

SECTION VI: PLAN EVALUATION AND MAINTENANCE

PLAN EVALUATION AND MAINTENANCE

44 Code of Federal Regulations

44 CFR §201.6(c)(4): A plan maintenance process that includes:

(i)	A section describing the method and schedule of monitoring, evaluating, and updating the mitigation plan within a five-year cycle.
(ii)	A process by which local governments incorporate the requirements of the mitigation plan into other planning mechanisms such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans, when appropriate.
(iii)	Discussion on how the community will continue public participation in the plan maintenance process.

LMS Monitoring, Maintenance, and Evaluation

The LMS Working Group, through the LMS Chairperson, monitors, maintains, and evaluates the LMS to meet the changing needs of the community. The LMS Chairperson will monitor the LMS on a continuous basis to ensure pre-disaster planning and mitigation initiatives are attainable and cost effective. To ensure implementation continues throughout the duration of the LMS, each agency or jurisdiction responsible for specific mitigation projects will provide status updates to the LMS Chairperson as project changes occur and on an annual basis.

The criteria used to evaluate the LMS and activities should include, but not be limited to:

- Federal and State requirements;
- Changes in development trends and land use which could affect infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, stormwater, roads, traffic, etc.);
- Storms, other natural processes, and human-caused events that have altered Hardee County's hazard areas (i.e. wind damage, flooding, erosion, etc.);
- Completion of existing mitigation projects and introduction of new goals;
- Changes in policy, procedure, or codes;
- Changes in building codes and practices;
- Legislative actions that could affect funding of mitigation efforts; and
- Changes in Flood Insurance Rate Maps, National Flood Insurance Program, etc.

LMS Updates

The LMS Working Group will review the LMS on a quarterly basis to consider changes and amendments needed between the update periods or after a major disaster declaration in which jurisdictions need to propose new mitigation initiatives based on damage assessments. In a non-disaster situation, the LMS Chairperson, based upon a determination of personnel and resource availability, will determine the revision period. The LMS Working Group will meet to review, evaluate the effectiveness of, and revise (if necessary) the LMS under the following circumstances:

- On a semi-annual basis;
- Within 90 days after a major disaster declaration;
- When events substantially alter or negate parts of the strategy;

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- At the request of at least three members of the LMS Working Group; or
- At the request of an adopting jurisdiction.

Annual LMS Update Requirement

Florida Administrative Code (FAC) Chapter 27P-22 (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) requires submittal of an annual LMS update to Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) by the last working weekday of each January. To meet this deadline, the LMS Working Group will annually update the LMS in December/January. The LMS Chairperson will complete this update with input from LMS Working Group members. Per FAC 27P-22, the annual LMS update shall address the following items:

- List of LMS Working Group membership with designated Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson;
- Documentation to indicate that within the preceding year the LMS Working Group issued a written invitation to each municipality, private organization, civic organization, Native American Tribe or authorized tribal organization, water management district, independent special district, and non-profit organization, as applicable;
- Changes to the hazard assessment;
- Updated project priority list including estimated costs and potential funding sources;
- Changes to the critical facilities list;
- Changes to the repetitive loss list; and
- Revisions to maps.

The LMS Working Group will evaluate the effectiveness of the LMS at achieving the adopted goals and objectives and make any necessary changes. The LMS Working Group will evaluate each initiative incorporated into the Mitigation Action Plan (Section V and Appendix D) for status and priority level. The entity responsible for each initiative shall provide an update on the proposed project(s) including:

- Changes to the hazard assessment in relation to the proposed project;
- Changes in community and political acceptance of implementation or maintenance of the proposed project; and
- Current probability of receiving implementation funding.

Five-Year LMS Update Requirement

The LMS Working Group will conduct a formal LMS update every five years, in accordance with 44 CFR §201.6(d)3, revise the LMS if necessary, to reflect any changes in priorities, and resubmit for approval to continue to be eligible for mitigation grant funding. To meet the five-year LMS Update requirement, the LMS Chairperson (with input from LMS Working Group members) will review the entire document to be sure the information included accurately reflects the status of the County and its jurisdictions. The LMS Working Group will update all sections of the LMS document as necessary.

The five-year update process will begin approximately 18 months prior to the expiration of the LMS. This will allow the LMS Working Group to begin meeting with ample time to review the LMS and make updates with public involvement and agency collaboration. Staff will be able to complete the necessary work as part of the State review process with time for the LMS Working Group to make necessary revisions prior to the expiration of the LMS.

