

St. Mary's County Hazard Mitigation Planning Board

2024 Annual Report



**ST. MARY’S COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING BOARD
2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

Introduction

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires state and local governments to prepare and adopt hazard mitigation plans as a condition for receiving Pre- Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) assistance. The St. Mary’s County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2006 by Resolution number 2006-35, updated in 2011, 2017 and again in 2023 by Resolution number 2023-04.

The Board shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County (CSMC) by addressing all matters related to planning and mitigation due to natural hazards, community outreach, coordination of resources and agencies, and any other issues relating to hazard mitigation that the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County (CSMC) may deem appropriate.

The membership of the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee consists of ten (10) members and four (4) alternates.

Current Members:	Representing:
Amy Bledsoe	Emergency Management
Tony Wheatley	Town of Leonardtown
Jessica Andritz	Land Use and Growth Management
James Gotsch	Public Works & Transportation
Ed Hogan	Metropolitan Commission
Charles Eible	St. Mary’s County Public Schools
Eric Benson	Information Technology
Philip Burch	State Highway Administration
Jennifer Aubert-Utz	Public Safety
Vince Whittles	Business Owner in St. Mary’s County
Alternates:	Representing:
George Erichsen	Metropolitan Commission
Angela Stancliff	Information Technology
Rick Tarr	Public Works & Transportation
Courtney Jenkins	Land Use and Growth Management

Meetings

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee has quarterly meetings. The Committee held four meetings in 2024:

- February 21, 2024
- May 15, 2024
- August 21, 2024
- November 20, 2024

Scheduled meetings for 2025:

- February 19, 2025
- May 21, 2025
- August 20, 2025
- November 19, 2025

Elections

Election for Chair and Vice-Chair positions were held on February 21, 2024. Amy Bledsoe was elected as Chairperson; Ed Hogan was elected as Vice-Chair.

Attendance

Member	02/21/2024	05/15/2024	08/21/2024	11/20/2024
Gerald Gardiner	P	N/A	N/A	N/A
Amy Bledsoe	P	P	P	P
Tony Wheatley	P	A	P	A
Jessica Andritz	P	P	P	P - Coutney Jenkins - Alternate
James Gotsch	P	P	P	P
Ed Hogan	P	P	P	P
Charles Eible	A	A	P	P
Eric Benson	A	P	P	A
Philip Burch	P	P	P	P
Jennifer Aubert-Utz	N/A	A	P	P
Vince Whittles	P	A	P	P

Present	8	6	10	8
Absent	2	4	0	2

Hazard Mitigation Plan

The St. Mary’s County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved by FEMA on March 13, 2023. The plan was adopted by the Town of Leonardtown on March 13, 2023, by Resolution number 3-23, and the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County (CSMC) on March 21, 2023, by Resolution number 2023-04. Per requirement, the plan must be updated every five years. The current plan will expire on March 12, 2028.

Hazard Mitigation Plan – Project Addition

A project for fixed variable message sign boards was added to the St. Mary’s County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. This project hopes to standardize the capability of fixed variable message sign boards in the future and enable the ability to remotely change display content. This could potentially increase public alert and early warning information.

St. Mary's Dam Water Level Monitor

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) signed an agreement to partner with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) for installation and maintenance of the water level/precipitation monitor at St. Mary's Dam. Real time data of the water level and precipitation rate monitoring enables early warning of protective actions within the Dam breach zone. Installation occurred on March 26, 2024.

Flood Mitigation Assistance Applications

Three (3) subapplications were submitted for the FY2023 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant funding cycle. All were submitted on behalf of the homeowners for elevations of single-family homes in coastal flood zones. Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will review and rate applications. Four (4) homeowners are currently interested in the FY2024 FMA grant funding cycle.

Tropical Storm Isis

On July 11, 2024, the final project was closed for Tropical Storm Isis, which occurred on August 4, 2020. Approximately \$2.3 million was eligible for reimbursement from damage that occurred during this storm.

Nuisance Flood Plan

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) approved the grant application from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to potentially fund updating the Nuisance Flood Plan. The plan will be updated by Smith Planning and Design (SPD) and incorporate nuisance items reported into the local 311 system. The updated Nuisance Flood Plan will compliment the current Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Sea Level Rise/County Problem Sewer Areas

Sea Level rise is expected to increase by 0.50 – 0.80 feet by the year 2050. In St. Mary's County, hundreds of residential properties, roadways, and 400+ miles of shoreline could potentially be affected. Impacts of sea level rise will increase county problem sewer areas. This will include environmental related issues such as sanitary sewer overflows, inflows/infiltration as well as human/public health hazards should these systems fail or are otherwise impacted. Facilities, residential dwellings and businesses located in coastal/low-lying areas may be affected by the corresponding surges. There is a necessity for continued discussion and resiliency needs for potential mitigation, relocation, or retrofit strategies.

Community Rating System

The Community Rating System (CRS) recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that reduce/avoid flood damage to insurable property, strengthen/support insurance aspects of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and foster comprehensive

flood management. Effective October 1, 2024, in St. Mary's County the CRS will change from a class ten (10) to a class seven (7), enabling a savings of up to fifteen (15) percent for those enrolled. A progress report will be required for renewal of the CRS annually.

St. George Island Tidal Gauge

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) signed an agreement to partner with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) for installation and maintenance of the tidal gauge/precipitation monitor at St. George Creek at Straits Point. The National Weather Service (NWS) conducts predictive modeling from this location for the area. Real time data of the water level and precipitation rate monitoring enables early warning of flooding potential on and near the Island. Installation occurred on January 13, 2025.

Conclusion

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Board aims to identify proactive measures like structural improvements, land use planning, and public education to reduce the risk of damage and make our community more resilient. The creation of long-term strategies and continued assessment of vulnerabilities will minimize the impact that future disasters have on lives and property. The Hazard Mitigation Planning Board is dedicated to serving the citizens of our community by overseeing the implementation of mitigation actions and advising the Commissioners of St. Mary's County of the impact that disasters and hazards could have on the community.