



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-1176, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma; Emergency Management

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Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

2021 Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Recommended Action:

Resolution adopting the 2021 Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and determining that the plan is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 and Section 15061(b)(3).

Executive Summary:

The federal Disaster Management Act of 2000 requires state and local governments to develop, and regularly update, hazard mitigation plans to meet federal and state hazard planning requirements and as a condition for grant assistance. In 2019, Permit Sonoma applied for and received funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to prepare an update to the 2016 Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan. For this update, Sonoma County partnered with local incorporated city governments and special districts within the County to prepare the 2021 Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP). The MJHMP includes a risk and vulnerability assessment of natural hazards within the County, establishes mitigation priorities and actions for risk reduction, and presents a five-year implementation and maintenance plan. The plan complies with federal and state hazard mitigation planning requirements to establish eligibility for funding under FEMA grant programs for all planning partners. While it was developed to meet those specific planning requirements, the planning team consulted with other departments and agencies within the County to support consistency and align concurrent assessments to the extent possible. County staff will continue collaborating to expand availability of common data and tools to enhance efficiency and alignment on related efforts.

On September 27, 2021, the FEMA and the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) determined that the draft MJHMP is eligible for final approval pending its adoption by Sonoma County and all participating jurisdictions. Staff recommends the Board adopt the 2021 Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to increase the County's disaster resiliency and maintain eligibility for federal disaster funding. Sonoma County's ability to apply for and receive future funding from FEMA is dependent on having a current, approved Hazard Mitigation Plan in place, and the County's current plan expires in April 2022.

Discussion:

Background

Hazard mitigation is defined as any action taken to reduce or alleviate the loss of life, personal injury, and

property damage that can result from a disaster. It involves long- and short-term actions often implemented before disasters, but also during and after. Hazard mitigation activities can include planning efforts, policy changes, programs, studies, improvement projects, and other steps to reduce the impacts of hazards. The federal Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 promotes proactive, pre-disaster planning. The DMA amended the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to require state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans (HMPs) as a condition for federal disaster grant assistance. Sonoma County's ability to apply for and receive future funding from FEMA is dependent on having a current, approved HMP in place. Sonoma County's current plan expires in April 2022, and adoption of a new HMP would ensure the County maintains full eligibility. FEMA is responsible for final review and approval of HMPs. CalOES is responsible for initial review of HMPs within the state and coordination of plans between FEMA and the local government.

HMPs are required to be updated every five years in order to continue to be eligible for FEMA hazard mitigation project grant funding (44 CFR §201.6(d)(3)). In 2006, Sonoma County prepared its first hazard mitigation plan in compliance with the DMA and has updated the plan every five years since, most recently in 2016. In 2019, Permit Sonoma applied for a \$333,330 planning project (75% federal, 25% local match) from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to develop the 2021 Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP).

Sonoma County partnered with local cities and special districts to develop the MJHMP and fulfill DMA requirements for all participating planning partners. FEMA encourages multi-jurisdictional planning under its guidance for the DMA, in part because it provides the ability to pool resources and eliminate redundant activities within a planning area that has uniform risk exposure and vulnerabilities. The MJHMP guides and coordinates mitigation activities throughout the planning area and was developed to meet the following objectives:

1. Meet or exceed requirements of the DMA;
2. Enable all planning partners to continue using federal grant funding to reduce risk through mitigation;
3. Meet the needs of each planning partner as well as state and federal requirements.
4. Create a risk assessment of local hazards of concern;
5. Meet the planning requirements of FEMA's Community Rating System <<https://www.fema.gov/fact-sheet/community-rating-system>> (CRS), allowing eligible planning partners to consider participation in the CRS program. CRS has 1,520 communities throughout the United States that participate in the program by implementing local mitigation, floodplain management, and outreach activities that exceed the minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements; and
6. Coordinate existing plans and programs so that high-priority projects to mitigate possible disaster impacts are funded and implemented.

Overview of the Process and Plan

The following planning partners submitted letters of intent to participate, and will be covered by the plan upon FEMA approval and adoption by their governing bodies:

- County of Sonoma
- Town of Windsor
- City of Sonoma
- City of Cotati
- City of Santa Rosa

- Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District
- Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District
- Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District
- North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District
- Timber Cove Fire Protection District
- Cloverdale Fire Protection District
- Sonoma Valley Fire Protection District

Permit Sonoma and the County's consultant (Tetra Tech) facilitated the plan development. A 19-member steering committee comprised of planning partner representatives, citizens, and other stakeholders oversaw the plan development. Coordination with other local, regional, state, or federal stakeholders or agencies involved in hazard mitigation occurred throughout the planning process. Cities that chose not to participate in this effort have, or are developing, their own HMPs.