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Continued Public Involvement

The LMS Working Group recognizes public participation is vital to the mitigation planning process. The LMS Working Group is committed to continued public involvement in the planning and review process. During all phases of LMS maintenance, the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback. The LMS Working Group will maintain the LMS and make it available for use and review on the website. Individuals will have an opportunity to submit comments for the LMS update at any time through the website, email, phone, or mail. The LMS Chairperson will compile all comments and present them at LMS Working Group meetings where members will consider them for incorporation in the update.

The LMS Working Group strives to include the public in the LMS update process. To encourage public participation and awareness of the LMS, efforts to involve the public in the maintenance, evaluation, and revision process may include:

- Advertise meetings of the LMS Working Group in the following, but not limited to, local newspapers, public bulletin boards, jurisdiction bulletin boards, public notice spaces at libraries and other public locations, and social media;
- Work with local news media to update the public on any maintenance or review activities;
- Make the LMS available for review at the following, but not limited to, on the County's website, at the County Administration Building, and jurisdiction administration buildings;
- Utilize websites of LMS Working Group member organizations to provide information and links to the LMS update and announcements of future LMS Working Group meetings;
- Utilize email and other technological services such as social media and online survey websites to communicate and receive input from LMS Working Group members and the public;
- Participate in events such as street fairs and events and presentations to local clubs to provide information and opportunities for citizen participation;
- Collaborate with local businesses such as grocery stores to include information in annual hurricane preparation community outreach efforts;
- As time and budget allows mail notices about meetings and information about the LMS process to different organizations throughout the community. These may include local Lions Clubs, chapters of Kiwanis International, Women's Clubs, gardening clubs, and homeowners' associations; and
- As time and budget allows the LMS Working Group may provide presentations to local governments, schools, clubs, and other potential stakeholders to expand participation in the planning process.

These efforts provide the public with an opportunity to express concerns, opinions, and ideas about updates and changes proposed to the LMS. Finding ways to interest and involve more people and organizations in the overall process is a challenge the LMS Working Group will continue to address throughout the LMS maintenance process.

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Incorporation into Existing Planning Mechanisms

As part of the LMS update process, the LMS Working Group is identifying current plans, programs, policies, ordinances, studies, and reports to augment and support mitigation planning efforts. Several existing plans, programs, policies, and ordinances incorporate the LMS including:

- Comprehensive Plans – Hardee County and the three (3) municipalities within Hardee County have incorporated Hazard Mitigation goals and objectives into their Comprehensive Plans through the Future Land Use, Intergovernmental Coordination, Transportation, and Capital Improvement Elements.
- Land Development Regulations – Hardee County and the three (3) municipalities within Hardee County have incorporated Hazard Mitigation goals and objectives into their Land Development Code, specifically related to flood protection.
- Central Florida Regional Planning Council – Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) – The SRPP makes emergency preparedness a priority in the central Florida region.

Integration Process

Members of the LMS Working Group will work with the entities they represent to incorporate, where applicable, the LMS into other planning mechanisms. Throughout the LMS maintenance cycle, the LMS Working Group will work with appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies to ensure LMS goals, objectives, and priorities are consistent and cross-referenced with those articulated in other existing plans. The Member organizations of the LMS Working Group will seek opportunities at the regional, County, and municipal levels to:

- Update work plans, policies, regulations, procedures, and other directives to include hazard mitigation concepts and priorities;
- Encourage the adoption of mitigation priorities within capital and operational budgets and grant applications;
- Share information on grant funding opportunities;
- Offer guidance for carrying out mitigation actions;
- Explore opportunities for collaborative mitigation projects and initiatives;
- Incorporate references to the LMS into the comprehensive plans of all outstanding municipalities; and
- Add hazard mitigation elements to redevelopment plans.

Members of the LMS Working Group will follow the process below to ensure widespread integration of hazard mitigation principles into local planning mechanisms in Hardee County.

1. The LMS Working Group will invite each local planning director and/or representative planner for each jurisdiction to attend meetings to discuss ways in which hazard mitigation can be best integrated into planning matters.
2. The LMS Working Group will ask each director to work with their planning staff to develop a strategy to integrate hazard mitigation into planning programs and to evaluate whether their

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regulations address hazard mitigation, and if found to be lacking, identify several possible alternatives.

