



## MEMORANDUM

Date: September 10, 2009

To: Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

From: Gerard S. Mallet, Local Mitigation Strategy Coordinator

Subject: FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Resolution 2005-068, dated April 26, 2005, adopted the Charlotte County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) as the County's Floodplain Management Plan. The LMS Committee, comprised of both government and non-government representatives, continues to revise and monitor the plan. The following is a progress report for 2008/2009. A copy of this memorandum is being made available to the public through a posting on the County's website.

### 1. Background

Charlotte County began work on an LMS in 1999. The original plan underwent extensive revision, beginning in 2003, to comply with the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA2K) of 2000. The plan, as adopted by the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners, includes a risk analysis which identifies the most common types of flooding that occur throughout the County.

The LMS identifies projects that can reduce the impact of flooding and reduce the losses that can occur. Properties identified by the National Flood Insurance Program as Repetitive Loss Properties, have been included as an action item in the LMS since its inception.

On August 13, 2004, Hurricane Charley, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in Charlotte County. The City of Punta Gorda and the commercial district of Port

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Charlotte were severely impacted by the storm. FEMA declaration 1539 was declared for the storm and Charlotte County received significant amounts of Public and Individual Assistance to rebuild from the storm. Due to the amount of aid disbursed to the County, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provided a significant opportunity to rebuild and strengthen the community. Since the HMGP provided funds to those projects identified in the LMS, the LMS Working Group, at the request of the State of Florida, was able to convene and prioritize those projects deemed an appropriate response to the storm.

## **2. Review of LMS action items:**

There are 6 objectives listed in the LMS: Reduce the vulnerability of the public and property from losses from natural disasters; prohibit development along the coastal dune system; ensure cooperation between government and non-government entities to enhance mitigation activities; reduce the vulnerability of critical facilities from losses due to natural disasters; enhance public awareness of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation measures; and acquire and protect unique natural habitats and ecological systems such as wetlands. The order of the objectives does not reflect prioritization which is decided separately by the LMS Working Group.

**Objective 1:** Reduce the vulnerability of persons and property from losses from natural disasters.

*Status:* Ongoing. The most likely threat to Charlotte County is a tropical cyclone. To reduce the vulnerability of its residents, the County addresses this objective in many ways. The County ensures that all new construction comply with strict building codes that require both wind and flood protection for all areas of the County. Structures within the SFHA are also required to obtain a Base Flood Elevation (BFE) as part of the permitting process. Since Charlotte County relies primarily on an "open" drainage system, all new structures are required to have a BFE of 18' above the crown of the adjoining roadway.

The County, through the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, provides for the safe and thorough evacuation of coastal residents in the event of an approaching storm. The County's flood warning system is evaluated and revised regularly. The County has added to significant web based programs to assist the residents and visitors in understanding their flood risks. One is the "Know Your Zone" link that allows residents to enter their address into the site and receive their evacuation zone and detailed information concerning appropriate actions during emergencies. The second is the "Charlotte Alert" subscription service that allows residents to subscribe to emergency information through email.

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The County actively monitors the status of properties deemed to be Repetitive Loss Properties by the NFIP, offers mitigation advice to the owners, and, when funding can be secured, eliminates the hazard.

The County recognizes the protection value of the coastal dune system and actively prohibits development that may diminish its effectiveness. Through strict enforcement of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (COBRA) and maintenance of a Coastal Development Control Line, the dune system is maintained and protected.

**Objective 2:** Ensure cooperation between government and non-government entities to enhance mitigation activities.

*Status:* Ongoing. The LMS Working Group is representative of the Community through its members. Invitations to County and City Departments, Civic Organizations, and the general public are extended for each meeting. Projects are discussed, selected, and prioritized by consensus. Should the County experience a natural hazard, all segments of government and response organizations are represented in the Emergency Operations Center. A continual program of training and exercising is in place to address preparedness and response activities.

