

Section 5

Capability Assessment

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5.1 Overview

5.1.1 Purpose

Although not required by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 or the Interim Final Rule, a capability assessment adds context to a hazard mitigation plan by providing an inventory of a jurisdiction's hazard mitigation-related programs and policies and an analysis of its capacity to carry them out. Understanding these capabilities is essential for developing mitigation strategies and actions.

The capability assessment is a review of Sussex County's resources to identify, review, and analyze the framework in place to support implementation of mitigation actions identified in the Plan (see Section 6). This local capability is extremely important because many of the most critical and effective hazard mitigation strategies and programs, including enforcement of floodplain management, building codes, and land-use planning, require a strong local role to achieve effective implementation.

5.1.2 Methodology

This capability assessment results from research, interviews, and surveys. Relevant documents were reviewed related to hazard mitigation, including the New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (2008), as well as state and federal sources related to funding, planning, and regulatory capability.

A web-based survey tool was designed and administered. The questions were vetted by the Sussex County Division of Emergency Management, and the survey was live from April 26, 2010 until June 30, 2010. The survey was targeted at the primary municipal contacts for this planning process. For the most part, these were municipal Office of Emergency Management (OEM) coordinators. Other municipal staff with relevant expertise—including those in the departments of planning, public works, and buildings—were encouraged to take the survey as well.

The survey generally covered the following topics:

- Floodplain management
- Land use planning and regulation
- Capital improvement planning
- Land conservation programs
- Intra-and inter-jurisdictional coordination

5.2 Capability Assessment for Municipalities within Sussex County

As described above, capability at the municipal level was assessed through the use of an online survey, augmented by research into other state sources and interviews with county officials. The survey was targeted to the primary contacts for this Plan in each municipality. Typically, these were municipal OEM coordinators. Others with relevant knowledge were solicited to participate as well, including those in the departments of planning, public works, and buildings. In Sussex County, 32 primary contacts participated including one municipal official. However, respondents did not answer all of the survey questions, creating variations in the response rate.

5.2.1 Staffing and Personnel Capability for Hazard Mitigation

Thirty-eight percent of municipal respondents in Sussex County have a hazard mitigation or flood mitigation plan in their municipality and have implemented hazard mitigation projects (including ongoing efforts), mostly relating to mitigation of flooding. When questioned if documentation of implemented hazard mitigation projects were available, three out of eight responders (38%) stated that grant applications, cost-benefit analysis, project records, and/or close out documentation among others forms of documentation were available.

Of the 32 individuals that responded, just over half (53%) reported working for their municipality's office of emergency management and 25% in a variety of municipal departments.

Over two-thirds of respondents (78%) reported working with other offices/agencies within their municipalities to plan and/or implement hazard mitigation, including the departments of public works, code enforcement, engineering, fire, emergency medical services, zoning, and building inspections.

Only three persons reported having staff trained or with expertise relevant to hazard mitigation. Additionally, only two offices reported having staff trained in hazard mitigation grant writing and 10% of the respondents indicated experience with hazard mitigation grant administration.

Respondents reported little use of a Geographic Information System (GIS)—only 13% reported having a GIS department or unit using the technology with only three staff members among the respondents devoted to operating, updating, and maintaining GIS.

As shown in Figure 5.2.1-1, respondents had a relatively strong familiarity with FEMA mitigation grant programs. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were familiar with the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program and over 74% with the Public Assistance Program. Fewer respondents were familiar with the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (53%) and less than 50% were familiar with the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, Repetitive Flood Claim Program, and Severe Repetitive Loss Program. As Figure 5.2.1-2 shows, participation in FEMA grant programs has been low in Sussex County.

Figure 5.2.1-1: Respondent Familiarity with FEMA Mitigation Funding Sources (Answering 19 of 32)
(Source: NDRR Municipal Capability Assessment Survey, 2010)

