

4.3 LOCAL MITIGATION PLAN INTEGRATION INTO STATE PLAN

The 44 CFR 201.4(c)(4)(ii) requires a description of the states process and timeframe by which the LHMPs will be reviewed, coordinated, and linked to the State Mitigation Plan.

LHMP REVIEW AND COORDINATION PROCESS

As mentioned in the previous section, the Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch reviews all LHMPs; however, FEMA is the final approval authority. The LHMPs will be logged into a queue upon arrival at the Ohio EMA. The State will review the draft to ensure compliance with the 44 CFR 201.6 local mitigation plan criteria within 45 days of the arrival. If the plan meets all FEMA requirements, it is forwarded to FEMA with a completed crosswalk for approval. Communication is provided to the community as to their status. Once the State has received approval of the document from FEMA, the State notifies the local jurisdiction in writing of the approval, when the update of the plan should be conducted, and the procedures that should be followed during the update process.

LHMP TRACKING

The State of Ohio has developed an Access database that identifies each LHMP that has been approved and catalogs all of the identified mitigation actions, the hazards each action addresses, and the estimated cost of said action. The state has input every action identified in all of the certified plans to this point. Because of the very heavy focus on plan development, this task has lagged. Currently, the database does not contain all plan items. However, an innovative new web portal will soon replace this simple system.

The web portal project, being funded by the PDM program and state funds, will result in better tracking and coordination of LHMPs. The enhanced plan certification is contingent on this project being successfully completed as its completion will keep Ohio in compliance with the enhanced plan criteria. A few features envisioned by the portal are:

- Quickly identify the top tier, or serious hazards by county
- Present local mitigation actions clearly and enable LHMP “plan keepers” to update this information by logging into the website
- Track past and ongoing mitigation projects
- Identify and present mitigation success stories including quantifying benefits of completed mitigation projects
- Catalog, store, and retrieve deeds for properties acquired using FEMA mitigation program funds
- Run reports to validate and update SHMP HIRA, strategy, goals, and objectives
- Present PDFs of LHMPs and the SHMP

The portal project received FEMA approval in April 2008 and is hoped to be completed in fall of 2008. Once the project is complete, and the database is fully updated, the update of the tracking database will occur when the draft LHMP is reviewed by Ohio EMA and forwarded to FEMA for final approval.

LINKING LHMPs TO THE SHMP

Because LHMPs are developed based on guidance and must meet specific Federal criteria, there are some similarities in their content. Nonetheless, LHMPs tend to be very different from one another in terms of: The quantity and quality of data presented in the HIRA; the techniques used to complete risk assessments and vulnerability analyses; the “structure” of goals, objectives, and action items; whether the action items are mitigation actions or not, and the relative ease of retrieving this information. For that reason, the Mitigation Branch has determined that the two most logical areas where the LHMP should link back to the state plan are in the HIRA and in the State Mitigation Strategy.

Link to HIRA. The LHMPs were reviewed and used to “ground truth” the data the state used to determine the most serious hazards facing the state. In Section 2, flooding, tornadoes, severe summer storms, and winter storms were identified among the most significant facing the state. These four were also the highest ranked hazards based on the number of plans reviewed indicating them as serious hazards. Coastal flooding, landslides, and invasive species are ranked high in the state plan; however, only some LHMPs identified these hazards as significant. This is likely due to a more limited geographical extent of such hazards.

Beyond the hazard identification, utilizing LHMP data (other than to “ground truth” state data) for risk assessment and vulnerability analyses is problematic. Since a LHMP does not contain data on a statewide basis, and since the methods used to conduct risk assessments and vulnerability analyses vary, it is impossible to utilize this data in the state plan to a great extent. It is utilized in the narrative descriptions of hazards, may confirm HIRA information, and may even be utilized in the risk assessment/vulnerability analysis for a hazard that has a limited geographical extent.

Conversely, analyses in the state plan HIRA may be useful and be incorporated into LHMPs. One of the tasks that the Mitigation Branch wishes to complete in the summer of 2008 is to provide applicable counties copies of HAZUS runs completed by the state.

Link to State Mitigation Strategy. Because the state mitigation strategy is a global view, objectives and actions may be of a different nature than those found in LHMPs. However, the goals in the state mitigation strategy should be reflective of and complimentary to LHMP goals. Again, LHMPs were reviewed and the goals in the state mitigation strategy are reflective of and encompass LHMP goals. LHMP goals/objectives/actions are useful to identify trends, needs, and do have a bearing in the development of state mitigation strategy goals and action items. For example, Goal 2, Objective 2 in the state mitigation strategy,

which is to develop web pages and information on mitigation for the business community, is proposed based on the large number of LHMPs that have identified this as an objective / action. Carrying out this action will not only have a positive impact on those counties with this identified in their LHMPs but statewide as well. To determine whether or not to roll a local objective / action into the state plan, it is evaluated to determine whether it has statewide applicability and whether it is a need expressed in a large number of LHMPs.

Linking and reviewing of the data in LHMPs will occur on an annual basis when the SHMP is reviewed. It is anticipated that the reports in the proposed web portal will assist in this effort.