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2018 Talbot County Floodplain Management Plan Progress Report

Overview

The following report updates the past year's progress on floodplain management in Talbot County. The updated *2017 Talbot County Hazard Mitigation & Community Resilience Plan*, which supports the Floodplain Management Ordinance and the Community Rating System (CRS) initiatives, serves as the County's floodplain management plan. Talbot County received a grant from the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for a combined Hazard Mitigation Plan update/Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment project. The updated Hazard Mitigation Plan has received "Approved" status from FEMA Region III, been reviewed and accepted by Talbot County's incorporated towns, and was adopted by the County Council becoming effective earlier this year. The following CRS Recertification report is based on the initiatives of the currently effective Hazard Mitigation Plan with updated and new initiative activities.

Flooding Initiatives

Identify historic structures (built prior to 1940) in four water-oriented villages in Talbot County for hazard mitigation due to flood events and storm surges.

- On May 10, 2016, Talbot County Government executed a grant contract with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) with AECOM as the vendor (the Water Oriented Villages Historic Resources Survey Grant Project)
- The funding was part of federal appropriations to the State of Maryland from the Department of Interior's Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Program.
- Three project objectives were identified:
 - Complete the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) Survey District Forms for the water-oriented villages of Neavitt, Newcomb, Royal Oak, and Tilghman Island for structures in the 0.2% flood zone (also known as the 500-year flood zone).
 - Complete approximately 25 - 35 Hazard Mitigation Forms for individual structures located within the flood zone.
 - Complete flood risk assessments and specific mitigation recommendations in each of the four villages for those surveyed structures.
- AECOM was contracted to complete the first two of the above-mentioned tasks which also included documentation of character-defining features of the districts, representative property types and contributing, and non-contributing properties.
- AECOM's final report included: identification of contributing and non-contributing resources including survey district boundaries, a prioritized listing of historic resources within the 1% (100-year) and 0.2% (500-year) flood zones that merit further investigation for hazard mitigation, and historic properties with unique architectural styles.
- Vision Planning & Consulting, LLC (VPC) was selected for and completed the third task of the grant; the completion of more in-depth flood risk assessments and specific mitigation recommendations for each of the surveyed historic structures.
- For each property, VPC identified hazard mitigation actions for protection from flooding and to hasten flooding event recovery allowing the property to be "usable" for the maximum amount of time possible, given sea-level change projections and concerns.
- First finished floor flooding and its corresponding damages were also determined for select buildings. VPC's work concluded with recommended structural and non-structural hazard mitigation actions for specific building types.
- Final reports from AECOM and VPC (October 2017) resulted in the following three objectives being utilized:

- County Council resolution stating the recommended hazard mitigation strategies for vulnerable historic properties that were included in the Water Oriented Villages Historic Resources Survey Grant project will be included as an appendix to the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- The Historic Preservation Commission is developing a work plan that includes follow-up strategies based on results of the project including conducting community outreach meetings (targeting homeowners whose structures were surveyed), and a county-wide workshop in late 2019 to introduce hazard mitigation best practices for historic properties.
- A final objective is to raise funding to conduct hazard mitigation forms for the Priority Two historic properties within the four project villages and expanding the project work into other water-oriented villages.

Targeted mailings could be used to inform residents, while detailed information should be made available at the public library.

- Locally published flood information, as well as the required FEMA documents, are available for public review at County libraries.
- This year all informational brochures and library reference materials for Talbot County flood hazard resources were updated and reformatted in content.
- Public outreach and disclosure criteria (described within the CRS Coordinator’s Manual) for map information services, outreach projects, flood protection information, flood protection assistance and, flood damage reduction were met or exceeded through outreach brochures, mailings, print media and online flood hazard/insurance articles, social media, and enhanced “one on one” flood protection assistance.

Communicate the risk of flooding and sea level change to Talbot County residents, visitors, government decision makers, and other interested parties by providing information on county flood hazards, mitigation practices, floodplain ordinance regulation, and the National Flood Insurance Program.

- Public outreach and the awareness of flood hazard risks are key factors for a risk-reduction strategy in preparing the public to meet the challenges of sea level change-enhanced coastal flooding and community resiliency.
- Means of communication with Talbot County citizens include; social media posting, the community alert siren system, and the Everbridge Citizen Alert System enabling citizens to register for multiple methods of being contacted with emergency information.
- In June of this year, Talbot County was awarded a grant through the MD Department of Natural Resources Community Resiliency Grant Program (funded by NOAA) to produce an online multi-media story map titled, “Talbot County: Our Resilient Community.”

