

1.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

To develop a natural hazard mitigation plan that reflects Seneca County's unique hazards, risks and vulnerabilities, the Seneca County EMA utilized a comprehensive, whole community planning process that involved all jurisdictions, stakeholders, organizations and agencies from across the county. Input and feedback methods were designed to meet the needs of various stakeholders, providing options for both in-person and digital participation due to personal schedules and circumstances. This section describes the process utilized to develop the plan and explains how stakeholders and the community were involved and included throughout the plan development process.

1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

From the outset of the project, the EMA understood that development of updating the mitigation plan would take approximately six to eight months; however, because grant applications and notices of awards were delayed, they knew the time allotted for plan development would be very brief. The timeframe necessary to administer the grant that would cover contractor costs, update current hazards and risks and consider adding new ones, identify underserved and disadvantaged vulnerable populations and groups, develop mitigation strategies and actions, include jurisdictions and stakeholders in the planning process, conduct a series of meetings, receive input and feedback, and complete the state and federal plan review process prior to adoption was going to have to be crunched into a few months. Each phase of plan development would still include specific activities and steps, as described below. They also realized that the update was going to occur in the context of new federal standards, and that Seneca County would experience plan review while requirement interpretations were still being refined. They realized this could extend the time to approval as guidance was interpreted and administered in the first eighteen months of application. It remained the county's goal to submit a new plan prior to expiration of the current plan in January 2025 and have no gap in grant eligibility due to jurisdictions' intentions to apply for project funding.

1.1.1 Pre-Update Planning Process

Seneca County's most recent mitigation plan was adopted on January 7, 2020 and expires on January 26, 2025. Seneca County EMA was awarded a Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) Grant Program grant in 2024 to update this plan as part of the required five-year approval process. The application identified the jurisdictions in Seneca County that would participate in the planning process. Most officials were familiar with the mitigation plan process because they were involved in the development of the current plan and expressed interest in participating in this plan.

Upon award of the grant, Seneca County EMA completed the approved procurement process to identify a contractor to manage the plan update process. The Seneca County EMA Director met with Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch mitigation planner to review the requirements for plan development. He proceeded to submit the required documentation to the State of Ohio EMA Mitigation Branch.

The Seneca County EMA Director met with Resource Solutions Associates LLC to discuss the potential contractor's specific work plan to update the current mitigation plan. On October 3, 2024 the county entered into a contract Resource Solutions Associates, LLC to coordinate the project, work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to collect information, and develop the new plan. Approval of the new plan was hoped for prior to current plan expiration but given new mitigation guidance in place and the delay in grant distribution, it may not occur prior to expiration. While it was agreed to try to achieve plan approval prior to expiration, the exact time frame during the approval of a plan is totally outside local control, and all parties understood this factor.

The EMA Director and the Contractor developed a project timeline and discussed specific methods and processes for the project. They discussed new mitigation guidance and how those requirements would add to the core planning committee participation and meeting discussions. Many additional organizations and individuals would be involved this time, and the topics covered would expand significantly to meet the new regulations.

The timeline began with a kick-off meeting to be held on October 16, 2024, and was followed by group meetings of jurisdictions, special interest groups, and county officials for that day and the following two days. Invitations were sent to all municipalities, many county government departments, and various agencies and organizations to cover all phases and sections of the plan requirements. Individual and follow-up meetings or calls were conducted as needed, and due to the timeframe of developing the plan, those meetings were conducted digitally. A final plan review meeting was held on November 25, 2024, starting in the afternoon and concluding in the evening for all agencies and jurisdictions. The public review period was held from November 28 through December 13, 2024. The process culminated with a completed plan submitted to Ohio EMA and FEMA for review on <TBD>.

1.1.2 Planning Team Meetings

Upon completion of all necessary grant agreements, contracts, and administrative requirements, the Contractor coordinated with the EMA Director to develop an initial list of planning team members. This list included representatives from all jurisdictions and a broad range of community organizations and agencies. The initial contact list included department, agency and organization leadership members who would identify participants within their organization, would invite them to meetings. They would act as the champion of the project, encouraging and facilitating widespread participation. While the invitation list began with these primary contacts, the list of participants grew as the project moved forward.

The complete list of invited and participating stakeholders is included as table 1-4 on Page 13 of this section.

