



SECTION 8. PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

2021 HMP Changes

- The 2021 HMP update maintained the two-volume approach with each jurisdiction having an individual annex (Section 9). Enhancements to the annex subsections is described below and in further detail in this section.
 - Reorganization of information
 - Expanded capability assessment to include integration in the tables and a subsection on adaptive capacity
 - A streamlined presentation of the hazard ranking
 - The mitigation of repetitive and severe repetitive flood loss properties is listed
 - Problem statements are summarized in the updated mitigation strategy table
 - Identification of staff and local stakeholder involvement in annex development

This section provides a description of the Mercer County’s HMP update planning partnership, their responsibilities throughout the planning process, and the jurisdictional annexes developed as a result of their plan update efforts.

8.1 BACKGROUND

FEMA encourages multi-jurisdictional planning for hazard mitigation. All participating jurisdictions must meet the requirements of Chapter 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR):

“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” [Section 201.6a(4)]

Members of the Planning Partnership have the expertise to develop the plan and have their jurisdiction’s authority to implement the mitigation strategy developed during the planning process. The Planning Partnership is responsible for developing and reviewing draft sections of the plan, updating their respective annex, creating the mitigation strategy for their jurisdiction, and adopting the final plan.

For the Mercer County HMP update, a Planning Partnership was formed to leverage resources and to meet requirements for the federal Disaster Mitigation Action of 2000 (DMA) for as many eligible governments as possible. Members of the Planning Partnership consisted of representatives from each jurisdiction. The DMA 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.

Each participating planning partner has prepared a jurisdictional annex to this plan. These annexes, as well as information on the process by which they were created, are contained in this volume.

8.2 INITIAL SOLICITATION AND LETTERS OF INTENT

Mercer County solicited the participation of all municipalities in the County at the commencement of this project. All municipalities interested signed a “Letter of Intent to Participate” committing their participation and





resources to the development of the Mercer County HMP update (Appendix B). Mercer County and all municipalities in the County participated in the update process and have met the minimum requirements of participation as established by the County and Steering Committee.

8.3 PLANNING PARTNER EXPECTATIONS

The Steering Committee developed the following list of planning partner expectations, which were outlined in the letter sent by Mercer County OEM to all jurisdictions and confirmed at the kick-off meeting held on April 6, 2021 (see Appendix C [Meeting Documentation] for details):

- Complete administrative tasks:
 - Complete a letter of intent to participate and return to the Mercer County DEM
 - Designate points of contact
- Provide representation at planning partnership meetings;
- Provide information about jurisdictional assets (critical facilities, plans/ordinances, hazard events/damages, new development, etc.) as requested;
- Support public outreach efforts within the jurisdictions, including posting of notices and plan links on websites and local media sources, advertising and supporting public meetings, and supporting outreach to NFIP repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss property owners, where applicable;
- Solicit and encourage the participation of regional agencies, a range of stakeholders, and citizens in the HMP development process;
- Assist with the identification of stakeholders within the jurisdiction that should be informed and potentially involved with the planning process;
- Prepare and submit a jurisdictional annex.
 - Attend mitigation workshop
 - Perform a capability assessment
 - Review the risk assessment
 - Involve local NFIP Floodplain Administrator in the planning process and have them complete the NFIP portion of the annex
 - Review the 2016 mitigation strategies and provide a status of each
 - Identify jurisdiction-specific mitigation strategies to address each of the natural hazards posing a risk to the jurisdiction;
- Review draft plan sections when requested and provide comment and input as appropriate;
- Ensure the HMP update meets the requirements of the DMA 2000, and FEMA and NJOEM guidance;
- Adopt the plan by resolution of local governing body after FEMA conditional approval;
- Provide information regarding progress on identified initiatives as requested by the County Hazard Mitigation Planning Coordinator; and
- Participate, as able, in additional opportunities:
 - Attend municipal support meetings
 - Participate in and advertise the public review and comment period prior to adoption.

By adopting this plan, each planning partner also agrees to the plan implementation and maintenance protocol established in Volume I. As described in Volume I, Section 7 (Plan Maintenance) it is intended that the planning partnership remain active beyond the regulatory update to support plan maintenance. Regarding the composition of the Steering Committee and Planning Partnership, it is recognized that individual commitments change over time, and it shall be the responsibility of each jurisdiction and its representatives to inform the HMP Coordinator of any changes in representation.



