencies that spanned community development, natural resources, business and industry, agriculture, service agencies, advocacy groups, and institutions. These individuals were not expected to make up the entire Mitigation Planning Committee, but were the leaders and supervisors asked to invite and support the right people from their organization, and other organizations they work with, to participate in meetings.

New planning standards required the analysis of social vulnerability and community resilience, so additional agencies and organizations that serve disadvantaged and disabled individuals were added, and a more robust representation of the public school system was included. A special meeting to cover community lifelines management was added to the list of initial gatherings.

**Table 1-1: Stakeholder Planning Committee**

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
<b>COUNTY</b>		
Wood County	EMA Director	Jeff Klein
	Wood County Commissioners	Craig LaHote, Pres.
	Wood County Sheriff	Mark Wasylshyn
	Wood County Engineer	John Musteric
	Wood County Regional Planning	David Steiner
	Director Job and Family Services	David Wigent
	Wood County Health Department	Benjamin Robison
	Wood County Soil Conservation	Jim Carter
	Wood County Farm Service Agency	Brenda Meyer
	Wood County ADAMHS Board	Amanda Kern
<b>CITIES</b>		
Bowling Green	Assistant Municipal Administrator	Joe Fawcett
Northwood	Fire Chief	Joel Whitmore
Perrysburg	Assistant Fire Chief	Tom Granata

Rossford	Administrator	Allison Murray
<b>VILLAGES</b>		
Bairdstown	Mayor	Chris Barringer
Bloomdale	Village Council Member	Bethany Vincent
Bradner	Mayor	Tammy Kreais
Custar	Mayor	Rob Cavin
Cygnets	Mayor	Scott Gonyer
Grand Rapids	Mayor	John Berry
Haskins	Administrator	Colby Carrol
Hoytville	Mayor	Julie Cramer
Jerry City	Mayor	John Brown
Luckey	Mayor	Cory Panning
Millbury	Mayor	Michael Timmons
Milton Center	Mayor	Debra Plath
North Baltimore	Mayor	Janet Goldner
Pemberville	Mayor	Carol Bailey
Portage	Mayor	Mark Wolford
Risingsun	Mayor	Rick Whetsal
Tontogany	Mayor	Matthew Shanahan
Walbridge	Mayor	Edward Kolanko
Wayne	Mayor	Craig Everett
West Millgrove	Mayor	Cindy Bonham
Weston	Assistant EMS Chief	Jeremy Schroeder
<b>TOWNSHIPS</b>		
Bloom Township	Trustee	Terry Hummel
Center Township	Trustee	Richard Engle
Freedom Township	Trustee	Rick Rahe
Grand Rapids Township	Fire Officer	David Alvord
Henry Township	Trustee	Jim Wymer
Jackson Township	Trustee	Brendan George
Lake Township	Administrator/Police Chief	Mark Hummer
Liberty Township	Fiscal Officer	Rod Lucas
Middleton Township	Trustee	Donald Cromley
Milton Township	Trustee	Stanley Wilhelm
Montgomery Township	Trustee	Jerry Houtz
Perry Township	Trustee	Chad Wonderly
<b>Adjacent Counties and Additional Organizations</b>		
Henry County EMA	Director	Tracy Busch
Sandusky County EMA	Director	Lisa Kuelling
Ottawa County EMA	Director	Fred Petersen
Lucas County EMA	Director	Abby Buchhop
Seneca County EMA	Director	John Spahr
American Red Cross	Disaster Program Manager	Deb Pressley
Bowling Green State Univ.	Manager of Support Services	Matthew Keefe

### *Scope of Planning Efforts*

The plan would include forty-three jurisdictions. There would be four cities and three developing  
 Developed by Resource Solutions Associates, Norwalk, Ohio

townships that operate similarly to the cities, twenty-one small rural villages, and two special jurisdictions. The county would be a separate section of the plan that included all unincorporated areas of the county. Another section would include the four cities and three developing townships because they shared similar hazards, challenges, and solutions to problems. The rural villages felt their hazards, vulnerabilities, and mitigation action needs were very similar, so all villages would be collected in one group in the plan. Lastly, the Northwestern Water and Sewer District, and Bowling Green State University would have individual sections of the plan that applied to their entity because they operate as independent entities, not under the auspices of local county, city or village jurisdictions.

There would still be individual descriptions of each jurisdiction's hazards and how they are affected or vulnerable, but they would share mitigation actions to foster a more collaborative approach as well as to be able to help one another successfully implement more actions than were previously completed.

To maintain consistency in the process and obtain comparable outcomes, worksheets that identified respondents and jurisdictions would be used at all sessions and the Contractor would follow the same line of discussion at all meetings. When relevant, information from one meeting was shared at another meeting for the purpose of obtaining the best input possible and to discuss how areas were inter-connected, collaborative, and common with one another. This would enable individualism in addressing hazards, but would also foster a countywide, whole community approach to mitigation actions.

