

1.0 Introduction

The Stafford Act, as amended, requires that a natural hazards mitigation plan meeting program criteria be developed, in order that communities will be eligible for future pre-disaster and post-disaster mitigation program funds. The purpose of this plan is to ensure that the community has existing goals and objectives, in addition to a well-thought-out process for mitigating future damages, before approving projects.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 is the latest legislation to improve the planning process and was put into motion on October 10, 2000, when the President signed the Act (Public Law 106-390). The legislation reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur. To implement these requirements, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prepared an Interim Final Rule, published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 201 and 206, which establishes planning and funding criteria for states and local communities.

Hazard mitigation is any action that reduces the effects of future disasters. Mitigation, also known as prevention, encourages long-term reduction of hazard vulnerability. The goal of mitigation is to save lives and reduce property damage.

1.1 Planning Grant

On June 5, 2003, the Henry County Commissioners signed the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning Grant Application for submittal to the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA). A letter dated August 5, 2003, from Ohio Public Safety, Emergency Management Agency indicated that Henry County had received the planning grant. The federal and state funding for this planning grant was \$19,675 (75%) with a local in-kind match of \$6,558 (25%). The total grant amount was \$26,233. The grant performance period was set as August 8, 2003, to August 8, 2005. However, for communities to receive project funding, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved plan is needed by November 1, 2004. Therefore, it is the County's intention to have an approved plan by November 1, 2004.

On October 1, 2003, a representative from OEMA met with Henry County representatives for the Grant Implementation Meeting. During this meeting, OEMA discussed the plan requirements, timelines, deliverables, and administration of the grant. The grant agreement was signed by OEMA on October 23, 2003.

1.2 Geographic Area of Plan

The preparation of the Henry County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan was developed to include all of the municipalities and townships located in Henry County, Ohio. This includes the villages of Deshler, Florida, Hamler, Holgate, Liberty Center, Malinta, McClure, New Bavaria and the City of Napoleon. As such, all governing bodies were invited to be part of the planning process and were allowed input during the plan

development. A letter dated October 8, 2003, invited them to the first core committee meeting. All of the townships and municipalities were sent letters on November 24, 2003, asking them to complete a survey. The survey asked questions regarding the level of concern they had about natural hazards and ranking potential activities. Copies of the completed surveys are located in Appendix F. They were sent another letter on February 12, 2004, for input on specific areas that needed to be addressed and possible mitigation activities.

1.3 Core Committee

The Henry County Planning Commission was identified as the lead agency in completing the plan. To assist the Planning Commission, a core committee was formed. To enlist volunteers for the committee, letters were sent on October 8, 2003, to the township and municipal officials, local fire and police departments, county offices, and other interested parties, to invite them to an initial meeting that was scheduled for October 29, 2003. Also, a press release was submitted and printed in the *Northwest Signal* on November 4, 2003, to invite any interested citizen to be involved in the planning process and to be part of the core committee. The core committee consisted of the following:

Tracy Busch	Director, Henry County EMA
Brent Damman	City of Napoleon Zoning Administration
Cheresa Hadsell	Henry County Health Department
Eldon Meyer	Napoleon Township Trustee
Jackie Miller	Interim Director, Henry County Chapter of the American Red Cross
Laura Moore	Henry County Planning Commission
John Nye	Henry County Sheriff
Hans Schmalzried	Henry County Health Commissioner
Tim Schumm	Director, Henry County Planning Commission
Dusty Sonnenberg	OSU Extension – Henry County
Jim Sugg	Resident
Bob Weitzel	City of Napoleon Police Chief

Tim Schumm acted as the facilitator/leader for the meetings, while Laura Moore had the role of the scribe. The Henry County Planning Commission also took the main role of writing the plan and developing the drawings.

Once the core committee was established, regularly scheduled meetings were held to develop the plan.

1.4 Core Committee Meetings

October 29, 2003: During the initial core committee meeting, the requirements of the plan were discussed along with how the plan will be developed and the core committee's responsibilities.

