



SOMERSET COUNTY

# HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

## SOMERSET COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

FINAL PLAN UPDATE  
JULY 2019

[www.co.somerset.nj.us/hmp](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/hmp)

### Section 8: PLANNING PARTNER PARTICIPATION

*Prepared by the Somerset County  
Mitigation Planning Committee*



## SECTION 8: PLANNING PARTNER PARTICIPATION

### BACKGROUND

Section 201.6.a(4) of Chapter 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44CFR) states: “Multi-jurisdictional plans (e.g. watershed plans) may be accepted, as appropriate, as long as each jurisdiction has participated in the process and has officially adopted the plan.” Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and NJ Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) both encourage multi-jurisdictional planning. Therefore, in the preparation of the Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), a planning partnership was formed to pursue grant funding for the plan and to meet requirements of the Federal DMA2000 for as many eligible local governments in Somerset County as possible.

DMA2000 defines a local government as follows: “Any county, municipality, city, town, township, public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; any Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, or Alaska Native village or organization; and any rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.”

### THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

#### Initial Solicitation and Local Jurisdiction Participation

Staff from the County Planning Division and Emergency Management Office serving on the Project Management Team (PMT) solicited the participation of all municipalities in the County at the commencement of the most recent plan update. Letters encouraging municipalities to participate along with sample resolutions committing municipal resources and identifying municipal hazard mitigation officers (MHMOs) to serve on the Somerset County Mitigation Planning Committee (MPC) were sent via certified mail to each mayor in July 2017. This correspondence and sample resolution also encouraged the identification of individuals to serve as core members of municipal hazard mitigation committees (MHMCs), led by the appointed MHMOs. Invitation letters were also sent to representatives from a broad range of stakeholder agencies and organizations requesting participation at the Steering Committee level in September 2017 via certified mail. As shown in Table 8-1, all 21 of Somerset County’s municipalities opted to participate in the update of the 2014 multi-jurisdictional HMP, along with two special purpose districts (the North Plainfield Board of Education, and the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority). Copies of municipal resolutions to participate are included in Appendix B.

**Table 8-1. Participating Jurisdictions in the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional HMP**

Jurisdictions		
Township of Bedminster	Township of Green Brook	Borough of Rocky Hill
Township of Bernards	Township of Hillsborough	Borough of Somerville
Borough of Bernardsville	Borough of Manville	Borough of South Bound Brook
Borough of Bound Brook	Borough of Millstone	Township of Warren
Township of Branchburg	Township of Montgomery	Borough of Watchung
Township of Bridgewater	Borough of North Plainfield	North Plainfield Board of Education
Borough of Far Hills	Borough of Peapack-Gladstone	Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority
Township of Franklin	Borough of Raritan	

### Planning Partner Responsibilities

At the start of the project, the PMT was required to identify the requirements that must be met by participating jurisdictions and other planning partners. Updated annexes will be included for all jurisdictions that meet the participation requirements. These requirements are available online at <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=26168> and are summarized in the bulleted list below.

- Designate representatives (MHMOs) who will serve as points of contact, act as members of the MPC and lead MHMCs.
- Develop and implement local public outreach efforts aimed at promoting involvement in the annex update process.
- Maintain a record of public comment and responses throughout the planning process.
- Formally adopt the updated 2019 HMP upon its completion.
- Participate as able in meetings and activities of the MPC.
- Provide support to the County Steering Committee as requested, including but not limited to providing information needed to prepare the updated annexes.

Other key tasks included: 1) documenting the implementation status of the projects identified in their 2014 HMP annex, 2) performing a capability assessment, 3) verifying the draft updated risk assessment; 4) reviewing the regional hazard mitigation framework, including mitigation recommendations provided in the countywide component of the Multi-jurisdictional HMP, and 5) developing an updated mitigation strategy for inclusion in their updated annex.

The PMT and its consultant (AECOM) held several MPC meetings for MHMOs and Steering Committee members through which planning partners were guided through the plan update process and provided with the information needed to make sound decisions regarding the hazards they are vulnerable to, the impacts of these hazards, and the mitigation measures which can be undertaken to reduce risks. Meeting invitations, draft HMP documents and plan update resources were provided by the PMT and consultant directly to all individual MPC members via e-mail. The PMT and consultant provided their telephone and e-mail contact information to all members of the MPC so that MPC members could contact them directly if they had any questions or required assistance throughout the plan update process.

MHMC were responsible for reaching out to their local community members, neighboring municipalities and other stakeholders, and for assessing alternatives in order to ultimately select the best course of action for their communities.