3. The local planning director and/or representative planner for each jurisdiction will report on the status of their community and identified changes to the LMS Working Group.
4. The LMS Working Group will make identified changes through the LMS amendment process as discussed in the Incorporation of LMS into local government comprehensive plans and land development regulations section.

A similar process will be used by the LMS Working Group to study the feasibility and implementation mechanics related to other planning processes active in the County such as the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (addressing transportation matters), State Housing Initiatives Partnership (active with low-income housing issues), and the CFRPC (works at a regional level).

Incorporation of LMS into Local Government Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Regulations

To ensure the full implementation of the Hardee County LMS, all participating local governments shall incorporate references to the LMS into their respective comprehensive plans following the procedures outlined in Section 163.3191, Florida Statutes (FS). The municipalities shall incorporate the LMS in their forthcoming preparation of the required Evaluation and Appraisal Reports (Section 163.3191, FS) and subsequent Evaluation and Appraisal Report Based Amendments. The Florida Commerce's Evaluation and Appraisal Notification Schedule includes the following due dates:

- Unincorporated Hardee County – October 1, 2024
- City of Bowling Green – October 1, 2027
- City of Wauchula – October 1, 2025
- Town of Zolfo Springs – May 1, 2027

Consistent with the provisions for identifying and funding capital improvement projects found in Section 163.3177 FS, local governments shall continue to develop funding mechanisms to use for approved County-wide mitigation initiatives.

Consistent with the provisions of Section 163.3177 FS, local governments shall emphasize mitigation goals during the annual preparation of capital improvement budgets, with special attention paid to the prioritization of regional, interlocal, and local projects.

Participating local governments shall emphasize mitigation funding during the annual budget process pursuant to the provisions of Section 163.3177 FS.

Hardee County has plans other than the Comprehensive Plan that implement hazard mitigation activities including pre-disaster mitigation, event coordination and post disaster redevelopment. Hardee County has developed, adopted, and implemented the following plans and programs:

- Community Rating System;
- Local Mitigation Strategy;

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- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan;
- Continuity of Operations Plan; and
- Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan.

While the Hardee County Division of Emergency Management serves in the leadership role for the Hardee County LMS, many County divisions, jurisdictions, non-governmental agencies, and private sector organizations have programs, resources, and capabilities that will be invaluable in efforts to improve the disaster resilience of the communities in Hardee County.

While not specifically designed for specific hazard mitigation purposes, some programs still result in a reduction of potential human or economic losses from disasters. For example, the original mandate for the protection of wetlands was to preserve environmental resources and habitat. However, it also has the effect of reducing the vulnerability of populations and property in the hurricane evacuation zones and floodplain areas.

As part of the update process, the LMS Working Group is responsible for reviewing local agency activities and identifying all relevant programs and policies that have some impact on mitigation. To complete this task, members of the LMS Working Group have conducted local and countywide meetings including interviews to identify mitigation programs and policies.

Typically, activities fall into the following general categories:

- Emergency Management – planning, training, exercise, response, and recovery;
- Floodplain Management Programs – preventive, property protection, structural projects;
- Comprehensive Planning – preventive activities;
- Emergency Services – prevention and outreach
 - Law enforcement and security issues
 - Fire prevention, response, and safety
 - Hazardous material prevention, response, and safety
 - EMS, Health Care Risk Assessment, security, response;
- Critical Facilities and Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment and Protection; and
- Communications – outreach, warning, education.

Located in Appendix C, Tables C-1 through C-4 list the policies and regulations in each jurisdiction that support the local mitigation strategy. The language included in these tables is quoted verbatim from each jurisdiction’s plan.

Incorporation of LMS into Partner Agency Documents

The LMS Working Group works with partner agencies to determine the best opportunities and options for incorporation of the LMS into partner agency documents.

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Identified Planning Mechanisms

The following list of planning mechanisms may be updated as the 2025 Hardee County LMS update continues.