The core planning team from Permit Sonoma and the consultant developed the mitigation strategy based on a review of the County's existing hazard mitigation plan from 2016, review of other existing plans and programs that support hazard mitigation, input received from the public throughout the process, the direction of the steering committee, and findings of the risk assessment.

The MJHMP is organized into three parts (the Planning Process, Risk Assessment, and Mitigation Strategy) across two volumes.

- Volume 1 includes all federally required elements of a disaster mitigation plan that apply to the entire planning area. This includes the description of the planning process, public involvement strategy, goals and objectives, planning area hazard risk assessment, planning area mitigation actions, and a plan maintenance strategy.
- Volume 2 includes all federally required jurisdiction-specific elements in annexes for each participating jurisdiction. The Sonoma County annex includes a jurisdiction profile and capability assessment; describes key vulnerabilities determined by the risk assessment; presents the status of the 2016 Sonoma County HMP; and identifies potential County of Sonoma-specific mitigation actions.

Key Changes from the 2016 Plan

Unlike the MJHMP, the original Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan and subsequent updates were prepared for the unincorporated county only. No municipalities or special districts participated in those earlier versions. Spurred by response efforts to the numerous catastrophic wildfires that impacted the County, Permit Sonoma and the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management conducted outreach within the operational area, which consists of the entire county, on the net benefits of a multi-jurisdictional partnership.

The planning partnership and resulting mitigation strategy, which includes area-wide and jurisdiction-specific actions, demonstrates the County's improved effort in collaboration and coordination on disaster preparedness and resiliency. Some of the major differences between the 2016 plan and the MJHMP are as follows:

- The MJHMP identifies a new mission statement, goals, and objectives to guide the mitigation strategy. The objectives serve as a measurement of the effectiveness of a mitigation action and also helped

establish priority actions.

- A comprehensive core capability assessment was conducted to identify existing capabilities that would support or enhance the outcomes of the plan.
- The identified hazards in the risk assessment were expanded from the 2016 plan to include Dam Failure, Drought, Severe Weather, Sea-level Rise, and Tsunami as stand-alone hazard profiles.
- The risk assessments were updated, standardized, and significantly enhanced using the best available data, including a general building count and critical facility inventory.
- The MJHMP provides a quantitative risk rating for each hazard to compare risk and help prioritize actions.
- Dollar loss estimates were generated for hazards of concern generated by FEMA's Hazus software or by applying a regionally relevant damage function to the exposed inventory.
- Actions were prioritized using a qualitative methodology that looked at objectives the action would meet, timeline for completion, funding, impact, and the action's benefits versus costs.
- The MJHMP includes an updated and detailed maintenance strategy to monitor, evaluate, and update the plan, with a new strategy for continuing public involvement that the 2016 plan did not offer. Permit Sonoma, with support from the Department of Emergency Management, will have lead responsibility in monitoring Plan progress.

Additional changes between the 2016 plan and MJHMP as they relate to federal requirements in 44 CFR are further detailed in Chapter 2.3 of Volume 1 of the MJHMP.

Outreach

The planning team and steering committee designed a public involvement strategy with the goals of reaching as many citizens within the planning area as possible, and involving and updating stakeholders throughout the process. The steering committee's composition of planning partners and stakeholders from interested agencies or organizations sought to diversify the perspectives guiding the plan development. The steering committee met eight times during plan development. Each meeting was open to the general public and included an open public comment period in addition to the scheduled agenda. Meeting materials can be found on the project's [webpage <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Long-Range-Plans/Hazard-Mitigation-Update/>](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Long-Range-Plans/Hazard-Mitigation-Update/).

The planning team created a project [webpage <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Long-Range-Plans/Hazard-Mitigation-Update/>](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Long-Range-Plans/Hazard-Mitigation-Update/) as a central channel to keep the public apprised of plan development milestones and opportunities for input, along with a "story map" that included risk assessment results for all relevant hazards, an interactive hazard mapping tool, and a report function to produce comprehensive hazard exposure summaries for any given property, block, or defined area. Public input was solicited starting with an online survey to determine the public's perception of risk and support of hazard mitigation, which returned 691 responses that informed action item development. The survey and summary of responses are located in Appendix A of Volume 1 of the Plan. A virtual public meeting was held on February 25, 2021, at which 109 individuals attended.