The following services and resources were provided to planning partners and participating jurisdictions as applicable:

- One-on-one meetings with MHMOs and other MHMC members from each jurisdiction (October 2017 and April 2018)
- Individual technical assistance for MHMOs from each jurisdiction via email and phone
- Four (4) Countywide MPC Meetings
- One roundtable working session for MHMOs in April 2018 to jump start the development of local mitigation strategies.
- Four (4) Countywide Steering Committee Meetings
- Four (4) Countywide Focus Group Meetings with subject matter experts
- A series of eight (8) Planning Partner Worksheets developed by AECOM, the consultant hired by the County to assist in the HMP update process, which were provided to HMOs and used to

facilitate the compilation of the municipal-specific information required to update the annexes as described below:

- MHMC Membership Worksheet: Each jurisdiction identified a MHMO and Alternate MHMO to serve on the MPC and represent their community. These individuals also were responsible for leading the planning and outreach efforts of each community's MHMC and expanding the committee's membership to ensure broad local representation. This worksheet documents the MHMC member's efforts to invite various local agencies and departments to participate in the MHMC, and when the invitation to participate was accepted. The worksheet is a single page table which includes the position title, name, email address, telephone number, date of invite, and whether the individual agreed to participate. It was completed by a MHMC member (typically, either the MHMO or Alternate MHMO) and is a standard worksheet used in FEMA Region 2.
- Comment Log/Response Tracking Sheet: This Excel table served as a tool for use by each participating jurisdiction, for the purposes of maintaining a log of the comments they received throughout the planning process. This tool also enabled MHMCs to track their disposition by indicating whether they concurred/did not concur with the comment as well as any action taken as a result.
- Capability Assessment Worksheet: FEMA requires that each jurisdiction evaluates its capabilities to accomplish hazard mitigation actions through existing mechanisms. AECOM distributed capability responses from the 2014 HMP and asked MHMCs to identify any changes that should be reflected in this plan update.
- Continued Compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP): Each MHMC provided documentation regarding how their jurisdiction will continue its successful participation in FEMA's NFIP. This worksheet documents this step. It was completed by the locally-designated floodplain manager/floodplain administrator for each municipality. It was not applicable for Somerset County, the North Plainfield Board of Education, or the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority, as those types of jurisdictions are not eligible participants in the NFIP. The worksheet is a FEMA Region 2 modified/condensed version of the NFIP worksheet that is in the Local Mitigation Planning Handbook (Worksheet 4.3).
- Status of Past Projects: MHMCs documented the status of each initiative that was identified in their jurisdiction's 2014 Annex. For initiatives not completed, they described barriers to implementation and indicated whether the initiative would be forwarded for inclusion in their 2019 HMP Annex. In many cases, 2014 Plan initiatives were targeted at activities that would expand local capabilities in some way. A significant number of these initiatives were completed during the last plan maintenance phase (2014 to 2019), with these visions now realized as existing capabilities of the jurisdiction.
- Action Worksheets: These worksheets were provided by FEMA Region 2 for use in documenting the evaluation and prioritization of local mitigation actions. Each MHMC was responsible for completing one Action Worksheet for each new or substantially modified and carried forward project included in their local mitigation strategy (action plan).
- Plan Integration Activities Worksheet: MHMCs documented the plan integration activities they undertook since their last Annex was approved in 2014. They also identified a series of plan integration activities that they are committing to undertake over the next five-year plan maintenance cycle.
- Growth/Development Trends: Each participating jurisdiction provided feedback regarding growth and development trends in hazard areas in their jurisdiction so that mitigation options could be considered in future land use decisions to ensure safe development and redevelopment. This worksheet was intended for completion by the MHMC member representing the local planning department, planning board, and/or by the local engineering and building code experts. Otherwise, the full MHMC was asked meet to develop a coordinated response.

