

# Mitigation Strategy

This section outlines Sherman County’s strategy to reduce or avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards. Specifically, this section presents a mission and specific goals and actions thereby addressing the mitigation strategy requirements contained in 44 CFR 201.6(c). The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan steering committee reviewed and updated the goals and action items documented in this plan. Additional planning process documentation is in Appendix X.

The information provided in the *Risk Assessment* is to provide the basis and justification for the mitigation actions identified in this plan. This section describes the components that guide implementation of the identified mitigation strategies and is based on strategic planning principles. This section provides information on the process used to develop the mission, goals and action items. This section also includes an explanation of how the County intends to incorporate the mitigation strategies outlined in the plan into existing planning mechanisms and programs such as the County comprehensive land use planning process, capital improvement planning process, and building codes enforcement and implementation.

- **Goals**— Goals are designed to drive actions and they are intended to represent the general end toward which the County effort is directed. Goals identify how the County intends to work toward mitigating risk from natural hazards. The goals are guiding principles for the specific recommendations that are outlined in the action items.
- **Action Items**— Action items are detailed recommendations for activities that local departments, citizens and others could engage in to reduce risk.

## Methods

The Sherman County Natural Hazards Mitigation Steering Committee as well as Stakeholders established Sherman County’s mitigation goals and action items. The goals are based on the goals established by the State of Oregon Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan as well as the regional goals shared by Sherman County, Gilliam County, and Wheeler County. However, specific emphasis and language is specific to Sherman County.

## Mitigation Plan Goals

The Sherman County Natural Hazards Mitigation Steering Committee, as well as stakeholders, established Sherman County’s mitigation goals and action items. The goals are based on the goals established by the State of Oregon Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan as well as the regional goals shared by Sherman County, Gilliam

County, and Wheeler County. However, specific emphasis and language is specific to Sherman County.

**Goal 1:** Enhance the ability to respond effectively and swiftly

**Goal 2:** Protect life, reduce injuries, and minimize damage to property

**Goal 3:** Increased cooperation and collaboration between groups and agencies

**Goal 4:** Motivate the public, private sector, and government agencies to mitigate against the effects of natural hazards through information and education

## Mitigation Actions

The 2019 Sherman County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) contains a number of action items that have been rolled over from the 2014 plan, as well as a number of new action items. The timing for action item implementation is broken into Routine (activities that are part of “regular County business” and are currently in process), Short Term (1-3 years), Mid Term (4-7 years) and Long Term (7-10 years).

2018 was one of the worst wildfire seasons on record in Oregon and Sherman County. In late July, the Substation Fire consumed 78,425 of grass land, brush and wheat fields. The Sherman County NHMP Steering Committee ranked wildfires as the greatest natural hazard risk to Sherman County. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the new mitigation action items concern wildfires. A number of these new mitigation items come from the current Sherman County Cooperative Wildfire Protection Plan. Highlighting these in the NHMP brings additional attention to their importance and establishes the ability to fund them through FEMA grants.

Each action item has a corresponding action item worksheet describing the activity, identifying the rationale for the project, identifying potential ideas for implementation, and assigning coordinating and partner organizations. The action item worksheets can assist the community in pre-packaging potential projects for grant funding. The worksheet components are described below. These action item worksheets are located in Appendix X.

Listed below are a few of the existing and new mitigation actions. Additional information and future activities are identified in Appendix X, Action Item Forms and within Table X of Appendix X. The action items were first vetted at the county steering committee meeting and through discussions with steering committee members.

**Multi-Hazard Action Item #6** - Purchase backup generators for critical facilities, including each city well in Sherman County.

Steering Committee members expressed concern about losing electric power during a major natural hazard event. During the 2018 wildfire season, some critical facilities did lose power for a period of time and would benefit from a reliable backup power supply.

**Multi-Hazard Action Item #7** - Increase the number of people in Sherman County signed up for the Everbridge Frontier Regional Emergency Notification System by 25%.

During the 2018 wildfire season, there was a spike in the number of county residents enrolling in this service.

**Multi-Hazard Action Item #9:** - Obtain financial assistance and/or regulatory support for low-income residents and renters who are vulnerable to extreme heat or diminished air quality to install air conditioning systems.

Sherman County's low income population continues to remain at approximately 17.7 % of residents (273) which is slightly higher than the state and national averages.

**Multi-Hazard Action item #12** - Require new development to include onsite rainwater storage and/or emergency drinking water storage tanks. Include water storage solutions in seismic retrofit projects for schools and other public buildings.

Drought concerns continue in all parts of Eastern Oregon with the frequency of declared droughts increasing. The Steering Committee ranked the risk of drought just behind wildfires and winter storms. The implementation of rainwater storage facilities in the county would ensure adequate drinking water during drought conditions while instilling an ethic of water conservation for all residents.