November 19, 2003: The core committee reviewed the results of the survey that was handed out at the Henry County Fair in August 2003, the survey given to the municipal and township officials and the survey completed by the core committee. The results of this survey are located in Appendix F. The survey results gave an indication of what natural hazards the public was concerned with and also what type of mitigation projects that they thought would be advisable. The core committee also began discussing the development of the hazard analysis and where to start looking for historical information on past natural disasters. The core committee also discussed possible public outreach activities that would include a public meeting and newspaper articles.

December 10, 2003: The core committee continued to discuss the hazard analysis, focusing on the hazard profile and community profile for the vulnerability map. A discussion of what types of facilities should be labeled as “critical facilities” occurred for implementation into the vulnerability map. Public outreach activities were also discussed. It was decided to contact the *Northwest Signal* to see if they would run a series of articles. The first article was published in the December 16, 2003, edition and a copy of this article appears in Appendix F.

January 21, 2004: The core committee review information gathered for the hazard profile, community profile and vulnerability map. The core committee decided to focus the plan on four natural hazards. They were tornadoes, winter storms, thunderstorms and floods. The core committee also began to discuss the inventory assets and loss estimates needed for the plan.

February 18, 2004: The core committee reviewed the draft hazard analysis section of the plan prior to submittal to OEMA. The core committee then began the process of developing problem statements and mitigation goals and objectives for the natural hazards addressed in the plan. The *Northwest Signal* was to be contacted again to have them publish another article. The second article was published on March 19, 2004 and a copy of this article is in Appendix F.

March 31, 2004: The core committee reviewed the problem statements and mitigation goals and objectives that were developed during the last meeting. Once these were finalized, the core committee began identifying potential mitigation activities that would address these goals and objectives. The core committee was given a copy of the evaluation criteria that was outlined in FEMA 386-3 “Developing the Plan” for review.

April 21, 2004: During the final meeting of the core committee, the mitigation activities were reviewed, evaluated and prioritized. The *Northwest Signal* will be contacted to have them publish a third article. The article was run on May 26, 2004 and a copy is located in Appendix F. Also, it was decided that a public meeting would be scheduled to get input from the public. The public meeting was held on June 3, 2004, from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

1.5 Public Communication

Prior to Henry County receiving the grant, the Henry County Planning Commission passed out surveys at the Henry County Fair in August 2003. This survey was to get the public's level of concern of different natural hazards, as well as getting insight on what type of projects they would recommend to mitigate these hazards. This same survey was given to municipal and township officials and the core committee. These surveys were determined to be representative because the survey asked for location of residency and the returned surveys indicated a variety of locations in Henry County. A total of 43 surveys were received, and a summary of the results and the completed surveys are located in Appendix F.

To alert the public and other organizations about the planning process, letters were sent to the neighboring counties, the political subdivisions in Henry County, area fire chiefs, Henry County Offices, such as the Sheriff, Engineer, Health Department, Soil & Water Conservation District, OSU Extension, Local Emergency Planning Committee, EMS, area utilities, farm bureau and the Henry County chapter of the Red Cross. Letters were also sent to the municipal and township officials to keep them updated on the planning process. Copies of these letters are located in Appendix F. In addition, a public notice was publicized in the *Northwest Signal* to inform the general public about the planning process and how they could be involved. To keep the public informed, additional articles were published in the *Northwest Signal* throughout plan development. Articles were published on December 16, 2003, March 19, 2004, and May 26, 2004 that described different elements of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. These articles are located in Appendix F.

Once the draft plan was complete, the public was able to view it at the Henry County Planning Commission web site at www.henrycountypanning.com and make comments. The public was also able to comment on the plan at the public meeting that was held on June 3, 2004. A few comments were received from the public meeting and the plan was revised accordingly to address these comments. A newspaper article was printed in *The Crescent-News* on June 4, 2004 that summarized the public meeting. The public meeting presentation and newspaper article are located in Appendix F.