The County also maintains an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Punta Gorda, the County's only incorporated entity that accepts the LMS as the Floodplain Management Plan and agrees to cooperatively address mitigation efforts.

**Objective 3:** Reduce the vulnerability of critical, public, and historic facilities.

*Status:* Ongoing. As a result of the funds made available through the HMGP from Hurricane Charley, the County began significant retrofit programs to strengthen key facilities. The status of the projects is addressed later in this report. In addition, through public and private funds, two historical structures, the 1903 A.C. Freeman House, and the 1921 Charlotte County Courthouse have been rebuilt to a higher standard.

**Objective 4:** Strengthen Plans for Post Disaster, Recovery, and Mitigation Plans.

*Status:* Ongoing. The Charlotte County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) was updated, revised, and digitized in 2006. The complete plan was adopted by the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners as the all hazards response and recovery plan for the County. The CEMP was reviewed and approved by the Florida Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency

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Management. The CEMP is due for its next evaluation and review by the Florida Division of Emergency Management in 2010.

**Objective 5:** Enhance public awareness of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation measures.

*Status:* Ongoing. Charlotte County, through the Office of Emergency Management, conducts continuous public awareness initiatives throughout the year. Preparedness, response, and mitigation measures for all hazards are published yearly in the phone directory. Mailings to property owners within the SHFA, insurance agents, mortgage brokers, and real estate agencies that encourage flood safety and the purchase of flood insurance are conducted annually. Public events, media campaigns, and websites are available to assist residents with preparedness information. The County annually publishes an "All Hazards Guide" that offers preparedness and mitigation information. The County website, [www.CharlotteCountyFL.com](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.com), is a thorough source of information for flood related topics.

**Objective 6:** Protect and acquire unique natural habitats and wetlands as part of the flood protection system.

*Status:* Ongoing. During this evaluation period the County has added the following properties to be preserved as green space:

Prairie Creek Preserve	1642.9 Acres
Thorton Key Preserve	30.2 Acres
Shell Creek Preserve	382.2 Acres
Deep Creek Preserve	108.3

All of the purchased property is in the SFHA with FIRM ratings of 8AE-26AE or below and in the Category 2 or less storm surge zone.

### 3. Community Rating System

The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the maintenance of the Community Rating System. Charlotte County received notice in August 2009, that the 3 year cycle review had been completed and the County would maintain its Class 5 Community status.

### 4. Prioritized Project Status

By recommendation of the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management, projects that had the most impact on minimizing structures from wind damage were given priority in the LMS. Repetitive Loss Properties remained an initiative and were

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tracked as part of the annual review process. The status of prioritized projects that have been is as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Status</u>
Port Charlotte Middle School	Shutters	Completed
LA Angier Middle School	Shutters	Completed
Charlotte Harbor School	Shutters	Completed
Charlotte Vo-Tech	Shutters	Completed
Murdock Middle School	Shutters	Completed
Myaka Middle School	Shutters	Completed
Port Charlotte HS	Shutters	Completed
Vineland Elementary	Shutters	Completed
Charlotte Harbor School	Shutters	Completed
Charlotte High School	Rebuild	In progress
Deep Creek Elementary	Shutters	Completed
Lemon bay High School	Shutters	Completed
Meadow Park Elementary	Shutters	Completed
Murdock Admin Center	Window Retrofit	In progress
All School District Buildings	Lightning Protection	Completed
Fire Station #1	Rebuild	Completed
Fire Station #7	Rebuild	Completed
Fire Station #2	Shutters	Completed
Fire Station #3	Shutters	Completed
Fire station #5	Roof Retrofit	In progress

## 5. Recommendations

The majority of the projects undertaken as a result of the Hazard Mitigation Grants received after Hurricane Charley have been completed. The Local Mitigation Strategy Planning Committee has adopted new projects to be considered should funding become available. Proposed projects include elevating lift station electrical controls above 100 year flood, repairing or replacing flood control structures along County waterways, and shuttering projects for some of the County’s critical infrastructure.

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