- Energy Resiliency Worksheet: Each participating jurisdiction provided feedback regarding energy reliability and/or energy resiliency actions that have been planned, initiated, or completed in their communities since Superstorm Sandy. They also identified local problems, needs, and potential solutions for reducing the risks of prolonged power outages in their communities, with a particular focus on maintaining operation of critical facilities during prolonged, widespread power outages. Local feedback has been incorporated directly into the draft Energy Resiliency Framework within Appendix L.
- Draft Flood Resiliency Framework (FRF): Somerset County recognized that there is a tremendous amount of information and data from countless sources regarding flood hazards and flood hazard mitigation measures, and therefore developed a draft FRF in 2018 to serve as a toolkit for County and municipal team members who are engaged in activities related to flood hazard mitigation and flood resiliency. The purpose of the FRF is to: (1) provide data and information about changing flood vulnerabilities and risk factors due to population, land use and climate trends; (2) identify potential site-specific and area wide strategies for reducing short-, mid-, and long-term flood risks and exposure; and (3) serve as a resource for updating mitigation strategies in the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Somerset County. The draft FRF is included as Appendix K of the 2019 Plan Update.
- Climate Memorandum. In 2018, participating jurisdictions were provided with a memorandum regarding climate change, its potential impacts in Somerset County, and potential ways communities can begin to take action now to mitigate inevitable future economic, environmental, and social impacts, thus enhancing their resiliency and sustainability. This memorandum was provided to jurisdictions in 2018 for their use during the process of updating their local mitigation strategies, and is included as Appendix FRF-11 of the draft Flood Resiliency Framework.
- Draft Energy Resiliency Framework (ERF): Many different entities are involved in and share responsibilities regarding the ownership, management, regulation, oversight and operation of the various components of the energy system. All play a vital role in making sure the overall system is safe, efficient, reliable and resilient; and that the needs of diverse customer groups and entities are addressed. It is recognized that local communities are important stakeholders and well as customers. They also serve as advocates regarding the energy needs of critical/essential facilities and infrastructure, businesses and residents within their borders. Local governments help monitor energy conditions and ensure that service needs are being met. They also play a role in educating the public and informing energy utilities of community needs and priorities. Somerset County provided jurisdictions with a draft ERF document to build understanding and awareness of the importance of improving energy resiliency in Somerset County. The document is intended provide policy-makers and the public with a general introduction to regional and local energy resiliency issues and solutions, as well as some basic tools and resources for moving forward. It establish draft general goals, objectives and strategies for improving energy system resiliency and reducing hazard risks; and identify efforts currently underway that enhance energy system reliability and resiliency. The draft ERF is included as Appendix L of the 2019 Plan Update.

### Benefit/Cost Review

Each jurisdiction's HMP annex includes an action plan of prioritized initiatives to mitigate natural hazards. Section 201.6.c.3iii of 44CFR requires the prioritization of the action plan to emphasize the extent to which benefits are maximized according to a cost/benefit review of the proposed projects. In addition, the County and each jurisdiction was requested to provide the status of each project included in the 2014 HMP, as well as summarize how the 2014 HMP was integrated into their planning mechanisms.



As part of the jurisdiction annex update process and associated completion of the Action Worksheets, MHMC members were asked to weigh the estimated benefits of a project versus the estimated costs to establish a parameter to be used in the prioritization of a project. This benefit/cost review was qualitative; that is, it did not include the level of detail required by FEMA for project grant eligibility under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant program. This qualitative approach was used because projects may not be implemented for up to 10 years, and the associated costs and benefits could change dramatically in that time. However, where possible, the benefits and costs of each project were assessed quantitatively. Where sufficient data was not available to do so, projects were assessed by assigning subjective ratings (high, medium, and low) to its costs and benefits, as follows:

**Table 8-2. Benefit/Cost Review**

Costs	
High	Existing funding levels are not adequate to cover the costs of the proposed project, and implementation would require an increase in revenue through an alternative source (e.g., bonds, grants, and fee increases).
Medium	The project could be implemented with existing funding but would require a re-apportionment of the budget or the cost of the project would have to be spread over multiple years.
Low	The project could be funded under the existing budget. The project is part of or can be part of an existing, ongoing program.
Benefits	
High	Project will have an immediate impact on the reduction of risk exposure to life and property.
Medium	Project will have a long-term impact on the reduction of risk exposure to life and property or will provide an immediate reduction in the risk exposure to property.
Low	Long-term benefits of the project are difficult to quantify in the short term.

Using this approach, projects with positive benefit versus cost ratios (such as high over high, high over medium, medium over low, etc.) are considered cost-beneficial and are prioritized accordingly. For many of the initiatives identified in the action plans, participating jurisdictions may seek financial assistance under FEMA’s HMGP or PDM programs. Both of these programs require detailed benefit/cost analysis as part of the application process. These analyses will be performed when funding applications are prepared, using the FEMA model process. The MPC is committed to implementing mitigation strategies with benefits that exceed costs. For projects not seeking financial assistance from grant programs that require this sort of analysis, the MPC reserves the right to define “benefits” according to parameters that meet its needs and the goals and objectives of this plan.

### Completion of the Planning Process

Somerset County, all of its participating municipalities, the North Plainfield Board of Education, and the SRVSA completed the planning and annex-preparation process. Completed jurisdictional annexes are presented in Section 9.