The participants and stakeholders were charged with providing input for all jurisdictions in Seneca County as the basis for the new hazard mitigation plan. This included confirming and modifying the long-standing risk assessment and hazard descriptions but added a full discussion

of social vulnerabilities and community resilience before talking about mitigation actions and strategies. Additional community leaders were designated as key participants, including social services directors, behavioral health professionals, and community planning and development leadership. These meetings covered all phases of the mitigation planning process: project planning, risk assessment, mitigation strategy development, and plan maintenance, plan update, and adoption. The 2023 federal mitigation planning guidance provided the standards for the project; there are no additional State of Ohio requirements.

Project Initiation

The EMA Director kicked off the project through his and the contractor's attendance at the initial meeting on October 16, 2024, which reached most of the county's key elected officials and appointed department leaders. The EMA Director introduced the project, and the Contractor spoke about the purpose and process of updating the mitigation plan. She covered development of the updated hazard identification and risk assessment, review of current mitigation strategy status and development of new strategies, identification of residents who need additional help after a disaster, resilience measures that may help, and the process of review and approval of the plan, culminating in local jurisdictional adoption of the plan.

Because Seneca County has just over 55,000 residents, many community leaders and officials wear multiple hats in the county. Many times, an individual spoke as an elected official for one jurisdiction, and as an employee of a jurisdiction. Elected officials also served their village in volunteer positions, such as being a volunteer fireman for the fire department. Many participants, therefore, represented more than one entity as they participated in mitigation meetings. Additionally, they were also local farmers or business owners themselves, representing agriculture or another industry in addition to holding an elected position as a township trustee or clerk.

The attendees were told that mayors, administrators and other key contacts in the municipalities, and fiscal clerks in the townships, were considered the key contacts in each jurisdiction, but they were asked to share the information with all other officials. While they were the people who would receive the project communication, and they were asked to select staff and volunteers from their jurisdiction to participate in the activities by attending work session. They were also asked to be champions of the project to encourage others' participation in the planning activities, and to reinforce the benefits of mitigation planning as a whole community. They were advised that communication would be channeled through them, and they should relay those pieces of information to council members, village officials, and others as part of the planning implementation.

Township trustees were invited to participate as representatives of the unincorporated portion of Seneca County. Their participation was not mandatory, as was the municipal participation, but it was highly encouraged because of the key role they play in county activities and governance. All townships would be described and included in the plan collectively as "Seneca County", specifically including all unincorporated areas of the county. Township trustees in Seneca County often work for local employers or jurisdictions, or own businesses or farms

themselves. Therefore, they had expert knowledge of how storms damage rural properties and affect business assets.

Attendees were asked to share all information, questions and concerns discussed with others in their jurisdiction or neighborhoods. Those attending were asked to become champions of the project, and to designate and facilitate active participation by their respective jurisdictions and departments. A question-and-answer period was provided, and there was time after the meeting for others to ask individual questions. Throughout the evening, many answers were provided to help local leaders encourage and facilitate participation in future work sessions.

Work Session Planning

In addition to the elected and appointed officials mentioned previously, social agencies, adjacent county emergency managers, natural resources experts, agricultural representatives, advocacy professionals, and community development officials were invited to participate in work sessions. This group also included behavioral and physical health professionals and organizations, as well as private practitioners. The local hospital and the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Development Partnership and Fostoria Economic Development Corporation directors were invited to share their overall perspective on development activities, regulation, social needs and groups of individuals in the county. Other key employees such as floodplain managers and regulation coordinators were invited directly. All invitees were told that all meetings were open to the public, and requested that they ask anyone with an interest to attend.

New 2023 plan requirements were discussed at length, and due to the addition of social vulnerability and community resilience narrative, combined with other interpretation and application changes taking place, Seneca County decided to create a new hazard mitigation plan at this time, even though it would include some of the previous information. This new plan would allow for broad consideration of a wide spectrum of issues, and provide for a logically flowing conversation during research, as well as facilitating a requirement-driven plan format that was logical, smooth, and consistent.

The EMA Director and Contractor decided to take a comprehensive approach to the meetings. Most stakeholders had a good understanding of the mitigation plan development process due to prior participation, so efficient use of their time was going to be a significant consideration in obtaining good attendance. Instead of asking participants to attend multiple meetings to discuss individual topics, they would plan for longer meetings with a progressive approach to mitigation components and discussion topics, including the whole spectrum of mitigation concerns in one meeting. They would begin by addressing hazards, climate change and weather patterns, and damage. Using this input and other research, the Contractor would create a draft plan for presentation in late November. They would be able to read the draft plan prior to the public review period and submit changes or modification for the plan that would be posted for community comment.