As was done in 2017, planning meetings would be scheduled at a variety of times to best meet the needs of the participants, and to obtain robust participation. City, county and large township employees who participated on behalf of their employer would require daytime workday meetings in or near their place of employment. Meetings would be held in Bowling Green and Perrysburg separately, but Northwood and Rossford would be together, and Lake Township would be combined with Walbridge and Millbury. Many of these employees were not able to leave their jurisdiction, including fire and police chiefs, some administrators, and many department supervisors. Multiple meetings were scheduled to accommodate these special needs and to best gather input using localized groups and nearby community arrangements.

With all of the rural villages having less than 3,400 residents, many elected and appointed officials would require evening meetings because of conflicts with daytime employment at other jobs. The county was divided into four practical quadrants, and nearby townships were also invited to the meetings with their neighboring villages.

All meetings were open to anyone who chose to attend regardless of location or time. They were open to the general public as well.

At the end of the planning process, all county departments and officials, cities, villages, townships and special jurisdictions would have been invited to at least two meetings, and have completed online surveys. All entities that serve disabled, disadvantaged, underserved, and disaster-affected individuals would have provided input as well. First responders would have had at least two opportunities to provide input and review plan details.

## **1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

With four cities, twenty-one villages, nineteen townships, two special districts and a county population of approximately 132,000, Wood County had a significant number of stakeholders to include in the mitigation planning process. The Mitigation Planning Team included broad participation from these identified stakeholders. Invitations to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team were extended to the following officials, leaders, and stakeholders, as described in this section, from Wood County and adjacent jurisdictions:

- Incorporated jurisdictions (county, city, and village officials)
- Township representatives (trustees, fiscal officers)
- Specialized disciplines, including fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, business and industry, education and academia, nonprofits, social agencies, and the general public
- Elected officials, including the county auditor, treasurer, engineer, and commissioners
- Appointed officials, including the county floodplain manager, GIS mapping specialist, conservation specialists, regional planning, building code enforcement officials, economic development officials, fire chiefs, police chiefs, public health commissioners, extension agents, public and private school districts, colleges, career centers, and universities.
- Economic development organizations such as economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and tourism professionals
- Emergency management officials from adjacent counties and NW Ohio EMA staff
- Non-government agencies and 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 Wood County
- Residents, businesses, and the general public

The EMA identified practical locations for work sessions, and then worked with each identified point of contact to schedule them. Most invitations were sent by e-mail as this was the quickest and most efficient method to communicate. When necessary, EMA staff reached out to stakeholders by phone or through other communication mechanisms to ensure delivery of the information. The EMA staff and Contractor worked together to establish and maintain a list of respondents so those who had not yet been involved could easily be identified. The EMA staff then reached out to non-respondents individually to garner their attendance.

All of these primary contacts were advised that all planning activities were open to the public and any constituent or resident was welcome to attend any session they wished to attend; they were also encouraged to add additional participants to the invitation list

### ***Project Kick Off and Hazard and Risk Identification Sessions***

Because many jurisdictions were represented by the same individuals who participated in the last plan, and to most effectively use the time of volunteer participants, there was no individual meeting for the purpose of kicking off the project. The EMA Director sent the Stakeholder Committee an email announcing the project digitally, and informing them of the first set of meetings. He asked that they

each identify and invite additional appropriate people from their jurisdiction, including department heads, key elected officials, technical and supervisory personnel and residents. He informed them that there would be a second set of meetings later to address strategies, review and adoption in detail. Every meeting in both the first wave of meetings in the spring, as well as the second wave in the fall, opened with a summary of the project initiation, and an overview of the entire update process, HIRA and mitigation action development, public review, state and federal review, and local adoption.

Electronic mail invitations and meeting descriptions were sent by the EMA in late February, with a meeting schedule for late March and April. Participants were asked to respond with their attendance intentions to the EMA so that required participation would be guaranteed. The EMA followed up with any jurisdictions, agencies and individuals who did not respond, or who did not have the participation the EMA Director had established. The following meetings were scheduled and conducted as the first wave of sessions. A detailed accounting of participants is included as Section 07 Participation by Meeting.

**Table 1-2: Spring Mitigation Update Meetings**

Date	Time	Primary Participants
03.23.22	12:30 – 2:30 pm	City of Northwood City of Rossford
	2:30-4:30 pm	Lake Township Village of Walbridge Village of Millbury
	5:30 -7:30 pm	Middleton Township Plain Township Washington Township Weston Township Grand Rapids Township Village of Haskins Village of Grand Rapids Village of Tontogany
03.27.23	12:30 – 2:30 pm	City of Bowling Green
	2:30 – 4:30	Bowling Green State University
	5:30 – 7:30	Montgomery Township Perry Township Bloom Township Portage Township Village of West Millgrove Village of Bradner Village of Jerry City Village of Wayne Village of Bloomdale Village of Portage Village of Risingsun Village of Cygnet Village of Bairdstown