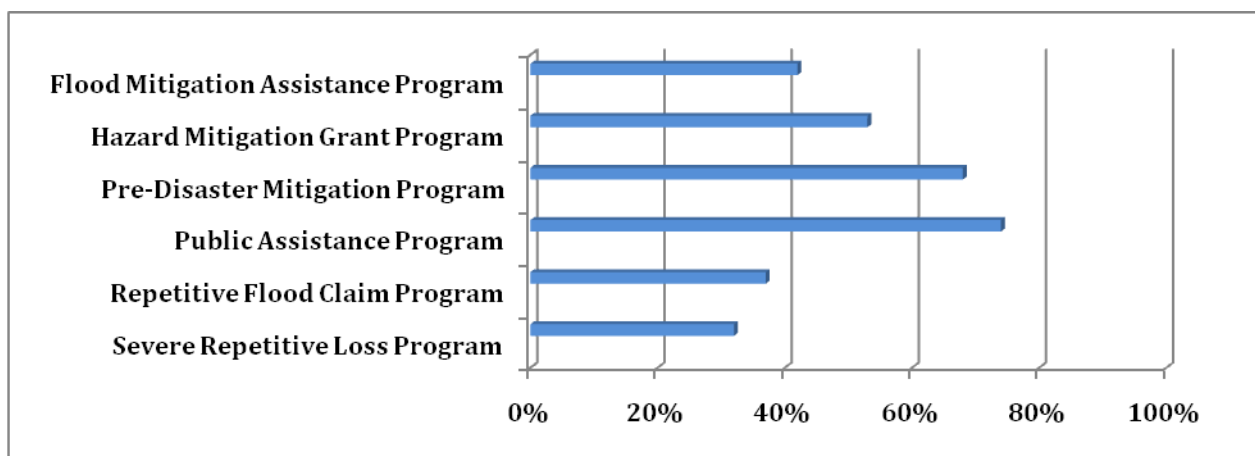
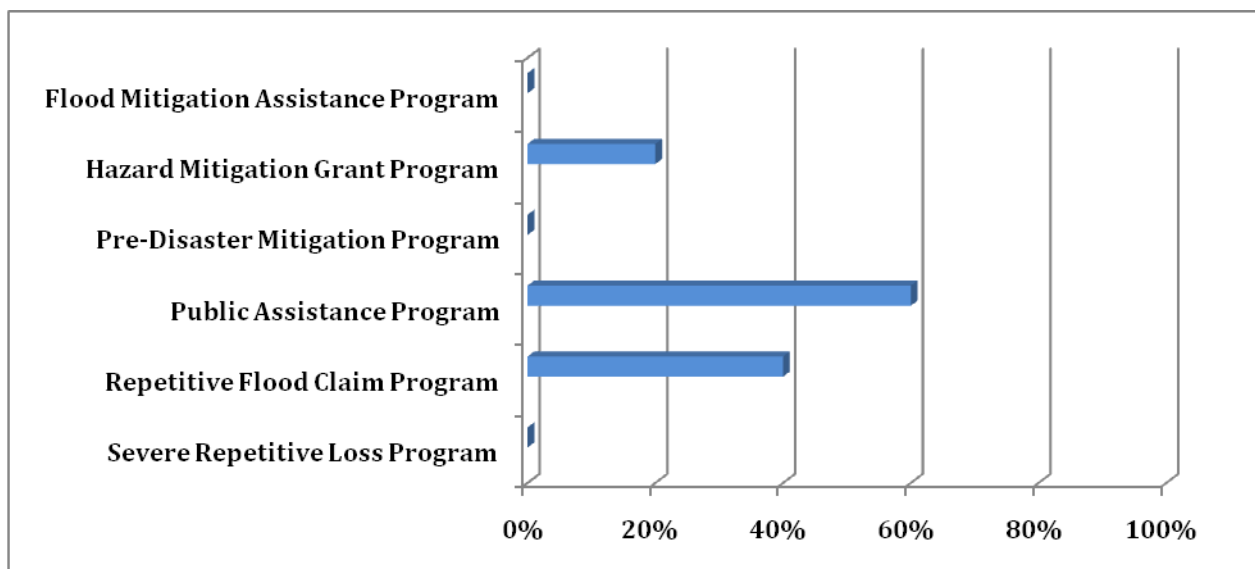