8.4 JURISDICTIONAL ANNEX PREPARATION PROCESS

As in the 2016 HMP, the jurisdictional annexes were maintained and updated for the 2021 HMP. The jurisdictional annexes continue to provide a unique, stand-alone guide to mitigation planning for each jurisdiction. Section 9 (Jurisdictional Annexes) includes an annex for every jurisdiction in Mercer County.

Data Collection

Each jurisdiction was paired with a contract consultant mitigation planner to work with the primary POC, alternate POC, NFIP Floodplain Administrator and the mitigation team to update their annexes. Each jurisdiction was asked to participate in a municipal kick-off meeting, held on April 6, 2021 to review participant expectations and the updated information needed to support the annex update. It was made clear that the annexes are sections of the plan that can be enhanced if more information is available to further customize any and all aspects of mitigation planning. A training was held on April 13, 2021 to lead municipalities through the worksheets used to collect data.

A concerted effort was made to have all plan participants document areas of flooding outside of the floodplain, and other ‘problem areas’ in the County where hazard impacts have occurred in the past and present chronic issues and challenges. This information was captured using an online form (Survey123) to capture the location on a map and description of the problem area.

Hazard Ranking Exercise

The presentation of the risk assessment and hazard ranking for each jurisdiction was conducted on May 26, 2021. At this meeting, the consultant presented the overall risk assessment for the hazards of concern and distributed jurisdiction-specific handouts with risk assessment results relevant to each plan participant. In addition, each planning partner was asked to review the ranked hazards specific for its jurisdiction. Refer to Section 4.4 (Hazard Ranking) for the methodology of the hazard ranking process. The calculated ranking was presented to each jurisdiction and they were asked to review the ranking and revise based on history of events, probability of occurrence, and the potential impact on people, property, and the economy. In addition, each jurisdiction was asked to rank their adaptive capacity for each hazard. Refer to Appendix B (Participation Documentation) for the input submitted by each municipality. The objectives of this exercise were to familiarize the partnership with how to use the risk assessment as a tool to support other planning and hazard mitigation processes and to help prioritize types of mitigation actions that should be considered. Hazards that were ranked as “high” for each jurisdiction as a result of this exercise were considered to be priorities for identifying appropriate mitigation actions, although jurisdictions also identified actions to mitigate “medium” or “low” ranked hazards as appropriate.

Strengths Weaknesses Obstacles and Opportunities (SWOO) Exercise

The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership were asked to participate in a facilitated SWOO session to identify strengths, weakness or challenges, obstacles, and opportunities in hazard mitigation for the County’s high-ranked hazards. Then, each jurisdiction was asked to complete a SWOO online form to document strengths, weaknesses, obstacles, and opportunities relevant to their jurisdiction for their high-ranked hazards. All SWOO results were compiled and provided as a resource to plan participants at the Mitigation Strategy Workshop in June 2021. Refer to Appendix B (Participation Documentation) which provides the information captured by meeting participants during the SWOO session.

Mitigation Strategy Workshop

A mitigation strategy workshop was conducted by the contracted planning consultant on June 16, 2020, for all participating jurisdictions to support the development of the updated mitigation strategy. To assist with the



identification of implementable and action-oriented mitigation actions, a three-step process was followed for the 2021 HMP update: 1) Assemble a ‘mitigation toolbox’; 2) Identify problem statements through ‘mitigation brainstorming’ and 3) Update the mitigation action plan. The purpose of this workshop was to guide the planning partnership in completing this portion of the planning process and discuss how projects that are well developed and documented are more quickly identifiable for selection when grants become available.

Electronic problem statement worksheets were developed and distributed to all jurisdictions which detailed detail the problems/challenges/gaps/identified to date, and mitigation alternatives to reduce future risk and address the identified problem. At the workshop the problem statements were reviewed, and the Planning Partnership focused on developing additional statements based on the impacts of hazards in the County and their communities. The results of the updated risk assessment, challenges and opportunities identified during the capability assessment update and SWOO sessions, and information gathered from the citizen survey were used to inform problem statement development. At the workshop, the Planning Partnership heard from the County, NJOEM, and the consultant on how to develop a diverse and detailed mitigation strategy and action worksheets.

These problem statements were intended to provide a detailed description of the problem area, including impacts to the jurisdiction, past damages, and loss of service. These problem statements helped form a bridge between the hazard risk assessment, which quantifies impacts to each community, with the development of achievable mitigation strategies. Each jurisdiction was requested to identify their highest priority mitigation strategy for implementation if funding was available.