03.28.23	12:30 – 2:00	City of Perrysburg
	2:30 – 4:30	Perrysburg Township
	5:30 – 7:30	Village of Pemberville Village of Luckey, Troy Township Freedom Township Weston Township Center Townships
04.11.23	1:00 – 4:00	Utility providers and public works representatives, 9-1-1 dispatchers, engineering staff, public information officers
	5:30 – 7:30 pm	Milton Township Liberty Township Jackson Township Henry Township Village of North Baltimore Village of Hoytville Village of Custar Village of Milton Center
04.13.23	9:00 – Noon	Healthcare, public health, behavioral health, EMS, fire, law enforcement
	1:00 – 4:00 pm	Job & Family Services American Red Cross Salvation Army Volunteer Groups Veterans Services Senior Services Nonprofits, churches and advocacy groups
04.25.23	9:00 – Noon	Wood County Regional Planning and economic development, floodplain managers, housing representative, land use planners, jurisdiction planning commission members
	1:00 – 4:00 pm	Soil conservation, OSU Extension, Farm Bureau, conservancy and watershed representatives, farmers, tiling contractors
04.27.23	9:00 – Noon	Public K-12 Superintendents Penta Career Center Wood County Educational Service Center Owens State College Bowling Green State University

\*Please refer to 07 Participation by Meeting spreadsheet for detailed participation

The hazard and risk identification meetings began with an overview of entire mitigation plan update project. The Contractor then covered a review of storms and other incidents that have occurred since January 1, 2018, an assessment of the damages caused by each



incident, and review of any other relevant facts about those incidents.

Added to discussions to consider social vulnerability and community resilience were questions about what populations were potentially underserved after the event, and what populations may have needed help but either none was requested, or none was given. Populations that were discussed included, but were not necessarily limited to the elderly, people living in poverty, minorities and non-English speaking populations or neighborhoods, disabled persons, veterans, people of color, and the unemployed. Circumstances of single parents with children, grandparents raising children, and families with children who have special needs were discussed. Healthcare discussions included a full range of behavioral health issues, public health concerns, and general healthcare.

Public safety and administrative participants discussed what gaps in services they may have identified, using FEMA's seven community lifelines to guide those discussions. Discussions about regulations included identification of any regulatory gaps in standards or enforcement, as well as problems with enforcement of standing regulation. Issues like homelessness, food shortages, medication replacement, and transportation were considered.

Discussions included identifying the effects of climate change. Weather patterns, characteristics of storms, levels of precipitation, temperature fluctuations and tendencies, and wind characteristics were the major focus of questions. The compounding effect of climate change and specific hazards introduced discussion about topics like an all-dam failure during or after periods of extended torrential rain. Other discussions focused on water shortages should extremely high temperatures be combined with an extended period of drought. Simultaneous hazard impact, including heavy rain, hail, tornadoes, high winds, and freezing temperatures at the same time, all too common in northwest Ohio, were typical of the discussions. They talked about heavy rains in the spring, followed by hot, dry summers, and rainy fall weather as it affects agriculture, a mainstay of Wood County.

Every jurisdiction was asked to describe the point at which the existing resources would be insufficient to meet post-incident community needs. This introduced detailed discussions about mutual aid, services by contract, regional resources, and assistance from state and federal departments. Uncomfortable for a county that strives to always meet the needs of its residents, participants described potential solutions to the identified shortfalls. They were able to identify locations to use as shelters, where there were no buildings that would serve as a community center, and when and where a community may have a shelter that was unequipped or not suitable for a shelter, and what they would have to do to fix that problem. The discussed transportation options should roads be destroyed, or weather not permit in the midst of a need to shelter people. While it felt extreme at times, the participants were able to brainstorm the effects of catastrophic incidents.

A brief review of mitigation strategy development, plan review, federal approval and local adoption was included in the meeting. There was a question and answer period for questions and concerns for any phase of the project.



***Draft Plan Development Period***

For several months, the Contractor worked writing the draft plan. Extensive research was done using various online tools, confirming or detailing the information gathered in the spring meetings and providing additional information about social vulnerability and community resiliency topics.

The EMA staff and the Contractor communicated individually with various participants, asking questions about specific findings or confirming their intent in answers. Many individual phone calls detailed conversations that were part of the spring meetings, and further clarification was needed in the writing phase of the plan.

Time was also spent clarifying new guidance requirements through conversation with the State of Ohio. As other plans came in with revisions and approval, those changes were applied to the Wood County draft plan.

During this time, every jurisdiction was asked to complete a survey that summarized the status of current mitigation strategies from the 2018 plan. They were also asked to complete a survey about hazards, their characteristics and damages, and the effects of climate change. All but three townships completed these surveys.

Based upon information from the spring meetings, information identified in online resources and U.S. Census data from 2020, completed surveys, and conversations with participants, the Contractor created mitigation actions for the updated plan. Some of the current strategies were continued, some were revised, and some were added. Strategies that were completed, and thus not continued, or deferred were eliminated. The Contractor created a set of strategies for each group to consider, accept, modify or eliminate at the late fall meetings in October and November.