- Hardee County Comprehensive Plan
- Hardee County Land Development Code
- Hardee County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- Hardee County Continuity of Operations Plan
- Hardee County Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan.
- Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan
- Bowling Green Land Development Code
- Wauchula Comprehensive Plan
- Wauchula Land Development Code
- Zolfo Springs Comprehensive Plan
- Zolfo Springs Land Development Code

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PLAN ADOPTION

44 Code of Federal Regulations

44 CFR §201.6(c)(5):	Documentation that the plan has been formally adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction requesting approval of the plan (e.g., City Council, County Commissioner, Tribal Council). For Multi-Jurisdictional plans, each jurisdiction requesting approval of the plan must document that it has been formally adopted.
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Plan Adoption

The LMS Working Group will submit the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional LMS to the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) for review and approval. FDEM has the authority to review the LMS on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FDEM utilizes the Local Hazard Mitigation LMS Review Tool, which includes the 2023 Florida Local Mitigation Strategy Crosswalk, to review the LMS. Appendix F includes Hardee County’s 2025 LMS Crosswalk. Following notification of “Approval Pending Adoption” of the 2025 Update by FDEM and FEMA, Hardee County, its jurisdictions, the Hardee County School Board, and all participating agencies as outlined in Section I may formally adopt the 2025 Hardee County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy.

Adoption by Jurisdictions

The Hardee County Clerk of the Circuit Court and each jurisdiction’s Clerk (or other official keeper of records) shall maintain original signed copies of resolutions adopting the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS). All jurisdictions must follow the participation requirements described in Section II to remain in good standing with the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional LMS. An executed adoption resolution along with compliance with LMS participation rules qualifies partners to submit qualified mitigation projects for Federal funding consideration.

A sample LMS adoption resolution is included at the end of this Section. Appendix H includes copies of adoption resolutions for each jurisdiction.

Adoption by Participating Agencies

Participating Agencies, as listed in Appendix A, must submit a letter of commitment supporting the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS). All participating agencies must follow the participation requirements described in Section II to remain in good standing with the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional LMS. An executed supporting letter along with compliance with LMS participation rules qualifies partners to submit qualified mitigation projects for Federal funding consideration.

A sample LMS Letter of Commitment is included at the end of this Section. Appendix H includes copies of the Letters of Commitment.

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Sample Resolution

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WAUCHULA, FLORIDA ADOPTING THE 2025 HARDEE COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY UPDATE.

WHEREAS, areas of Hardee County, including the City of Wauchula, are vulnerable to the human and economic costs of natural, technological, and societal disasters; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission of the City of Wauchula realizes the importance of reducing or eliminating those vulnerabilities for the overall public health, safety, and welfare of the community; and

WHEREAS, a Local Mitigation Strategy presents a unified strategy to build a disaster-resilient community; and

WHEREAS, State, local and tribal governments are required by Federal law (Title 42, Part 68 of the United States Code and Title 44, Part 201 of the Code of Federal Regulations) to adopt a hazard-mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of emergency or nonemergency disaster assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires each local jurisdiction to have either its own local mitigation strategy or to actively participate in the development and maintenance of multi-jurisdictional mitigation strategy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wauchula actively participated in the development and maintenance of the Hardee County Local Mitigation Strategy as adopted in 1999, 2015, and 2020; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wauchula has actively participated in the 2025 update to the Local Mitigation Strategy through the Hardee County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group, which has established a comprehensive, coordinated planning process to eliminate or decrease these vulnerabilities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wauchula representatives and staff have identified, justified, and prioritized proposed projects and programs needed to mitigate the vulnerabilities of the City of Wauchula to the impacts of future disasters; and

WHEREAS, the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional LMS incorporates these proposed projects and programs into the update that has been prepared and issued for consideration and adoption by the jurisdictions of Hardee County; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management has issued an “Approval Pending Adoption” of the Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Commission of the City of Wauchula:

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1. The City Commission of the City of Wauchula hereby accepts and adopts its designated portion of the “Hardee County 2025 Multi-Jurisdictional LMS”.
2. Agency personnel of the City of Wauchula shall pursue available funding opportunities for implementation of the proposals and projects designated therein.
3. Agencies and organizations within the City of Wauchula will, upon receipt of such funding or other necessary resources, seek to implement proposals contained in the LMS.
4. The City of Wauchula will continue to participate in the updating and expanding of the LMS in future years.
5. The City of Wauchula will encourage businesses, industries, and community groups operating within Hardee County to also participate in updating and expansion of the LMS in the years ahead.
6. The City of Wauchula will continue to participate in the furtherance of public involvement opportunities.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED by the City Commission of the City of Wauchula, Florida, in regular session, this ____ day of ____, 2025.