Municipal Support Meetings

In addition to the municipal kick-off meeting and Planning Partnership meetings, virtual municipal support meetings were held throughout the planning process. At these support meetings, the consultant worked one-on-one with the planning partners to complete their jurisdictional annexes. Each section of the annex was discussed to ensure accuracy and completeness. This included, but not limited to, the following:

- Completing data gathering for the capability assessment.
- Reviewing the calculated hazard ranking for the jurisdiction and provide input to adjust the ranking as necessary.
- Inspecting the list of critical facilities located in the jurisdiction and their exposure to the 1% flood hazard area.
- Identify mitigation initiatives that have reasonable potential to be accomplished within the lifespan of the County HMP (five years), including both FEMA-eligible projects and those projects using funds from non-FEMA sources.

Jurisdictional Annexes

While the jurisdictional annex format is designed to document and assure local compliance with the DMA 2000 regulations, its greater purpose and function includes:

- Providing a locally relevant synthesis of the overall mitigation plan that can be readily presented, distributed, and maintained;
- Facilitating local understanding of the community’s risk to natural hazards;
- Facilitating local understanding of the community’s capabilities to manage natural hazard risk, including opportunities to improve those capabilities;
- Facilitating local understanding of the efforts the community has taken, and plans to take, to reduce their natural hazard risk;
- Facilitating the implementation of mitigation strategies, including the development of grant applications;



- Providing a framework by which the community can continue to capture relevant data and information for future plan updates.

It is recognized that each jurisdiction’s annex is a “living” document and will continue to be improved as resources permit. As such, its design is intended to promote and accommodate continued efforts to maintain the annex to be current and to improve the effectiveness of the annex as the key tool, reference and guiding document by which the jurisdiction will implement hazard mitigation locally.

The following provides a description of the various elements of the jurisdictional annex.

Section 9.X.1: Hazard Mitigation Planning Team: Identifies the hazard mitigation planning primary and alternate(s) contacts and Floodplain Administrators as identified by the jurisdiction, and additional representatives that contributed to the annex update. Further detail is provided in Section 2 (Planning Process), Section 9 (jurisdictional annexes) and Appendix B (Participation Matrix).

Section 9.X.2: Jurisdiction Profile: Provides an overview and profile of the jurisdiction.

Section 9.X.3: Capability Assessment: This subsection provides an inventory and evaluation of the jurisdiction’s tools, mechanisms, and resources available to support hazard mitigation and natural hazard risk reduction. Within the municipal annexes, tables provide an inventory of the municipality’s planning and regulatory, administrative, and technical, and fiscal, capabilities, respectively. Further, another table identifies the municipality’s level of participation in state and federal programs designed to promote and incentivize local risk reduction efforts. Further information regarding Federal, State, and local capabilities may be found in the Capability Assessment portion of Section 5.

- **Adaptive Capacity:** A new addition to the capability assessment is a summary of the jurisdiction’s adaptive capacity to each hazard.

Section 9.X.4: National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Compliance: This subsection provides NFIP summary statistics and documents the NFIP as implemented within the jurisdiction. This summary was based on questions prepared by, and/or interviews conducted with, the NFIP Floodplain Administrators for each NFIP-participating community in the County. This subsection also identifies actions to enhance implementation and enforcement of the NFIP within the community.

Section 9.X.5: Growth/Development Trends: Identifies of areas of known and anticipated future development and the vulnerability of those areas to the hazards of concern.

Section 9.X.6: Jurisdictional Risk Assessment: This subsection provides information regarding each plan participant’s vulnerability to the identified hazards.

- **Hazard Extent and Location:** Each annex includes a map (or series of maps) illustrating identified hazard zones, critical facilities, and areas of NFIP Repetitive Loss/Severe Repetitive Loss (RL/SRL). Further, these maps show areas of known or anticipated future development, as available and provided by the jurisdiction. These maps may be found at the end of the annex.
- **Hazard Event History Specific to the Jurisdiction:** Identifies hazard events that have caused significant impacts within the jurisdiction, including a summary characterization of those impacts as identified by the jurisdiction. The documentation of events and losses is critical to supporting the identification and justification of appropriate mitigation actions, including providing critical data for benefit-cost analysis. It is recognized that this “inventory” of events and losses is a work-in-progress and may continue to be improved as resources permit. As such, the lack of data or information for a specific event does not necessarily mean that the jurisdiction did not suffer significant losses during that event.