***Strategy Development, Review/Approval and Adoption Discussion***

The jurisdictions and special interest groups again gathered in October and November to review the drafted plan sections with an emphasis upon mitigation actions and adoption. This round of meetings brought continuing discussion of the current strategy status surveys, the carrying forth of selected strategies from the most recent plan, and the addition of new strategies to address new or developing issues or social and resilience issues.

A brief review of the hazard identification and risk assessment findings was shared, and question or additional input was received.

New strategy options were presented to participants for review, modification and approval. Other strategy ideas were presented by participants. Special attention was given to threats of unusual nature, such as dam failure and earthquake, threats to which Wood County is not exceptionally vulnerable. Particular attention focused on dam ownership, responsibility for maintenance and repair and where the authority to carry out strategies was placed. Discussions resulted in re-wording or revision of some strategies, and the addition of some specific actions suggested by participants.

Conversations with the special districts discussed each set of strategies in detail because these were both entirely new jurisdictions that function in a manner not like the other jurisdictions. The threats often cause unique damages, and the solutions to lessening those damages are unique as well. The adoption process was covered, and the exact steps to comply with standards was identified.

Many additional conversations with various jurisdictions were conducted by phone call due to schedule conflicts that developed along the way and prevented attendance at meetings. The villages experienced difficulty in coming to meetings due to the multiple roles their elected officials fill at full-time jobs, family farms, and the county. Sometimes participants provided input for multiple jurisdictions as they live one place, work in another, and have another connection to yet additional areas. Other conflicts included various business reasons, conferences, farm work, and personal illness or family commitments. Instead of holding up a plan that was already expired to meet in person, the gaps were filled by surveys and phone calls.

All four cities, twenty-one villages, and the county responded to strategy surveys. All townships with the exception of Center, Perry and Weston participated in surveys, resulting in sixteen of nineteen townships completing surveys. Various employees and county officials completed surveys on behalf of county operations or other groups that were part of the 2018 planning process. BGSU and NWWSD were not asked to participate in surveys because they were new to this plan, and there were no 2018 strategies to review.

Multiple meetings were held to discuss strategy development. The following table lists those meetings and the invitees for each meeting. Again, all meetings were open to the public, and jurisdictions were able to attend alternate meetings if another time fit their schedules better.

**Table 1-3: Strategy Review and Development, Adoption Review Meetings**

Date	Time	Participants
07.13.23	10:00 – 11:30 am	Wood County EMA Staff, Contractor
09.27.23	9:00 – 10:00 am	Wood County EMA Staff, Contractor
10.30.23	9:00 am – Noon	Wood County Engineer Wood County Chief Building Official Wood County Planning Commission
	1:00 - 3:00 p.m	Perrysburg Township Lake Township City of Rossford City of Perrysburg City of Northwood Village of Millbury Village of Walbridge
	6 – 8 pm	Village of Grand Rapids Village of Haskins Village of Tontogany

		Village of Weston Village of Pemberville Village of Luckey Portage Township Plain Township Washington Township Middleton Township Grand Rapids Township
11.02.23	9 – 11 am	City of Bowling Green
	11:00 – 12:30	Northwestern Water & Sewer District
	6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Liberty Township Troy Township Webster Township Village of Portage Village of Risingsun Village of Jerry City Village of Wayne Village of Bairdstown Village of Bloomville Village of Bradner Village of Cygnet Village of West Millgrove
11.06.23	10:30 a.m.	Bowling Green State University
	1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Countywide Make up meeting Village of Custar Village of Hoytville Village of North Baltimore Village of Milton Center Milton Township Liberty Township Jackson Township Henry Township
11.08.23	4:00 4:30	Washington Township (phone call)
11.14.23	2:00 – 3:00	Village of North Baltimore
11.15.23	9:30 – 10:30	Village of Risingsun
11.14.23	11:00 – 11:15	Village of Milton Center
11.14.23	11:15 – 11:30	Village of Hoytville

\*Please refer to 07 Participation by Meetings spreadsheet for detailed participation

### ***Final Plan Review***

After these meetings, the Contractor modified and added strategies according to the discussions. The EMA staff and the Contractor reviewed the draft plans prior to public posting. The final writing, editing and completion of all plan sections was done, and the plan was set to be posted for public review on Monday, November 27, 2023.

The EMA published a news article in the Bowling Green Sentinel on December 28, 2023 that notified the public about the updated mitigation plan and the public review period. An email was sent to the planning participants that advised them of the posted draft plan, and request for comments. The Stakeholder Committee was also notified of the draft plan availability.

The review period began on Tuesday, November 28, 2023 and ended on Monday, December 11, 2023.

The plan was posted at [www.consultrsa.com/wood](http://www.consultrsa.com/wood) . There were no access controls applied to the draft plan. Directions were posted for those who wished to make comments. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Wood County EMA office and an appointment to review it was requested, when possible, to ensure that someone was present to answer any questions and to receive comments in writing or verbally. Persons with disabilities who wished to review the plan were encouraged to ask for assistance.