At the final meeting in November, they would discuss drafted strategies and actions to reduce damages, minimize vulnerability, and lessen negative impacts. Again, they would review the plan approval process, local adoption, and ongoing maintenance of the plan. Meetings would be planned with ample time to cover the full spectrum of concerns. Additionally, the Contractor and EMA Director would be available to answer questions, meet digitally, and help them work through the input and review process.

Work Sessions

The first meeting of the mitigation team was held on Wednesday, November 16, 2024 at the Seneca County Public Safety Building Training Room. The EMA Director and Contractor spoke about the plan and the timeframe and answered many questions after the meeting. The EMA Director had briefed the Seneca County Commissioners and other elected officials on the process and plan requirements prior to the meeting, so most were not surprised by any of the information presented.

The first round of work sessions was also held on November 16, 17 and 18, 2024. Meetings were scheduled throughout the day and into the evening for various groups, including county officials, cities of Fostoria and Tiffin, the five villages, and the townships. There were sessions designed for engineering officials and public works, public safety departments, community development and code enforcement officials, those who serve populations with special needs, and public health, healthcare and behavioral health. One makeup session was scheduled for general attendance. Evening options were offered for those who were unable to attend during the workday. All initial sessions were held at the Seneca County Public Safety Building in Tiffin on the Seneca County Fairgrounds. At the end of three days, most jurisdictions and interest groups had participated in at least one session.

Some stakeholders had schedule conflicts and were not able to participate in the initial group work sessions. For others, conversations were necessary to clarify the development of strategies for the new plan. In those cases, individual meetings, phone calls, and digital meetings were held to obtain their input. All officials and others who were unable to attend the mid-October sessions met with planners at alternate times. Meeting software was used to conduct digital meetings with the remaining villages, county officials, development professionals, and others as indicated on the participation sign-in sheets.

All jurisdictions were asked to complete paper surveys that would provide information about the status of current mitigation strategies, and the suggestion of new strategies to be included in the upcoming plan. Social vulnerability strategies, others to address community resiliency, and other ideas were addressed by groups within the communities and results were provided to the Contractor for plan development. All jurisdictions participated and turned in completed paperwork as requested.

Several telephone and digital meetings were held with high-hazard dam owners, as well as in-person meetings. Fostoria officials attended multiple in-person meetings, but also spoke with the Contractor and EMA Director by phone. The Clyde dam operator of Beaver Creek Reservoir

and the city's fire chief spoke with the contractor by phone. Attica officials attended in-person meetings. Emergency action plans and other structural information was shared digitally.

The Contractor used the information gathered and the online research completed to create a draft plan which was completed on November 25, 2024. The plan was emailed to all participants as part of the public review period starting November 28, 2024.

HIRA and strategy review meetings were held on November 25, 2024. The first session was for all local officials and agencies who wanted to attend during the work day; the evening meeting was intended for those who participated as part of a volunteer commitment, or who work outside the county during the work day. The Contractor reviewed the HIRA, explained the strategies and took feedback, explained the layout and contents of the draft plan, shared access procedures to find the draft plan, and explained the review and adoption process and potential funding sources.

Table 1-1 provides detail for the meeting dates, times, locations and participants.

Work Session Content

All sessions covered the comprehensive process of developing a mitigation plan and obtaining federal approval and local adoptions. The sessions began with discussion of and identification of all potential hazards, including dam failure, drought and extreme heat, earthquake, flood, hazardous materials incident, infrastructure failure, invasive species, land subsidence, severe storms including thunderstorms and tornadoes, water quality emergency and winter storms. The Contractor provided factual incident history and damage information as available, and the description of the hazard. Some hazards, such as dam failure, were determined to be not present or applicable to all areas of Seneca County. The very specific threats of high hazard dams were covered in detail.

Climate projections were shared by the Contractor, and participants added their observations regarding weather patterns and consequences in the past five years. They reviewed where damages occurred, the severity of the damages, and the duration in cascading threats and/or loss of use. Each group engaged in this kind of discussion about each hazard on the list, and determined if it was a relevant threat to the group or jurisdiction being represented. They discussed cascading events due to climate changes, and considered how that might change vulnerability or intersect with new development and community growth.

A variety of resources were used to guide the discussion and provide factual information, projections, and estimations by experts in the field of climatology. Those references are listed in Table 1-5.