- **Hazard Ranking and Vulnerabilities:** The Mercer County HMP update identifies and characterizes the broad range of hazards that pose risk to the entire planning area; however, each jurisdiction has differing degrees of risk exposure and vulnerability aside from the whole. The local risk ranking serves to identify each jurisdiction’s degree of risk to each hazard as it pertains to them, supporting the appropriate selection and prioritization of initiatives that will reduce the highest levels of risk for each community.
- **Critical Facilities:** Identifies potential flood losses to critical facilities in the jurisdiction, based on the flood vulnerability assessment process presented in Section 4 (Risk Assessment). If a mitigation action is identified, this is specified in the table.
- **Identified Issues:** Presents other specific hazard vulnerabilities as identified by the jurisdiction.

Section 9.X.7: Mitigation Strategy and Prioritization: This section discusses and provides the status of past mitigations actions and status, describes proposed hazard mitigation initiatives, and prioritization.

- **Past Mitigation Initiative Status:** Where applicable, a review of progress on the jurisdiction’s prior mitigation strategy is presented, identifying the disposition of each prior action, project, or initiative in the jurisdiction’s updated mitigation strategy. Other completed or on-going mitigation activities that were not specifically part of a prior local mitigation strategy may be included in this sub-section as well.
- **Completed Mitigation Initiatives Not Identified in the Previous Mitigation Strategy:** Other completed or on-going mitigation activities that were not specifically part of a prior local mitigation strategy may be included in this subsection as well.
- **Proposed Hazard Mitigation Initiatives for the Plan Update:** Table 9.X-15 summarizes the mitigation action types identified by hazard in the jurisdiction. Table 9.X-16 presents the jurisdiction’s updated mitigation strategy. Table 9.X-17 provides a summary of the local mitigation strategy prioritization process discussed in Section 6 (Mitigation Strategy).

Section 9.X.8: Action Worksheets: FEMA-eligible mitigation actions, projects and initiatives are further documented on an Action Worksheet which provides details on the project identification, evaluation, prioritization, and implementation process.

Annex Review

Additional meetings to complete the jurisdictional annexes were held with the Steering and Planning Committees throughout the planning process. In preparation for the draft plan public review, each jurisdiction was asked to have their ‘mitigation team’ review their annex to ensure it was complete and accurate for posting to the Mercer County OEM’s mitigation website.

In summary, all participating communities and the County completed the planning partner expectations and annex-preparation process. Details regarding these meetings are described further in Sections 2 (Planning Process) and 6 (Mitigation Strategy). Completed jurisdictional annexes are presented in Section 9.

8.5 COVERAGE UNDER THE PLAN

All jurisdictions (County and municipalities) met the participation requirements specified by the Steering Committee. Any non-participating local jurisdiction within the Mercer County planning area can “link” to this plan in the future following the linkage procedures defined in Appendix H (Linkage Procedures).

Table 8-1 lists the status of each jurisdiction, whether or not they submitted letters of intent to participate, and their ultimate status in this plan update. Refer to Appendix B (Participation Documentation) and Appendix C (Meeting Documentation) for details on participation and meeting attendance.



Table 8-1. Jurisdictional Status

Jurisdiction	Letter of Intent to Participate	Attended Workshops and/or Meetings and Project Calls	Provided Update on Past Projects	Submitted Mitigation Actions for Current Plan	Seeking Approval for Adoption (meets all previous requirements)
Mercer County	NA	X	X	X	Yes
East Windsor Township	X	X	X	X	Yes
Township of Ewing	X	X	X	X	Yes
Hamilton Township	X	X	X	X	Yes
Borough of Hightstown	X	X	X	X	Yes
Hopewell Borough	X	X	X	X	Yes
Hopewell Township	X	X	X	X	Yes
Lawrence Township	X	X	X	X	Yes
Borough of Pennington	X	X	X	X	Yes
Princeton	X	X	X	X	Yes
Township of Robbinsville	X	X	X	X	Yes
City of Trenton	X	X	X	X	Yes

NA = Not applicable. The Mercer County's OEM Coordinator is the HMP Coordinator and managed the project and grant and served as Steering Committee chair. A letter of intent to participate was not required for Mercer County.

Workshops and additional meetings (via in person, email and/or teleconference) to complete the jurisdictional annexes were held with the Steering and Planning Committees throughout the planning process. In summary, all participating communities and the County completed the planning partner expectations and annex-preparation process. Details regarding these meetings are described further in Section 2 (Planning Process) and Section 6 (Mitigation Strategy). Completed jurisdictional annexes are presented in Section 9.