- This project will provide flood hazard and sea level change information in an interactive and engaging digital format accessible to the public and jurisdictional decision makers.
- The online story map will benefit Talbot County Government operations, county residents and visitors by providing easily accessible flood hazard information including; flood zones, evacuation routes, hazard awareness details, mapped historical flood areas, preparedness recommendations, and mitigation solutions.
- Many of Talbot County’s National Flood Insurance Program-Community Rating System public outreach and mitigation activities will be supported, as well as, the County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- The online story map will be available for public use in March 2019.

Implement a program for public information about flood risk and steps residents, homeowners, and businesses can take to reduce risk. Look for opportunities to tie in messages about other county priorities (e.g. shoreline stabilization, pollution, and fertilizer runoff, etc.).

- Talbot County, in partnership with the Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Partnership (ESCAP) CRS Work Group, is participating in the creation of a regional CRS Program for Public Information outreach project or PPI.
- A PPI is an ongoing public outreach effort designed to distribute the Community Rating System flood safety messages that are most important for flood awareness, preparedness, and mitigation.
- The PPI will assist in the design of the County’s entire flood protection outreach program within the collaborative efforts of a multi-jurisdictional collaboration.
- PPI participation utilizing many types of public information endeavors within the program can yield increased CRS credit improving the CRS rating of Talbot County.
- For Community Rating System credit, the PPI must be developed according to a seven-step planning and public involvement process. This process has begun with the ESCAP-CRS Work Group.

Public Awareness Initiatives

Identify and solicit low/no cost partners to create awareness and promote outreach and conduct a business continuity planning workshop to promote disaster resistance, mitigation, and preparedness to help businesses develop contingency plans to minimize loss during disasters.

- The Department of Emergency Services (DES) maintains a Local Emergency Planning Committee, in partnership with the business community, for preparedness and awareness outreach.
- DES has discussed personal and business preparedness with the business community this year focusing on senior centers, healthcare and assisted living facilities.
- The updated Hazard Mitigation Plan is in the beginning stages of public dissemination bringing awareness of hazards that impact the county and mitigation strategies to lessen those impacts.
- Emergency Management completed this plan with the help of a wide variety of partners and stakeholders in Talbot County and the State of Maryland. The Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Partnership collaborated with Talbot County and other jurisdictions developing a mid-shore climate adaption agenda that is enhancing the County's implementation of its Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Outreach is only the first step in the process of orienting property owners to property protection and assisting them in designing and implementing a project. They are geared to encourage people to seek more information and become better educated to take steps to protect themselves and their properties.

- Outreach is always one of the top priorities of Talbot County.
- The Department of Emergency Services holds Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) classes every six months for public safety training and regularly updates social media and the departmental website with preparedness and incident-specific information.
- CERT classes are also being tailored to accommodate the specific needs of County villages in regards to how they are able to react in the event of a disaster or emergency where they may be inaccessible by emergency services.
- Informational brochures on flood risks and property protection are provided to the public through events, the libraries, within several County Offices and the newly updated online Flood Information content.

Talbot County Department of Emergency Services Website Redesign: This project will present all-hazard preparedness and mitigation content to the public and allow for easy navigation to important topics of interest. The redesigned website will enable the acceptance of electronically submitted Maryland Department of the Environment Tier II reports.

- The DES website has been updated and contains a comprehensive inventory of preparedness and mitigation content.
- DES is working to provide electronic access to the Maryland Department of the Environment Tier II reports on the county website to facilitate reporting and data access. This information is currently available only at the state level.

In the event of an evacuation of the Eastern Shore as part of the State Mass Care Shelter Strategy, the Talbot County Community Center would provide a shelter for approximately 3,000 residents/evacuees of Talbot County and would also serve to shelter evacuees transiting the County if the evacuation routes to the Western Shore (the Chesapeake Bay and the Kent Narrows bridges) were closed. This would be a shelter of last resort as this area on the lower Eastern Shore has limited access to the mainland via bridges to the Western Shore and Delaware. This would also be used as a shelter for first responders as the Talbot County Community Center is located 5 miles from the Talbot County Department of Emergency Services. This property is also adjacent to the location of the soon-to-be-built Easton Memorial Hospital complex and would provide shelter for staff and patients if needed.

- Plans and MOUs (reviewed annually) have been developed between the County and the State of Maryland allowing the community center to be utilized as an emergency shelter for the Upper Shore Region.
- The Maryland Department of Human Services last inspected the Community Center site on June 26, 2017.
- Evacuation route signs have been established on Maryland State Routes 33 and 333 as well as on County Route 322 for population emergency evacuation guidance.
- Understanding the need to accommodate pets within emergency shelters, Talbot County has implemented a pet registration process allowing pets to be placed into emergency shelters (under the care of their owners) during a sheltering emergency.
- To better inform the public of storm surge hazards, a series of hurricane storm surge maps are accessible from the Talbot County Department of Emergency Services and Flood Information website content. These maps are also part of the Talbot County flood information reference materials at both library branches.