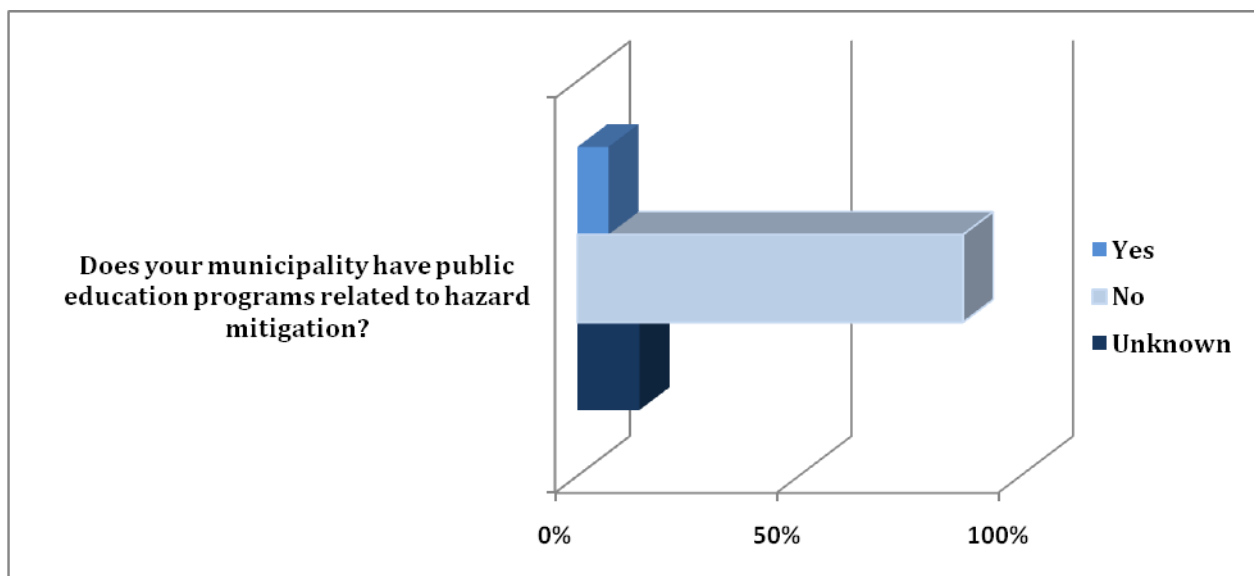
Figure 5.2.1-2: Municipal Participation in FEMA Mitigation Programs (Answering 19 of 32)
(Source: NDRR Municipal Capability Assessment Survey, 2010)



Over one-third of the respondents were unaware of how much federal, state, or local funding was spent in their municipality on hazard mitigation activities from 2000-2009. Thirty percent stated they received no funding, while another 30% stated that their municipalities received between \$1 to \$250,000. Only one respondent (3%) stated that they received between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 in federal, state, and local funding.

As Figure 5.2.1-3 shows, only two respondents reported that their municipality has any public information programs related to hazard mitigation. Additionally, only 13% stated that their municipalities provide site-specific hazard information to property owners or prospective property owners.

Figure 5.2.1-3: Existence of Municipal Public Education Programs Related to Hazard Mitigation
 (Answering 28 of 32)
 (Source: NDRR Municipal Capability Assessment Survey, 2010)



5.2.2 Floodplain Management

As Table 5.2.2-1 shows all 24 municipalities in Sussex County participate in the NFIP, meaning that they are required under state law to have adopted a floodplain management ordinance and have a designated floodplain manager.

One municipality in the county takes additional steps to reduce their Community Rating System (CRS) score below the default rating of 10. Additional proactive steps can reduce the CRS rating, which in turn reduces property owners' NFIP premiums.

Table 5.2.2-1: NFIP and CRS Participation in Sussex County
(Source: FEMA)

Municipality	Participating in the National Flood Program as of 6/30/08	CRS Rating
Andover Township	Yes	10
Andover Borough	Yes	10
Branchville Borough	Yes	10
Byram Township	Yes	10
Frankford Township	Yes	10
Franklin Borough	Yes	7
Fredon Township	Yes	10
Green Township	Yes	10
Hamburg Borough	Yes	10
Hampton Township	Yes	10
Hardyston Township	Yes	10
Hopatcong Borough	Yes	10
Lafayette Township	Yes	10
Montague Township	Yes	10
Newton Town	Yes	10
Ogdensburg Borough	Yes	10
Sandyston Township	Yes	10
Sparta Township	Yes	10
Stanhope Borough	Yes	10
Stillwater Township	Yes	10
Sussex Borough	Yes	10
Vernon Township	Yes	10
Walpack Township	Yes	10
Wantage Township	Yes	10

