

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

**September 15, 2016**

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). In 2015, the Steering Committee began working to update the plan in preparation of a required five year update that was due in 2016. The proposed revisions to the LMS were 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 submitted to State and Federal agencies for review and the required update has now been completed with an approval by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on May 3, 2016.

As part of the LMS revisions, the Steering Committee evaluated a list of projects contained within the LMS 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 version in the newly adopted plan contains twenty-seven projects, ranked in order of priority. A Crawfordville area stormwater study and acquisition of land in Crawfordville for stormwater use were ranked as the two top priority projects. In the original revisions proposed last year these projects sought to address stormwater on a countywide basis. However, during the final review these projects were condensed to the Crawfordville area to make them more feasible. Funding is being sought to complete these projects.

The next set of highest ranked 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. The replacement and elevation of the Sopchoppy River Bridge on Highway 375, Smith Creek Road, was 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. The Board of County Commissioners sent notices to property owners in the subdivision a few years back, asking them to consider swapping or donating land to the County that could be utilized for stormwater retention, parks, etc. The Board also surveyed that area's residents regarding their interest in the County creating a Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU) that could be utilized to fund stormwater and other improvements and the majority of residents who responded were not in favor of this. The creation of a one foot freeboard requirement for new construction in the Special Flood Hazard Area has been kept on the list and is ranked six place in priority. 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 seventh and eighth ranked projects pertain to sewer infrastructure. Project seven seeks to upgrade and expand the entire countywide sewer system and better protect it from flood induced impacts. This project has progressed by the County acquiring lots in the Wakulla Gardens subdivision for future sewer expansions and upgrades in that area. Additionally, State funding has been obtained to expand central sewer into the Wakulla Gardens and Magnolia Gardens subdivisions after upgrades are completed at the County sewer plant. The eight ranked project is the flood proofing of utility manholes and sewer lift stations in the County to prevent stormwater intrusion. During the past year, the County completed the installation of fifty water-tight manhole covers and repaired and sealed other covers along Mashers Sands Road and Surf Road.

Drainage and stormwater are topics addressed by the next three projects in the ranking. The study, acquisition of land, and implementation of stormwater improvements in Magnolia Gardens and Greiner's Addition subdivisions is the ninth ranked item. This project is awaiting funding, as are the tenth and eleventh ranked endeavors. Two drainage improvement projects to install cross drains or stormwater detention facilities on Smith Creek Road and along Surf Road were ranked as projects ten and eleven respectively.

The next several projects in the rankings cover different topics. Sewer expansions and removal of septic tanks from the surge area within the City of St. Marks is project number twelve. A stormwater mitigation item in St. Marks is on the list as project thirteen and 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. Further advancement on these projects in the City of St. Marks is awaiting funding. The project ranked as the fourteenth priority 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. On a different topic, 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. Project number sixteen 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 seventeen and eighteen on the LMS list affect the Sopchoppy area. Project seventeen proposes a replacement and elevation of the Sopchoppy River Bridge on County Road 22, Rose Street. This project is awaiting funding. Stormwater mitigation in Sopchoppy to include a study, land acquisition and construction of detention ponds is ranked as project eighteen. Funding for this is also being sought.

The next few items on the list cover a variety of topics and they include two new projects added during the updates to the LMS. Project number nineteen implements the Florida Forestry Service's fuel reduction plans to better protect residents from wildfire. This item was added by the Committee during the plan update. Improving wind resistance for existing mobile homes through the installation of roof strapping has been identified as project twenty. Funding is available for

these mobile home improvements through the SHIP program. The twenty-first ranked 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. Another new project added during the update was ranked as item number twenty-two and is for beach renourishment along the Mashles Sands shoreline. This will address severe coastal erosion problems in the area. The retrofitting of homes through the weatherization program was ranked as project number twenty-three and this can harden properties to the effects of natural hazards. Through the on-going weatherization assistance program administered by the Capital Area Community Action Agency, residential property owners can get their homes better prepared for natural events.

Flooding and evacuation related activities complete the list of LMS projects. The project ranked as priority number twenty-four seeks to increase the stormwater retention pond capacity at the Medart Recreational Park to reduce flooding in the area. Some earth work has been completed on this project to raise the retaining walls. Improvement of traffic flow on US 319 in Crawfordville, 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 to include improvements and widening on portions of US 319 within the next five years, which will aid in traffic flow. 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. The final LMS project is 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. Each year County staff sends informational materials covering several flood related topics and property protection measures to these owners.

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.

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