



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Hazard Mitigation Overview

Hazard mitigation is the use of long-term and short-term policies, programs, projects, and other activities to minimize the loss of life, injury, and property damage that can result from a disaster. Communities, residents, and businesses across the United States have been faced with continually increasing costs associated with natural and human-caused hazards. Hazard mitigation is the first step in reducing risk and is the most effective way to reduce costs associated with hazards.

Sussex County has developed a hazard mitigation plan (HMP) to reduce risks from disasters to the people, property, economy, and environment within the County’s planning area. The County and 24 participating local jurisdictions (the Planning Partners) prepared this plan as an update to the 2021 Sussex County HMP. The updated 2025 HMP (also referred to as “the plan”) includes countywide analysis and assessment of hazards, risk, and capabilities.

The plan complies with federal and state hazard mitigation planning requirements to establish the Planning Partners’ eligibility for funding under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant programs. The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires state and local entities to implement pre-disaster mitigation planning and develop HMPs. FEMA has issued guidelines for the development of multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plans. The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) supports plan development for jurisdictions in New Jersey.

### The Planning Process

This HMP update documents the process and outcomes of the Planning Partners’ mitigation planning efforts. To support the planning process, the Planning Partners accomplished the following:

- Developed a Steering Committee consisting of key stakeholders and a countywide Planning Partnership made up of the Steering Committee members, the Planning Partners, and other regional stakeholders
- Involved a wide range of stakeholders and the public in the plan update process
- Reviewed the 2021 Sussex County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Identified hazards of concern to the County to be included in the update
- Profiled the hazards of concern
- Estimated the inventory at risk and potential losses associated with these hazards
- Reviewed and updated the mitigation goals and objectives
- Reviewed mitigation strategy and actions outlined in the 2021 HMP to indicate progress
- Developed new mitigation actions to reduce the vulnerability of assets from hazards of concern
- Developed mitigation plan maintenance procedures to be executed after obtaining approval of the plan from NJOEM and FEMA

### Involvement by Stakeholders and the Public

The Planning Partners kept stakeholders and the general public informed throughout the planning process and provided opportunities for public comment and input. In addition, numerous agencies and stakeholders participated



as core or support members of the Steering Committee or Planning Partnership, providing input and expertise throughout the planning process.

## Participating Jurisdictions Involved in the Mitigation Planning Effort

The following are the local governments in Sussex County that participated as Planning Partners in this HMP update:

- County of Sussex County
- Borough of Andover
- Township of Andover
- Borough of Branchville
- Township of Byram
- Township of Frankford
- Borough of Franklin
- Township of Fredon
- Township of Green
- Borough of Hamburg
- Township of Hampton
- Township of Hardyston
- Borough of Hopatcong
- Township of Lafayette
- Township of Montague
- Town of Newton
- Borough of Ogdensburg
- Township of Sandyston
- Township of Sparta
- Borough of Stanhope
- Township of Stillwater
- Borough of Sussex
- Township of Vernon
- Township of Walpack
- Township of Wantage

The participating jurisdictions provided significant input into the preparation of the plan, in particular the preparation of jurisdiction-specific annexes included in Volume II.

## Multiple Agency Support for Hazard Mitigation

Primary responsibility for the development and implementation of mitigation strategies and policies lies with local governments. However, local governments are not alone; various partners and resources at the regional, state, and federal levels are available to assist communities in the development and implementation of mitigation strategies. In New Jersey, NJOEM is the lead agency providing hazard mitigation planning assistance to local jurisdictions. In addition, FEMA provides grants, tools, guidance, and training to support mitigation planning.

In updating the HMP, the participating jurisdictions fully coordinated with and solicited participation from county and local governments, relevant organizations and groups, state and federal agencies, and the general public. This coordination ensured that stakeholders had established communication channels and relationships to support mitigation planning and mitigation actions included in the plan.