5.2.3 Land Use Planning and Regulation

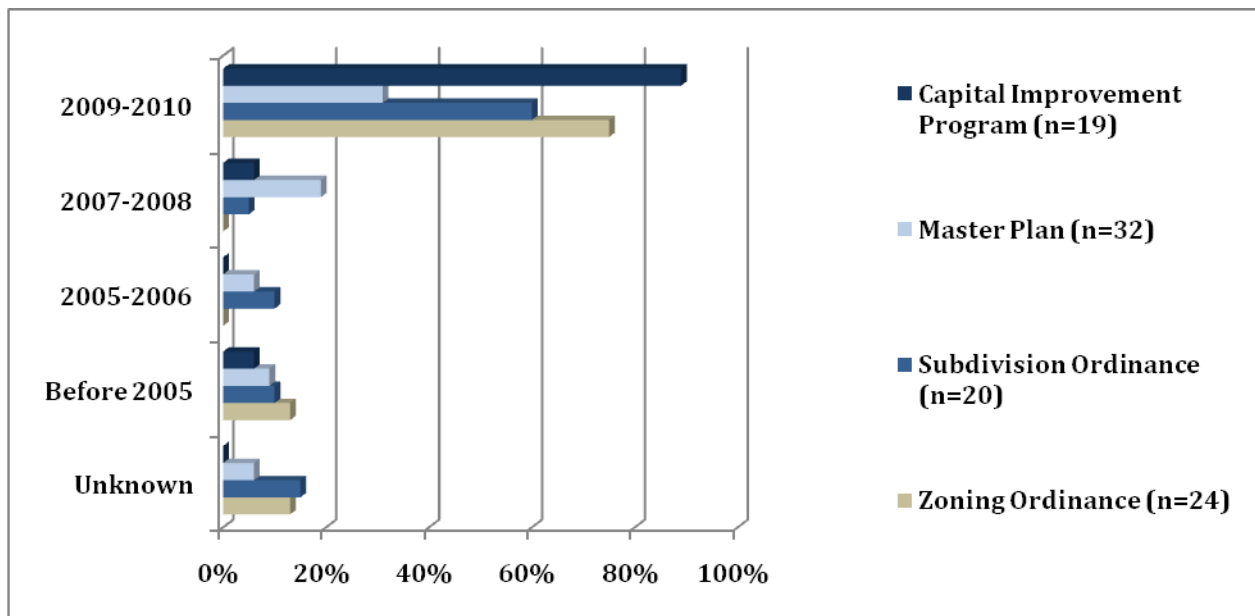
Fifty-eight percent of primary contacts who responded to the survey reported that their municipality Master Plan was updated every three to five years, while only 3% stated their Master Plan was updated annually. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents said that their municipality Master Plan was not updated on a regular basis. Just under one-third of the respondents reported that their Master Plans were last updated between 2009 and 2010.

Almost all of the respondents reported that their municipality has a zoning ordinance and 74% reported that their municipality had a subdivision ordinance. Of the respondents, most have updated their zoning and subdivision ordinances within the last three years.

Similarly, 27% of the primary contacts who responded to inquiries regarding the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) indicated that their municipality updated their CIP annually, while 35% reported that their CIP was not updated on a regular schedule. Figure 5.2.3-1 displays the update dates for municipality’s Master Plans, Capital Improvement Program, Subdivision Ordinance, and Zoning Ordinances.

Figure 5.2.3-1: Updates to: Master Plan, Capital Improvement Program, Subdivision Ordinance, and Zoning Ordinance

(Source: NDRR Municipal Capability Assessment Survey, 2010)