Notice of the draft plan availability and the open review time was also posted on Wood County social media sites, on the Wood County EMA web page, and in local print media. All releases included the locations where the plan could be viewed digitally or in print as well as contact information for the Contractor and EMA staff.

Wood County EMA staff and the Contractor reviewed all comments and questions received from stakeholders and the public and recommended appropriate revisions for incorporation into the plan. Upon final revision, the plan was submitted to the Ohio EMA for review and federal approval. Following federal approval, the formal adoption process began. This process is explained in section 4.0 Plan Adoption.

### **1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation**

All incorporated jurisdictions in Wood County elected to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. **The county and all incorporated jurisdictions (cities and villages) and the two special districts are expected to formally adopt the hazard mitigation plan.** For the purposes of plan adoption and future grant administration, the county is authorized to act on behalf of the townships.

While Wood County officials represent townships in plan adoption, sixteen townships elected to participate in the planning work sessions and contributed significantly to the process. This broad participation ensured that all interests across the county, including rural and suburban areas, were represented. Because so many local individuals fill more than one leadership role in the county, there was much multi-jurisdictional consideration throughout the process, emphasizing the countywide focus of mitigation planning and implementation.

The officials identified in Table 1-1 served as the primary point of contact for each jurisdiction. The EMA coordinated with these individuals to schedule work sessions; the primary representatives then notified and invited other jurisdiction officials, stakeholders, and community members. A complete list of all individuals who participated in the mitigation planning process is provided below.

Participants were continually reminded that the mitigation planning process was open to the public. Meeting dates were announced to a wide audience and jurisdictions were encouraged to extend invitations to employees, community organizations, residents, and others who might have an interest in the project. Contact information for the EMA and Contractor was freely distributed to all participants so that all community members could ask questions, provide input, or otherwise become involved in the planning process.

### **1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Comprehensive community participation in the mitigation plan was a goal of the EMA throughout the planning process. Utilizing FEMA's Whole Community Planning concept, the EMA consistently reached out to a broad scope of community partners, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and stakeholders. These representatives were invited to participate and provide input through all phases of the planning process. Some planning team work sessions focused on countywide issues while others allowed for discussion of specific jurisdictional concerns.

Regardless of the individuals in attendance, all meetings were open to the public and any participants were welcome to attend any meeting that fit their schedule, regardless of the location. Stakeholders were encouraged to invite others from their jurisdiction or agency.

At all meetings, the EMA Director and Contractor informed attendees that all meetings were open to the public. The current hazard mitigation plan was made available for the planning team's review on the state's mitigation portal; participants were encouraged to review that document to facilitate discussions at work sessions. Attendees were also encouraged to share meeting invitations, plan documents, and all information with colleagues, community members, and others who may have an interest in participating in the project.

Once the initial draft plan was complete, it was posted on the Contractor's website for review by the public. This two-week public review was conducted November 28 through December 11, 2023. The EMA staff and the contractor met after the review period to discuss and make necessary changes and corrections. The plan was submitted to the State of Ohio on Tuesday, December 12, 2023.

All jurisdictions and members of the planning team were notified of this review period and plan review forum by the same e-mail system used throughout the project. To notify the general public, the EMA placed a news release in *The Sentinel-Tribune* (Bowling Green) on November 28, 2023 and posted a notice on the agency's website and social media pages. Jurisdictions were encouraged to share the invitation on their website and social media pages.

All notifications included a link to view the plan online, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments and questions. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Wood County EMA during regular business hours for anyone who preferred to view a printed copy of the plan.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

Extensive research was conducted during the planning process. This included reviews of existing data, plans, and reports and detailed discussions with stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

The county profile was developed through the study of various county and jurisdiction documents and plans. Information about community development, business and industry, land use regulations, and community life were researched; relevant findings were included as part of the countywide and jurisdiction profiles. Statistical information was provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and other government sources. Jurisdiction websites provided additional local information. Wood County's comprehensive community development and land use plan was consulted for information about individual communities, development goals, building and development restrictions and regulations, and countywide goals and objectives for community growth. The cities supported that information with their corresponding jurisdictional documents. County building officials and jurisdictional zoning officers provided information about construction standards, permit process and requirements, and occupancy rules. The floodplain manager provided information about community participation in NFIP and CRS, and communities provided jurisdictional documents and websites that confirmed and explained collaboration between the municipality and the county. Watershed plans and government discovery reports were consulted for information about rivers and streams. These were but a few of the documents that provided information, confirmation, detail, and data for the Wood County multi-jurisdictional mitigation planning efforts.

Weather event information was identified based on reports from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Storm Events Database. Additional hazard data was obtained from the Ohio EMA, FEMA, Tornado History Project, Toledo Metropolitan Council of Governments, and other federal, state, and private sources. Incidents prior to 2011 were reviewed for accuracy and any additional information was added; incidents occurring since 2011 were incorporated into the new plan. This information was shared with stakeholders during planning team work sessions so that local knowledge of the impact, consequences, and recovery efforts of incidents was incorporated into the county's hazard history. Appendix B: Hazard and Vulnerability Data includes a complete list of all recorded occurrences of each hazard, organized by type.