Once a list of hazards was identified, participants shared recent consequences of incidents involving those hazards and talked about what those consequences meant to their residents. They talked about the cost of repairing damages, the extent and cost of disruptions, and the kinds of cascading events that occurred due to the hazard impact. Extending the changes in

climate that are projected for the mid and late-century periods, they discussed how today's damage would change in coming years, increase or decrease, and how the consequences for communities and individuals would change.

Groups all discussed how community development, such as the addition of new housing, retail, or industrial facilities, or changes to recreational use of rivers and streams, or inland lakes, might cause varied consequences in the coming years. They talked about how regulation, collaboration between various agencies and jurisdictions, and new scientific and technical information could help prevent ballooning consequences in coming decades.

Social vulnerability was addressed through discussion of what disadvantaged and underserved populations looked like in Seneca County, and how those groups might be negatively impacted after significant incidents. References listed in Table 1-11 helped guide the groups to consider what socially vulnerable sets of people were in metropolitan areas, and how that set might look different, but suffer similar consequences and damages, in Seneca County, Ohio. Discussion led to the identification of sets of people who are not listed in the reference documents, such as the isolated, very elderly rural residents who are common to Seneca County and other rural Ohio communities. How community development might affect these underserved and disadvantaged groups, as well as how it may worsen their plight, was addressed. They discussed demographic trends in Seneca County and assessed how that progression might change things, even as early as 2030.

Community resilience for all sets of people was discussed, and how a small, rural county would survive without outside assistance was considered. In general, participants discussed how they would help themselves in the worst of incidents, and they identified how they would help one another. They identified and discussed problems common to many Ohio counties at this time, such as the lack of volunteers, insecurity in sheltering resources, and transportation challenges. Again, they used research documents identified in Table 1-11 to guide this discussion, but added local considerations not included in those documents.

The last meeting discussion list included draft plan review, the public review period, state and federal plan review, approval, jurisdictional adoption, and implementation of an approved mitigation plan with dates attached to each phase. They also discussed the integration of mitigation actions and concepts into community development, and specifically the strategies that support such integration. Specific reference was given to the roles and responsibilities for municipalities to participate in community development, and the roles of development professionals to ensure that all communities were included in discussions and activities.

Because a totally new plan was being developed, there was no item-by-item assessment of mitigation actions listed in the 2019 plan. The inclusion of social vulnerability and community resilience changed the committee's scope of concerns for mitigation actions, and reached further toward community lifelines and core capabilities than ever before. Due to this new 2023 planning guidance, a significant amount of new information not covered in previous mitigation plans was included.

Final Plan Review

The updated Seneca County Hazard Mitigation Plan was released for public review on Thursday, November 28, 2024. It was printed and available in hard copy at the EMA offices at 126 Hopewell Avenue in Tiffin. There were copies placed at the public library in Tiffin and Fostoria for open review. It was posted on the Seneca County website at senecacountyohio.gov as well as the EMA's website, senecacountyema.org. There was no access control for viewing the plan, and the plan was open to everyone. This request for review and comments was published in the Advertiser Tribune, the local newspaper, on <insert dates>. The draft plan was sent by email to all officials and others who either participated in the planning efforts or were key individuals notified of plan activity. All communications asked for input and feedback on the draft plan by close of business on Friday, December 13, 2024.

The release of the plan included a description of how to find the plan and access it and offered for the EMA Director and/or Contractor to meet with anyone who had questions or concerns about the content. Comments were requested by email or phone call to the Seneca County EMA Director.

The plan remained open for public review through Friday, December 13, 2024. The review period was slightly more than two full weeks in duration. There were no comments received during the public review period.

Table 1-1: Planning Team Meetings

Date	Location	Purpose/Audience
10/16/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Key Officials Kick-off Meeting
10/16/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	City of Tiffin officials meeting – open to the public
10/16/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	City of Fostoria Emergency Services – open to the public
10/16/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Special Groups meeting including agriculture and natural resources, infrastructure representatives, Village of Attica, and open to the public
10/16/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Public meeting including the Village of Republic
10/17/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Public Meeting with emphasis upon education, disabled populations, social services, and children
10/17/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Public meeting with emphasis upon public health, behavioral health and healthcare
10/18/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Public Meeting with emphasis upon the City of Fostoria and high-hazard dams/reservoirs
10/22/2024	Digital Meeting	Public meeting with emphasis upon the Villages of Bettsville and New Riegel