In addition, the MJHMP planning team presented the plan and process to various other public forums throughout the County, including: Windsor Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; Bodega Bay Community Emergency Response Team; Oakmont Citizens Advisory Committee; Cotati City Council; Town of Windsor Parks and Recreation; the Mark West Community Advisory Committee; North County Citizens Organized to Prepare

for Emergency; California Wildfire Recovery Roundtable; Springs Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergency; and the Town of Windsor Planning Commission. Other strategies to seek input from local residents included social media posts and press releases. The public comment period on the draft MJHMP was held from July 12th to July 30th, 2021. No public comments were received for the County annex of the MJHMP. County staff also presented the MJHMP to the Sonoma County Planning Agency on July 29, 2021 for additional public input.

FEMA Review

On September 2, 2021, the draft Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2021 was submitted concurrently to the CalOES and the FEMA. On September 27, 2021, FEMA and CalOES determined that the plan is eligible for final approval pending its adoption by Sonoma County and all participating jurisdictions.

Formal adoption documentation must be submitted to FEMA Region 9 by at least one participating jurisdiction within one calendar year of the date of FEMA's approval letter, or the entire plan must be updated and resubmitted for review. FEMA will approve the plan upon receipt of the documentation of formal adoption. Once the plan is approved, each participating jurisdiction must adopt the plan within five calendar years of the date of the approval. Partner jurisdictions are aware of their governing bodies' required action and have confirmed the step is included in their upcoming workplan.

Incorporation into the General Plan

The County is in the process of updating its General Plan Housing Element. State law requires the County to update the Public Safety Element and incorporate environmental justice policies into the General Plan when the Housing Element or Hazard Mitigation Plan are updated. The Safety Element and environmental justice General Plan update process is anticipated to begin in early 2022. The MJHMP will provide an important foundation to inform the Safety Element update, and is designed to be incorporated into the current and updated Safety Element to comply with Assembly Bill 2140 in order for the County to maintain the ability to receive full state cost share funding after a disaster under the California Disaster Assistance Act. The current Safety Element incorporates the Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation by reference, and adoption of the MJHMP will replace the 2016 HMP. The updated Safety Element and environmental justice policies are anticipated to be completed by mid-2023.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Adoption of the MJHMP is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (feasibility and planning studies) and Section 15061(b)(3) (common sense exemption), each on a separate and independent basis. The MJHMP identifies hazard risk and offers a mitigation strategy of possible future actions the County and planning partners may take to reduce hazard risk depending on funding and staffing availability. The plan is intended to help inform the County and its planning partners in future decisions about mitigation. Adoption of the MJHMP is exempt from CEQA under Guidelines Section 15262 because adoption of the MJHMP is not a commitment to any mitigation action, and is not a decision to approve, adopt, or fund any of the potential mitigation actions identified. Environmental factors were considered in preparation and are considered throughout the document. For similar reasons, adoption of the MJHMP is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to the common sense exemption, because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that adoption of the MJHMP may have a significant effect on the environment.

Some of the mitigation actions may be implemented through regulatory mechanisms and some through education programs, interagency coordination, or public participation. The County of Sonoma may not be the lead agency for the actions that constitute a project subject to CEQA.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

September 19, 2006: The Board of Supervisors adopted the first Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

October 25, 2011: The Board of Supervisors adopted the 2011 Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan by Resolution No. 11-0582.

April 24, 2017: The Board of Supervisors adopted the 2016 Hazard Mitigation Plan by Resolution No. 17-0168.

September 24, 2019: The Board of Supervisors authorized the County Administrator's Office to execute two grant agreements with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, administered by the California Office of Emergency Services.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	\$83,332.50		
State/Federal	\$249,997.50		
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$333,330.00		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

1. Draft Board of Supervisors Resolution
2. Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Volumes 1 and 2
3. FEMA Approval Pending Adoption Letter dated September 27, 2021
4. FEMA Completed Review of the Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2021
5. FEMA Notice of Hazard Mitigation Grant Sub-Application Approval

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A