The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis was based on multiple data sources. National Risk Index projections helped establish potential losses in flood and earthquake incidents. FEMA records provided additional loss data based on federal disaster assistance provided in the county. The State of Ohio Enhanced Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2019) also provided some data and explanation.

A variety of sources were used to examine county's issues with water and drainage. These includes watershed reports published by ODNR, US EPA documents, reports developed by local government agencies and watershed coalitions, and others as identified in Table 1-4. This information was combined with discussions with stakeholders and subject-matter experts to develop the mitigation plan. Local Soil and Water Conservation District, Ohio State University Extension Service, and the Natural Resource Conservation District office provided information.

The USDA agricultural statistics system supplied data regarding agriculture and production.

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
2020 United States Census	US Census Bureau	2010
Bowling Green Community Action Plan	City of Bowling Green	2022
Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan	City of Bowling Green	2015
Bowling Green Improvement Plan	City of Bowling Green	2014
Bowling Green Zoning Code	City of Bowling Green	2022
Healthcare Facility Listing for Wood County	Ohio Department of Health	
Neighborhoods at Risk	Headwaters Economics	2023
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2023
Ground Water Pollution Potential of Wood County, Ohio	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	1994
National Risk Index for Wood County OH	FEMA	2021
Northwood Comprehensive Plan	City of Northwood	2004
Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019
Perrysburg Land Use Plan	City of Perrysburg	2022
Perrysburg Township Community Master Plan	Perrysburg Township	2010
Portage River Watershed Plan	Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, Portage River Basin Council	2013
Maumee River Watershed Reports	Ohio Environmental Protection Agency	2012
Soil Survey of Wood County, Ohio	US Department of Agriculture	2000
Storm Events Database	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2023
Wood County Flood Damage Reduction Regulations	Wood County Commissioners	2011
Wood County Future Land Use Plan	Wood County Planning Commission	2017
Wood County Economic Profile	Ohio Department of Development, Office of Research	2021
Wood County Annual Report	Wood County Commissioners	2022
Wood County LEPC Annual Report	Wood County LEPC	2022
Ohio GIS Mapping for Geological Information	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	2023
Candlewood Dam East and West Emergency Action Plans	Williamsburg Subdivision Homeowners Association	2017
National Inventory of Dams	FEMA	2023
Environmental Quality Incentive Program	USDA	2019
Wood County Hazard Mitigation Plan	Wood County EMA	2018
Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	FEMA	2020
Resilience Analysis Planning Tool	FEMA	2022
Climate and Risk Resilience Portal	FEMA	2022
Invasive Species List	Ohio Department of Agriculture	2023
Wood County Community Health Improvement Plan	Wood County Health Department	2019



## **1.5 PLAN MAINTENANCE**

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan, and may occur in several ways dependent upon what severe storms and other incidents occur in the coming five-year period. Ongoing plan maintenance establishes hazard mitigation as part of regular community development activities, provides a mechanism for the EMA to continually engage stakeholders in issues related to disaster risk reduction, and lays a solid groundwork for the required five-year update. By reviewing disaster occurrences annually and assessing the county's progress on mitigation activities, a five-year mitigation plan update can be a quick and efficient process. Wood County intends 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**

One of the biggest challenges in plan maintenance is obtaining and maintaining stakeholder participation. Plan review meetings can be poorly attended, leading to limited feedback and discussion of ongoing mitigation issues. Many stakeholders have competing demands on their time as they fill multiple roles in the community. In Wood County, countywide meetings are often difficult because there are so many jurisdictions, ranging from large, suburban cities with full-time employees to small, rural villages with part-time or volunteer officials. In consideration of this issue, Wood County will adopt a plan maintenance methodology that incorporates multiple engagement and communication methods to meet the needs of such a diverse group of community leaders. When conducting plan maintenance, the EMA will include the varied activities identified below, selecting the specific activities they believe will elicit the best participation from stakeholders as necessary.

- Jurisdiction-based meetings in local villages and townships
- Countywide meetings at central locations
- Written or electronic surveys/questionnaires
- Webinars/conference calls
- Post-incident review when a significantly damaging incident takes place
- Individual

These activities are utilized frequently in today's business environment and will be accessible and acceptable to most stakeholders. As with any planning activity, documentation of participation, copies of surveys, and other communication surrounding these events will be maintained. The EMA Director will maintain this documentation.

### **1.5.2 Annual Plan Review**

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, beginning approximately one year after the final approval of the plan, and continuing through years two, three and four of the plan's validity period. These annual plan maintenance discussions may be conducted through traditional in-person meetings or webinars, surveys, questionnaires, or other forms of communication. Jurisdictions may choose to review the plan internally and report their findings to the EMA as a courtesy. The specific methodology will be determined by the EMA Director based on what best meets the needs of stakeholders and is appropriate at that specific time. If a year has been riddled with incidents, a

face-to-face session should be held after post-incident response critiques are held. A comprehensive review may involve varied methods of consideration for different groups. For example, county employees may be gathered to discuss the incident, while municipalities and townships may be sent written materials and asked to submit completed documents after review at their local meetings.