Date	Location	Purpose/Audience
10/24/2024	Digital Meeting	Digital meeting with the Village of New Riegel and the Village of Bettsville
10/28/2024	Digital Meeting	Meeting with Seneca County floodplain manager and SWCD manager to discuss hazards, vulnerability and strategies for the county
10/28/2024	Digital Meeting	Digital meeting with Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and Fostoria CIC to discuss development goals and trends, regulations, enforcement, and mitigation integration into community planning
10/28/2024	Digital Meeting	Discussion with zoning officials regarding community development and regulation
10/28/2024	Off-site Work Session Bettsville	Work at the Village of Bettsville to discuss vulnerability, threats, strategies and approval/adoption.
10/30/2024	Off-site Work Session Tiffin	Work at the City of Tiffin to assess mitigation progress and determine strategies for the new plan
10/31/2024	Digital Meeting Bloomville	Met with Bloomville officials to discuss threats, vulnerabilities, and strategies for the new plan, and to cover review, approval and adoption processes.
11/4/2024	Off-site Work Session Republic	Village of Republic officials worked on new plan strategies, progress on mitigation efforts, and review, approval and adoption process
11/4/2024	Off-site Work Session Attica	Meeting at Attica Village Hall with village administrator and fire chief to assess mitigation progress, new strategies, and review, approval and adoption process
11/5/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room (for New Riegel)	Meeting with Village of New Riegel to assess mitigation progress and to discuss new strategies, review, approval and adoption process
11/5/2024	Off-site Work Session Fostoria	Meeting with Fostoria officials and leaders to discuss mitigation progress, new strategies, and review, approval and adoption process
11/6/2024	Off-site Work Session Seneca County	Met with Seneca County Commissioners and county administrator to discuss mitigation progress, new strategies, and review, approval and adoption of the new plan
11/6/2024	Off-site Work Session Bloomville	Village of Bloomville meeting to discuss mitigation progress, new strategies, and review, approval and adoption of the new plan
11/7/2024	Digital Meeting	Conversation with City of Clyde regarding high hazard reservoir/dam in Adams Township with exchange of all associated documents and process guidance
11/25/2024	Seneca County Public Safety Bldg. Training Room	Two open public meetings with local officials, special interest groups, service organizations and the general public to review HIRA, strategies and review, approval and adoption process

Date	Location	Purpose/Audience
11/28 through 12/13/2024	Public Review Period	Public Review by all Seneca County officials and residents
TDB	On site	Adoption by Local Jurisdictions
TBD	Digital	Submission of plan to OEMA for Review & Approval
TBD	Digital	Federal Approval of 2025 Seneca HMP

1.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

With two cities and five incorporated villages, a wide array of stakeholders was identified as having a role in the mitigation planning process. The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team included broad participation from these groups. In some cases, due to the small population, individuals filled more than one role in the planning process. With limited numbers of individuals to assume leadership tasks, most of them filled multiple roles in their community.

From the beginning of the planning process, the EMA attempted to include the whole community in planning activities. The input and opinions of the general public were viewed as critical to the process, as were the opinions of elected and appointed officials and key community leaders. A broad, inclusive list of planning team members was developed with the intention of including any, every, and all agencies with an interest or role in emergency management, and thus in disaster mitigation. As the process unfolded and planning began, an inclusive planning approach was used, and even more people became part of the process.

The initial invitation to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was extended to the following officials, leaders, and stakeholders from Seneca County and adjacent jurisdictions:

- Incorporated jurisdictions
- Township trustees
- Specialized disciplines, including fire service, law enforcement, engineering, utilities, public health, healthcare, hospitals, business and industry, nonprofits, social agencies, and stakeholders as part of the general public
- Specific appointed officials, including the county floodplain manager, GIS mapping specialist, conservation specialists, regional planning, building and zoning officials, community and economic development officials, fire chiefs, police chiefs, public health commissioner, agricultural extension agents
- Key elected officials such as the county auditor, treasurer, engineer, and commissioners
- Emergency management officials from the adjacent counties
- Non-profit agencies including American Red Cross and United Way as well as community action groups
- Special interest groups such as watershed coalitions, conservancy districts, federal partners, state agencies with facilities in the county, and others with a special interest in the well-being of Seneca County
- Residents, businesses, and stakeholders from the general public

1.2.1 Jurisdiction Participation

All incorporated jurisdictions in Seneca County chose to participate in the countywide hazard mitigation plan. Participating jurisdictions included the City of Fostoria, the City of Tiffin and the Villages of Attica, Bettsville, Bloomville, New Riegel and Republic. Seneca County elected and appointed officials participated on behalf of all other areas, but participation was solicited through both county officials and the township sub-structure of government to reach those community members who live in the rural areas. This methodology assured that both municipal and rural interests would be included in the mitigation plan.

