

# **WAKULLA COUNTY/CITY OF ST. MARKS COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM PROGRESS REPORT**

**April 17, 2019**

On October 29, 1999, the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners adopted the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) as the County's Community Rating System Floodplain Management Plan. Once every five years, the LMS must be evaluated to assess what should be revised in the plan to ensure that it is up to date and compliant with Federal and State requirements. This plan has been updated as required over the years by the LMS Steering Committee (a volunteer workgroup). The current LMS was adopted by the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners on March 7, 2016 and by the City of St. Marks Board of Commissioners on March 10, 2016. Subsequently, the revised LMS was reviewed and approved by State and Federal agencies on May 3, 2016, which places its expiration in 2021.

The LMS contains a list of projects that can be utilized to assist the County and City of St. Marks in reducing their risk and vulnerability to known hazards. This list is routinely updated by the LMS Steering Committee and the current version of this list contains thirty-four projects. A Crawfordville area stormwater study and acquisition of land in Crawfordville for stormwater use are ranked as the two top priority projects. Funding is being sought to complete these projects.

The next set of projects relate to a variety of issues. The third ranked project this year seeks to improve stormwater drainage in Panacea. Preliminary work for this item has been completed, which determined the issues contributing to the flooding and developed a recommended solution. This project has also been added to the County's Adopted Infrastructure Plan and is awaiting funding. The replacement and elevation of the Sopchoppy River Bridge on Highway 375, Smith Creek Road, is the next priority item. Funding is being sought to replace and elevate this critical infrastructure. The fifth ranked project is for stormwater mitigation in Wakulla Gardens subdivision. To date, a stormwater study for the Wakulla Gardens subdivision has been completed and construction plans for six of the flood basins in that subdivision are also complete. Stormwater improvements are currently being made in this subdivision in conjunction with central sewer expansions and road improvements. The creation of a one foot freeboard requirement for new construction in the Special Flood Hazard Area is next on the list. This would require new structures to be built one foot above the currently required base flood elevation to allow better protection from flooding. Draft language has been created for this that can be presented to the Board of County Commissioners in the future.

The next few projects pertain to sewer infrastructure and stormwater improvements. Project seven seeks to upgrade and expand the entire countywide sewer system and better protect it from flood induced impacts. The County currently has central sewer expansion projects underway in the Wakulla Gardens and Magnolia Gardens subdivisions and thus, is making progress towards this goal. The eight ranked project is the flood proofing and retrofit of utility manholes and sewer lift stations in the County to prevent stormwater intrusion. In 2018, the County applied for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant for this project and funds will continue to be sought for these

infrastructure improvements. The study, acquisition of land, and implementation of stormwater improvements in Magnolia Gardens and Greiner's Addition subdivisions is the ninth ranked item. Stormwater improvements are currently underway in conjunction with central sewer expansions in Magnolia Gardens. The tenth and eleventh ranked endeavors pertain to St. Marks and are awaiting funding. These projects include sewer expansions and removal of septic tanks from the surge area within the City of St. Marks and a stormwater mitigation project that focuses on conveyance of flood waters through the city. To date, the City has acquired three and half acres of land near the existing bike trail for a park and stormwater treatment.

The next several projects in the rankings cover different topics. Project number twelve is the Florida Division of Forestry's fire prevention public awareness campaign. This is an on-going project that has included activities such as seminars on fire prevention. An upgrade of the road construction standards in flood prone areas is the next ranked project and County staff will pursue this regulation change as time permits. Item number fourteen seeks to improve an alternative access route through Panacea to be utilized during times of flooding. This project is awaiting funding. The next issue pertains to a natural hazards public outreach campaign that is on-going. Wakulla County has placed updated flood zone maps and flood informational materials on its website as part of this project. In addition, educational information related to hurricane preparedness, flood insurance and permitting within the flood zone is included in the local newspaper each year.

Projects ranked as numbers sixteen and seventeen on the LMS list affect the Sopchoppy area. Project sixteen proposes a replacement and elevation of the Sopchoppy River Bridge on County Road 22, Rose Street. Stormwater mitigation in Sopchoppy to include a study, land acquisition and construction of detention ponds is ranked as project seventeen. Funding for both of these items is being sought.

The next few items on the list cover a variety of topics. The first of these implements the Florida Forestry Service's fuel reduction plans to better protect residents from wildfire. Progress towards this goal has been made through prescribed burning during the last year. The next item on the list is the replacement of overhead power lines with underground cables in the City of St. Marks. This relocation project includes work that so far has been completed on Waterfront Street, Riverside Drive and Port Leon Drive. Item number twenty is for beach renourishment along the Mashas Sands shoreline. This will address severe coastal erosion problems in the area and has been included in the Adopted Infrastructure Plan. Funding is needed to complete this project. The retrofitting of homes was ranked as project number twenty-one and this can improve a structure's resistance to the effects of natural hazards. Through programs such as the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP), qualifying residential property owners can better prepare their homes for natural events. Funding is currently available for the SHIP program and citizens are encouraged to inquire about their eligibility.

Flooding and evacuation related activities make up the next few projects. The four-laning of Crawfordville Highway, which is a critical evacuation route, was included as the next priority on the list. County staff has worked with the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency and the Florida Department of Transportation on this project and four-laning work is currently underway in the northern portion of the County. The acquisition of severe repetitive loss properties for the

purpose of creating open space is the next project. As severe repetitive loss property owners become interested and funding is available these projects will be pursued. An on-going education campaign targeted toward the owners of properties within repetitive loss areas, which are areas where property owners have made multiple flood insurance claims, is the next item included on the list. Each year County staff sends informational materials covering several flood related topics and property protection measures to these owners.

The list of undertakings continues with projects for the hardening of government facilities, electrical lines and roadways. The next two projects propose to install generators at the Board of County Commissioners Administration Complex, St. Marks City Hall, and Sheriff's Office Annex. A funding request was submitted to the Florida Legislature earlier this year for a couple of these generators. The subsequent project includes the installation of wiring for future generators in government buildings. Retrofitting overhead electrical lines with underground lines in areas with heavy tree canopies throughout the County makes up the next item. Projects twenty-nine and thirty propose to elevate Old Fort Road and Mashers Sands Road, which are both subject to flooding. The last project in this group is for a road elevation study. This would include a County-wide study to assess which roadways have the greatest need and would be the most feasible to elevate above potential floodwaters. All of these projects are awaiting funding.

Three projects make up the remainder of the LMS list. The first of these seeks to replace septic tanks on Live Oak Island with central sewer. Next, the Working Group has included a project to construct a Category 3 shelter within the County as there are currently no shelters in the County that have been built to that standard. The last project is to obtain a new First Responder Communication System. Funding is also needed to move these projects forward.

This Progress Report was prepared by Melissa Corbett of the Wakulla County Planning and Community Development Department. It will be made available to the governing boards through memorandum and through news release to the local press, "The Wakulla News", for publication. Its availability to the public will be posted on the Board of County Commissioners Public Notice board and County website, [www.mywakulla.com](http://www.mywakulla.com). Copies of this Report and related documents may be obtained from the Planning and Zoning Office, which is located at 11 Bream Fountain Road.

For more information, please contact Melissa Corbett, CRS Coordinator for Wakulla County and the City of St. Marks, at (850) 926-3695 or [mcorbett@mywakulla.com](mailto:mcorbett@mywakulla.com).