Regardless of the specific method, the annual plan maintenance discussion will include an assessment of the past years' disaster incidents and a summary of the resulting damages, costs, and recovery efforts. It will define any shortages, gaps in capabilities, and ineffective loss prevention actions. It will identify any mitigation projects that would have reduced losses or eliminated costs. Status reports on in-progress mitigation projects and updates on the mitigation strategies and actions developed by each jurisdiction will also be included. The EMA Director will maintain records of these annual discussions and will develop an annual list of strategy modifications, including to continue, modify, defer, or eliminate any particular strategy or action from mitigation efforts in the future. The report will identify any reduction in losses due to a successful mitigation strategy, action, or project implementation.

As part of the review process, jurisdictions will be asked to conduct an internal analysis of mitigation strategies and actions underway in their jurisdiction, or to identify strategies that should be added, modified, or deferred. They will provide the EMA with a brief report of their findings. The report will include an assessment of disaster incidents that occurred during the year, a summary of damages and recovery efforts, and a status report on the adopted mitigation strategies as a result of those incidents. If a strategy has been completed, the jurisdiction will evaluate its effectiveness in 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 will convene a planning team meeting after any significant disaster or large-scale emergency to review and document any changes, additions, or deletions that should be considered at the five-year update while the incident is fresh in the planning team's mind. If the incident involved jurisdictions, resources, or departments from outside Wood County, those entities should be included in the meeting. The EMA will maintain records of these meetings and findings.

Along with these review activities, the EMA will conduct an annual review of the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and note any necessary changes. Loss estimates will be evaluated for ongoing accuracy and any progress in development, change in regulation, or other significant differences will be noted. Additional topics of review should identify any significant changes in property valuations across the county, additions or deletions of significant capital equipment, businesses or industries, service centers, institutions or facilities; significant changes in agricultural practices, conservation practices, or livestock operations; initiation or completion of community, residential, commercial or industrial growth and development; changes in development regulations including zoning, building codes, or other regulations; modifications of NFIP or CRS participation; changes to floodplain or flood maps; major projects underway or completed including cleaning of rivers, ditches, and streams, installation of structurally engineered projects or devices, creation of natural habitat or runoff detention

areas; changes in warning and notification equipment or procedures; and changes in any first responder capability or capacity. The EMA Director will also annually review the process of mitigation inclusion in community development and will make recommendations for changes to the county process that will ensure that mitigation strategies are included in the implementation of growth in the countywide community. The EMA Director may add other information at his/her discretion.

### **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 and it is the goal of the EMA to make mitigation part of daily operations. It is the EMA's intention that the broad group of stakeholders representing the municipalities, jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations involved in plan development continue to participate in ongoing plan maintenance. Without their involvement, 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. This was stressed to stakeholders during the plan development process.

Public involvement is an important component of ongoing mitigation efforts. As with all plan development meetings, annual update meetings will be open to the public and community input will be encouraged. Public notices of annual plan review activities will be published through local media and appropriate websites and social media accounts of participating jurisdictions and agencies. 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. If surveys and other electronic tools are utilized to collect feedback from stakeholders, these documents will also be made available to the community and instructions provided on how to utilize these tools. Any feedback submitted by the public will be reviewed by the EMA and planning team; documentation of public participation will be maintained by the EMA. The public should have open access to any findings in annual reports, as well as any recommendations for future projects, initiatives, and actions.

### **1.5.4 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms**

Wood County's mitigation concerns are embedded into daily operations across the entire county. As departments, agencies, and jurisdictions work with and beside one another to help the community grow and prosper, they will consider the effects disasters and storms would have on new ventures and facilities. This community development participation in mitigation activities is a major factor in the achievement of goals as well as the assessment of new and additional mitigation efforts. This participation occurs during purposeful plan review and during daily operations within each department or jurisdiction that guide the growth and development of specific communities in the first place.

The EMA Director plays an important daily role in community development planning and execution. He is part of various committees and boards within county, municipal, and township government. He works to maintain community focus on development regulations and mitigation projects, as well as speaking for generalized operational efforts to reduce damages

due to disasters. The EMA Director is an active participant in the Local Emergency Planning Commission (chair), Wood County Mayor's Association, Wood County Township Trustee's Association, Wood County Emergency Preparedness Committee (co-chair), Wood County United Way Board, Wood County Safety Committee, Wood County Safe Communities Committee, and Wood County Land Use Plan Update Committee. He also participates in several public safety and educational facility advisory boards and committees.

Building regulation officials and county economic and community development officials regularly communicate with the EMA staff. They discuss new regulations, changes to rules and requirements, and other factors involving development activities. When a new project is being coordinated, they typically speak with the EMA to consider disaster factors like vulnerability and mitigation. They are part of developing the county's emergency operations plans, mitigation plan, and hazardous substances documents. A regular line of communication between the offices is maintained.