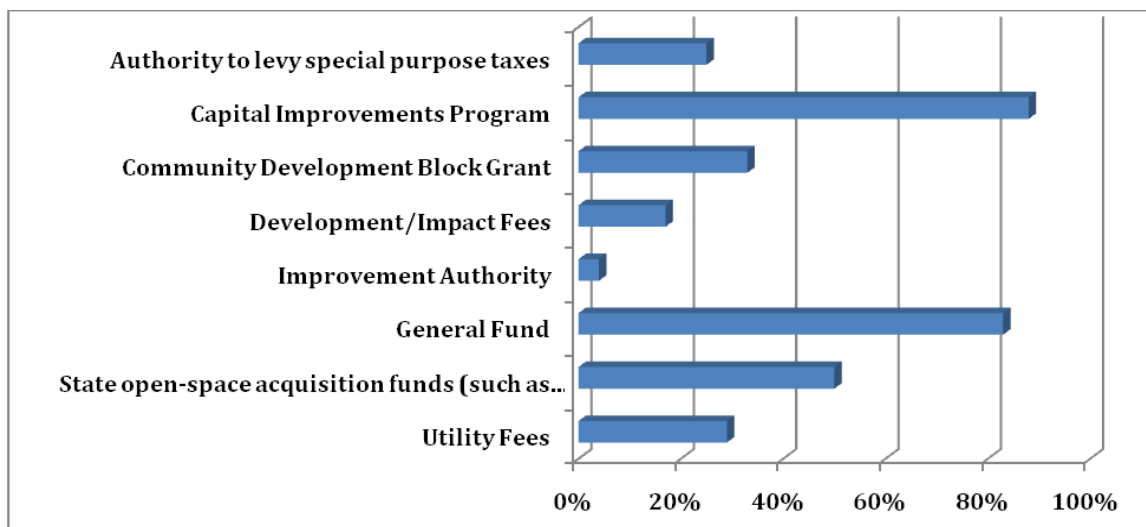


5.2.4 Funding Sources

Most municipalities received their funding for hazard mitigation projects from the Capital Improvement Program. However, the General Fund (83%) and State open-space acquisition funds such as Green Acres or Blue Acres (50%) were also most often used or accessible. Figure 5.2.4-1 details the funding sources available and in use in Sussex County.

Figure 5.2.4-1: Municipality Funding Sources (Answering 24 of 32)

(Source: NDRR Municipal Capability Assessment Survey, 2010)



5.2.5 Intra- and Inter-Jurisdictional Coordination

Many municipal primary contacts coordinate their mitigation activities with other agencies, mostly within the same municipality. Respondents reported that departments that assisted in implementing hazard mitigation related work include: the Department of Public Works (77%), the Engineering Department (41%), and the Fire Department (32%). Respondents also reported working with departments such as the Planning Department, Police Department, First Aid, and the Office of Emergency Management. Additionally, municipalities reported working with agencies such as the National Park Service, and New Jersey Fish and Wildlife.

5.3 NJOEM Support for Hazard Mitigation

State capabilities for hazard mitigation have an impact on the efficacy of local planning and implementation. In accordance with the State Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (SHMPU), the focus of New Jersey's statewide hazard mitigation effort is centered in the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), located in the Division of State Police.

NJOEM is represented on the State Hazard Mitigation Team (SHMT), which is chaired by a representative of the Governor's Office. Other state agencies represented on the SHMT and actively involved in hazard mitigation include the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the Department of Community Affairs (NJCA), the Department of Transportation (NJDOT), and the Department of Banking and Insurance.

The SHMT has responsibility for the following, at a minimum:

- Identifying hazards, monitoring changes in hazard vulnerability, and implementing measures for reducing potential damage by providing a mechanism for follow-up activities crucial to the successful implementation of team recommendations
- Developing and maintaining a comprehensive state hazard mitigation plan or the reduction of natural hazards
- Promoting public awareness of risks associated with known hazards and preparedness among residents of the state
- Serving as an advisory group to the Governor's Advisory Council on Emergency Services (GACES) and preparing post-disaster hazard mitigation recommendations for all applications for assistance.
- Investigating and recommending cost-effective hazard mitigation opportunities to the NJOEM and the GACES as part of any disaster recovery effort

Historically, NJOEM has had limited staffing to address the hazard mitigation needs of the state. Additional, staff is needed to expand the ability of the state to support local and county mitigation planning needs. NJOEM needs to employ adequate staffing with the necessary expertise for the timely development of hazard mitigation plans and to facilitate the implementation of risk reduction projects statewide.

In the past, NJOEM has employed planning professionals and program administrators who conducted community outreach, mitigation workshops, and training opportunities to promote development of hazard mitigation plans, assist with developing alternative funding sources, and promote a statewide risk reduction strategy. Recent staffing loss and the inability to hire has left the State Hazard Mitigation program understaffed to meet the needs of county and local emergency management programs. As stated in the SHMPU, the state would benefit from hiring professional staff for the State Mitigation Unit to fulfill its responsibilities and manage its increased workload resulting from recent disasters; the addition of several FEMA funded mitigation programs, and commitments in the SHMPU. Increased NJOEM staffing is needed in the areas of planning, engineering, and project management; in particular as it relates to education of affected communities, project assessment, and development of mitigation projects that have been recommended but not initiated.

5.4 Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, there are several areas which may be investigated further to determine the relevance of developing hazard mitigation strategies to fill gaps or shortcomings. Particularly these areas include: staffing, resources, and coordination.

As noted, there is often little to no staffing available at the local level to devote to hazard mitigation related activities. This includes project identification and data gathering, grant writing and application development, and the subsequent project management that follows an awarded grant. Outside assistance or an augmented staff with knowledge in hazard mitigation project management would be beneficial in bolstering Sussex County's efforts in reducing future risk. It would also assist in preparing better project applications that may be selected based on a competitive selection process. Additional staff also creates the ability to improve coordination at all levels of government.