Additional input and support for this planning effort was obtained from a wide range of agencies as well as through public involvement. Under the project management of the Sussex County Division of Emergency Management, the Sussex County Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee provided oversight for the preparation of this plan. The Steering Committee includes representatives from the following:

- Sussex County Community College
- Sussex County Department of Central and Shared Services
- Sussex County Division of Community and Youth Services
- Sussex County Division of Emergency Management
- Sussex County Division of Planning and Economic Development
- Sussex County Division of Public Works



- Sussex County Division of Senior Services
- Sussex County Engineering Department
- Sussex County Facilities Management
- Sussex County Health and Human Services – Division of Health
- Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority
- Sussex County Open Space Committee
- Sussex County Sheriff's Office
- Sussex Rural Electric Coop
- Atlantic Health System - Newton Medical Center
- New Jersey Bureau of Dam Safety
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Sussex County
- Upper Delaware Conservation District (former Sussex County Soil and Water Conservation District)
- Andover Township
- Hampton Township
- Wantage Township

### Risk Assessment for Local Hazards of Concern

The Planning Partners evaluated each jurisdiction’s risk and vulnerability due to each identified hazard of concern, based on past events, past and predicted future losses, and the expected probability of future occurrence. From these evaluations, hazards were ranked as high, medium, or low risk to each jurisdiction. The hazard rankings were used to focus and prioritize individual jurisdictional mitigation strategies. Summary overall hazard rankings for all of Sussex County are presented in Table ES-1.

Table ES-1. Countywide Ranking for Sussex County Hazards of Concern

Hazard of Concern	Hazard Ranking
Dam Failure	Medium
Disease Outbreak	Low
Drought	Low
Earthquake	Low
Flood	Medium
Geological Hazards	Low
Hazardous Materials	Medium
Hurricane	Medium
Infestation	Low
Nor'easter	High
Severe Weather	High
Severe Winter Weather	High
Wildfire	Medium



## Capability Assessment and Plan Integration into Other Local Mechanisms

Effective mitigation is achieved when hazard awareness and risk management approaches and strategies become an integral part of public activities and decision-making. Within the County, there are many existing plans and programs that support hazard risk management. It is critical that this HMP integrate, complement, and reference those plans and programs to the extent practical in order for it to be a comprehensive resource for hazard mitigation.

The HMP includes a capability assessment to review relevant local mechanisms for each participating jurisdiction. This assessment identifies where each jurisdiction is currently able to implement hazard mitigation measures and where each would benefit from improved capabilities for such measures. The capability assessment also provides a summary and description of the existing plans, programs, and regulatory mechanisms at all levels of government (federal, state, county and local) that support hazard mitigation in the County. In the jurisdictional annexes, each participating jurisdiction identifies how it has integrated hazard risk management into its existing planning, regulatory and operational/administrative framework, and how it intends to continue to promote this integration.

## Mitigation Strategy

### Hazard Mitigation Plan Goals and Objectives

It is a federal requirement for hazard mitigation plans to include a description of mitigation goals to reduce or avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards of concern.

The Sussex County HMP planning process included a review and update of mitigation goals and objectives that were previously established to guide the selection of mitigation actions addressing all hazards of concern. Mitigation goals were updated based on the updated risk assessment, discussions, research, and input from plan participants and stakeholders. The goal development process considered the goals expressed in the New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as other relevant county and local planning documents.

**2025 Sussex County HMP Goals**

- Goal 1: Protect life
- Goal 2: Protect property
- Goal 3: Increase public preparedness and awareness
- Goal 4: Develop and maintain an understanding of increased risk from climate change impacts on natural hazards
- Goal 5: Enhance mitigation capabilities to reduce hazard vulnerabilities
- Goal 6: Support continuity of operations before, during, and after hazard events
- Goal 7: Reduce the risk of natural hazards for socially vulnerable populations
- Goal 8: Address long-term vulnerabilities from high hazard dams

### Implementation of the 2021 Plan

The status of the mitigation projects identified in the 2021 HMP was reviewed for this HMP. Numerous projects and programs have been implemented that have reduced hazard vulnerability of assets in the planning area. Uncompleted projects have been reevaluated, modified as necessary, and incorporated into this plan. The Planning Partners' annexes describe these mitigation activities in more detail, and plan maintenance procedures have been developed to encourage thorough integration with local decisions and processes and regular review of implementation progress.



## 2025 Mitigation Actions

Actions included in the jurisdictional mitigation strategies had a strong focus on the following areas:

- Education and outreach for the general population and socially vulnerable populations
- Training and education of municipal officials, including floodplain administrators
- Ensuring continuity of operations for critical facilities through the installation of emergency backup generators
- Reduction of flood risk through the increase in capacity of stormwater infrastructure, including culverts, drainage systems, and catch basins
- Working to identify safety measures and procedures of dams within the various jurisdictions.

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