The Wood County Engineer's Office communicates regularly with the EMA. They discuss weather and road conditions, ditch maintenance issues, watershed concerns, floodplain management, and other engineering and technical aspects of managing Wood County, and making it a safe place for the residents and visitors.

Other key organizations also participate in EMA activities, giving the communication loop a dual pathway to help insure implementation of risk reduction efforts. Land use planning, economic development, and regulation enforcement are all two-way efforts to recognize disaster risk, identify risk reduction strategies, and implement planning and development that increases resiliency in a sustainable manner.

One very recent example stands out that illustrates how this two-way communication occurs in the county. The Wood County Planning Commission spearheaded development of a countywide future land use plan in 2017, and further updates in 2021. The steering committee included community development professionals and departments as well as natural resources and parks directors, Wood County Soil and Water Conservation, Northwest Water and Sewer District, and the EMA Director. Along with all villages, cities, and townships, this vast array of representation helped create a visionary plan to guide the county for the next decade as development occurs. Issues like flooding, smart development, storm water management, and disaster mitigation were included in the planning effort at the hand of all these professionals. These individuals also participate in the Wood County All-Hazards Multijurisdictional Mitigation Plan development and annual reviews both in 2017 and 2023.

Some communities have worked to incorporate countywide efforts in their jurisdiction to a greater detail. The cities of Perrysburg, Northwood, and Bowling Green have comprehensive citywide planning documents that are consistent with the countywide plan. The individuals who developed and maintain those plans were included in the mitigation plan development and will be included in annual review activities, and the EMA Director is consulted as they develop their internal plans for growth.

All Wood County jurisdictions adhere to development and construction standards enforced by local officials, and this enhances the effectiveness of mitigation strategies that support these

efforts. Residential and commercial building codes, including the associated permitting process for construction, renovation, and occupancy, are granted and managed by the Wood County Building Department. The permit process includes all construction activities from site development through occupancy. The county uses the Ohio Building Code and the International Fire Code as the regulation of choice. Fire departments in Rossford, Perrysburg, Perrysburg Township, Northwood, Bowling Green, and Lake Township complete fire code inspections in their jurisdictions.

The entire county is zoned, with the exception of Jackson, Milton, and Montgomery Townships and the eastern and southern periphery of Perrysburg Township. All villages except Milton Center, Wayne and West Millgrove are zoned; Wayne is still in the process of considering zoning. All four cities are zoned. This results in enforcement of permitting for use of properties according to pre-established rules. There are currently some concerns about development of businesses using hazardous materials and performing some mining operations in the unzoned area of Perrysburg Township. The township trustees are pursuing a zoning vote in an upcoming election to minimize future issues.

Wood County's Regional Planning Director serves as the county Floodplain Manager. He ensures that development in the floodplain, if done at all, is completed in a no-net-loss fashion. Subdivision regulations in floodplains are extremely tough, requiring they need a 200-year flood base elevation requirement. Four communities in the county do not currently participate in NFIP: Northwood (never joined in 1976), West Millgrove (has floodplain designation since 2012 only), Hoytville (has no floodplain), Tontogany (never joined in 1976), and Luckey (had no floodplain before 2012). These communities are all interested in joining NFIP and will work with the Regional Planning Director to develop floodplain regulations and with the EMA Director to resolve the sanctions currently in effect.

Wood County Soil and Water Conservation supports the county ditch maintenance program by working with landowners to identify the best method of maintaining waterways, whether that is through the ditch maintenance program, grants and other programs, or by privately completing the work. The Wood County Engineer is responsible for cleaning, construction and repair of county ditches on the ditch maintenance program. He is also responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of three county-owned detention ponds, four pump stations and twelve village storm sewer systems, as well as approval of any watershed maintenance programs in the county. The Engineer approves field tiling plans and Wood County Health Department approves septic systems. Both departments work with homeowners and farmers to make sure drainage is running effectively and the proper maintenance is done. They work with farmers and businesses to address drainage issues that can be attributed to poor soils, debris-filled ditches, and inconsistent tiling of farm fields. Both are part of the Regional Planning steering committee for economic and community development, and represents mitigation concerns along with the EMA Director.

#### **1.5.5 Documentation of Plan Maintenance**

The EMA will be responsible for maintaining documentation of all plan maintenance activities. This documentation should include attendance records for review meetings, contact lists for any parties invited to complete digital or on-site reviews where the EMA staff is not physically

present, meeting notes and summaries, and recommendations from stakeholders for changes, additions, or deletions to the plan. Results from surveys and questionnaires, annual jurisdiction reports, and comments submitted by the public should also be maintained. All reports, documents, and files can be saved digitally so they are more accessible and less cumbersome to maintain. These records should be part of the data shared with the author of the next update to the mitigation plan.

#### **1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle**

The newly approved Wood County All-Hazard Multijurisdictional Mitigation Plan will expire in 2029. With annual plan maintenance activities, the county should be positioned to submit an updated plan 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.