(Signatures as appropriate for the jurisdiction)

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Sample Letter of Commitment

LETTER OF COMMITMENT FOR HARDEE COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY PLAN

<Date>

Lane Schneider, FAEM
Director of Emergency Management
Hardee County
404 W. Orange Street
Wauchula, FL 33873

Dear Mr. Schneider:

<DATE>

RE: Letter of Commitment as Participant in the Hardee County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy Plan

Dear Mr. Schneider:

As the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Local Mitigation Strategy Plan requirements under 44 CFR §201.6 specifically identify criteria that allow for multi-jurisdictional mitigation plans and that many issues are better resolved by evaluating hazards more comprehensively by coordinating at the county, regional, or watershed level, the <PARTICIPATING PARTNER> is submitting this letter of commitment to confirm that <PARTICIPATING PARTNER> has agreed to participate in the Hardee County Multi-jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy Plan.

Furthermore, as a condition of participation in the mitigation planning, <PARTICIPATING PARTNER>, agrees to meet the requirements for mitigation plans identified in 44 CFR §201.6 and to provide such cooperation as is necessary and in a timely manner to Hardee County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group to complete the plan in conformance with FEMA requirements.

<PARTICIPATING PARTNER> understands that it must engage in the following planning process, as more fully described in FEMA's Local Mitigation Planning Handbook, including, but not limited to:

- Identification of hazards unique to the jurisdiction and not addressed in the master planning document;
- The conduct of a vulnerability analysis and an identification of risks, where they differ from the general planning area;
- The formulation of mitigation goals responsive to public input and development of mitigation actions complementary to those goals. A range of actions must be identified specifically for each jurisdiction;
- Demonstration that there has been proactively offered an opportunity for participation in the planning process by all community stakeholders (examples of participation include relevant

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involvement in any planning process, attending meetings, contributing research, data, or other information, commenting on drafts of the plan, etc.); and

- Documentation of an effective process to maintain and implement the plan.

Therefore, with a full understanding of the obligations incurred by participating in the FEMA hazard mitigation planning process as a participant in a multi-jurisdictional plan; I <NAME OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL>, commit <PARTICIPATING PARTNER> to the Hardee County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy. This letter provides formal adoption of the Multi-Jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy by the jurisdiction's governing body (each jurisdiction must officially adopt the plan).

This document is executed this <DAY OF MONTH> day of <MONTH>, <YEAR>.

Please contact <NAME OF CONTACT> at <PHONE NUMBER & EMAIL> with questions.

Sincerely,

<ADD SIGNATURE HERE OF PARTICIPATING PARTNER OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE>

<FIRST AND LAST NAME OF PARTICIPATING PARTNER OFFICIAL>

<TITLE>

<PHONE>

<FAX>

<EMAIL>

SECTION VIII: RESOURCES

RESOURCES

Staff and the LMS Working Group relied on a variety of resources to obtain information and guidance in completing the update of the 2025 Hardee County Multi-jurisdictional LMS Plan. The following list represents sources of information consulted.

Existing Plans, Documents, and Reports

- Hardee County Comprehensive Plan
- Hardee County Unified Land Development Code
- City of Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan
- City of Bowling Green Land Development Regulations
- City of Wauchula Comprehensive Plan
- City of Wauchula Land Development Regulations
- Town of Zolfo Springs Comprehensive Plan
- Town of Zolfo Springs Land Development Regulations

Agencies, Documents, and Websites

- AEM.com 2022 United States Lightning Report <https://aem.eco/2022-united-states-lightning-report/>
- Bureau of Economic and Business Research
- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
- ESRI
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- FL Dept of Ag and Consumer Services (DOACS) www.Freshfromflorida.com
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Health
- Florida Department of Health Hardee County

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- Florida Department of Transportation
- Florida Division of Emergency Management
- Florida Forest Service
- Florida Geologic Survey
- Florida Geological Survey information
- Florida Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity (FHRO)
- Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
- Heartland Coalition for the Homeless; 2022 Point in Time Count
- Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)
- The Weather Channel <https://weather.com/storms/tornado/news/2024-05-03-enhanced-fujita-scale-tornado-explained>
- Firststreet.org
- Johns Hopkins University
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA)
- United States Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Census Bureau
- Weather.com