**Wildfire Hazard Action Item #8** - Assist Rural Fire Protection Districts and City Fire Departments in upgrading their firefighting equipment, facilities and training as needed. This can be done by means of application of RFA/VFA or other Grants, obtaining FEPP equipment from ODF, obtaining training from BLM or other agencies, etc.

Fire departments in the county are operated by small groups of all volunteer forces who utilize an array of firefighting equipment which periodically must be replaced.

## Government Structure

Beyond Emergency Management, most departments within the county and city governance structures have some degree of responsibility in building overall community resilience. Each plays a role in ensuring that jurisdiction functions and normal operations resume after an incident, and the needs of the population are met. For further explanation regarding how these departments influence hazard resilience, reference the *Community Profile*.

## Existing Plan & Policies

Communities often have existing plans and policies that guide and influence land use, land development, and population growth. Linking existing plans and policies to the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan helps identify what resources already exist that can be used to implement the action items identified in the Plan. Plans and policies

already in existence have support from local residents, businesses and policy makers.<sup>1</sup> A list documenting plans and policies already in place in the county and participating cities can be found in the *Community Profile*.

## Community Organizations and Programs

In planning for natural hazard mitigation, it is important to know what social systems exist within the community because of their existing connections to the public. The county and cities can use existing social systems as resources for implementing such communication-related activities because these service providers already work directly with the public on a number of issues, one of which could be natural hazard preparedness and mitigation. The *Community Profile* provides a comprehensive list of community organizations and programs, and offers a more thorough explanation of how existing community organizations and programs can be utilized for hazard mitigation.

### Rationale or Key Issues Addressed

Action items should be fact-based and tied directly to issues or needs identified throughout the planning process. Action items can be developed at any time during the planning process and can come from a number of sources, including participants in the planning process, noted deficiencies in local capability, or issues identified through the risk assessment. The rationale for proposed action items is based on the information documented in Section 2.

### Ideas for Implementation:

The ideas for implementation offer a transition from theory to practice and serve as a starting point for this plan. This component of the action item is dynamic, since some ideas may prove to not be feasible, and new ideas may be added during the plan maintenance process. Ideas for implementation include such things as collaboration with relevant organizations, grant programs, tax incentives, human resources, education and outreach, research, and physical manipulation of buildings and infrastructure.

#### IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH EXISTING PROGRAMS

The Sherman County multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan includes a range of action items that, when implemented, will reduce loss from hazard events in the County. Within the plan, FEMA requires the identification of existing programs that might be used to implement these action items. Sherman County currently addresses statewide planning goals and legislative requirements through its comprehensive land use plan, capital improvements plan, mandated standards

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<sup>1</sup> Burby, Raymond J., ed. 1998. *Cooperating with Nature: Confronting Natural Hazards with Land-Use Planning for Sustainable Communities*.

and building codes. To the extent possible, Sherman County will work to incorporate the recommended mitigation action items into existing programs and procedures.

Many of the Sherman County multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan's recommendations are consistent with the goals and objectives of the County's existing plans and policies. Where possible, Sherman County will implement the multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan's recommended actions through existing plans and policies. Plans and policies already in existence have support from local residents, businesses, and policy makers. Many land-use, comprehensive, and strategic plans get updated regularly, and can adapt easily to changing conditions and needs.<sup>2</sup> Implementing the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan's action items through such plans and policies increases their likelihood of being supported and implemented.

### **Coordinating Organization:**

The coordinating organization is the public agency with the regulatory responsibility to address natural hazards, or that is willing and able to organize resources, find appropriate funding, or oversee activity implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

### **Internal and External Partners:**

The internal and external partner organizations listed in the Action Item Worksheets are potential partners recommended by the project Steering Committee but not necessarily contacted during the development of the plan. The coordinating organization should contact the identified partner organizations to see if they are capable of and interested in participation. This initial contact is also to gain a commitment of time and/or resources toward completion of the action items.

Internal partner organizations are departments within the County or other participating jurisdiction that may be able to assist in the implementation of action items by providing relevant resources to the coordinating organization.

External partner organizations can assist the coordinating organization in implementing the action items in various functions and may include local, regional, state, or federal agencies, as well as local and regional public and private sector organizations.

### **Plan Goals Addressed:**

The plan goals addressed by each action item are identified as a means for monitoring and evaluating how well the mitigation plan is achieving its goals, following implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> ibid

**Timeline:**

Action items include routine, short, mid, and long-term activities. Each action item includes an estimate of the timeline for implementation.

*Routine actions items* are activities that are currently in process and will continue to be implemented in the next planning period.

*Short-term action items* are activities that may be implemented with new or additional resources and/or authorities in the next 1-3 years.

*Medium-term action items* are activities that may be implemented with new or additional resources and/or authorities in the next 4-7 years.

*Long-term action items* may require new or additional resources and/or authorities, and may take from 8-10 years to implement.