In Ohio, every county is divided into sub-sections called “townships”. Townships are small sections of land, sometimes as small as six square miles. Incorporated jurisdictions (villages and cities) lie within the townships and supersede the township authority as governance for those parcels is absorbed by the municipality. In general, the remaining land outside the municipalities is considered a “township”, and the elected officials’ duties are primarily road upkeep and cemetery maintenance. Census areas, neighborhoods, homeowner association districts, and postal zones may exist as part of the townships, but those have no governance structure.

Townships originally, in the 1800’s and before, provided a means to identify plats of land and to create the verbiage in documents like deeds. In Ohio, townships may choose to be zoned, but other land use planning is done by the county level of government. Townships can provide very basic services such as plowing snow from tertiary roads and maintaining cemeteries. Townships do not have the same full authorities as municipalities and counties. Townships cannot levy taxes and must participate in most programs as an unincorporated area of the county, through the county government officials. There are twenty-two unincorporated communities and one census-designated place in Seneca County.

Seneca County has fifteen townships, including Adams, Big Spring, Bloom, Clinton, Eden, Hopewell, Jackson, Liberty, Loudon, Pleasant, Reed, Scipio, Seneca, Thompson, and Venice. Each has three elected trustees and a fiscal officer. They do not generally have any employees, and often contract Seneca County for essential services.

Consistent with other types of whole community planning, these townships do not adopt the mitigation plan individually, and for the purposes of hazard mitigation, work through the Seneca County Commissioners as unincorporated areas.

The townships have a countywide association that meets regularly, and other county officials attend some of those meetings. Key leaders such as the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership director and the Community Improvement Corporation director also participate in those meetings. Townships do not have the structural sophistication of villages, so there are few committees or commissions associated with townships. The direct connection with leaders, as mentioned, enables a solid working relationship and inclusion in strategic and development plans and activities in these townships. Some townships have adopted regulations, such as

zoning, but others have not. Most townships are primarily agricultural in nature. In many cases, the Seneca County Commissioners act on behalf of the townships.

The county government handles services including ditch maintenance, plowing and repair of main and secondary roadways, bridge and culvert maintenance, land use planning, community development, emergency management, and many other humanitarian and financial functions on behalf of the township. Many daily functions of government are handled by the county because townships must, by law, meet only annually.

The officials identified in table 1-2 served as the primary contacts for the jurisdictions and agencies. These individuals assisted by inviting additional relevant individuals to the meetings. All communication throughout the planning process was shared with this group of officials and employees. They were asked for their own input at sessions, and asked to notify others within their jurisdiction of meetings and work sessions and invite any other residents or officials to participate in the planning meetings. They were invited to the initial project meetings in October 2024 and then in late November. They led the completion of surveys and handouts during the project. They were all asked to review the draft plan and participate in the final plan review prior to the plan's submission to state reviewers. These individuals coordinated with the EMA Director and Contractor to invite additional relevant stakeholders.

Table 1-2: Participating Jurisdiction Lead Representatives

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Seneca County	Commissioner	William Frankart
	County Administrator	Barb Patterson
	Sheriff	Fred Stevens
	Engineer	Mark Zimmerman
	Soil & Water Conservation District	Bret Margraf
		Morgan Metzger
		Andrea Smith
	Health Department	Julie Richards
	Tiffin Seneca Economic Partnership	Aaron Montz
	Fostoria Economic Development Corp.	Renee Smith
	Auditor	Julie Adkins
	Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services Board	Mircea Handru
	Emergency Management Agency	John Spahr
	EMS Director	Chris Hafley
	Board of Developmental Disabilities	Erica Fisher
Prosecuting Attorney	Derek DeVine	

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
	FCFC Children First	Sandy Hallett
	Media Relations	Sherri Trusty
City of Fostoria	Mayor	Don Mennell
	Safety Service Director	Eric Keckler
	Fire Chief	Jason Root
	Community Improvement Director	Renee Smith
Village of Attica	Mayor	Louis Sanders
	Administrator	Bryan Shock
Village of Bettsville	Mayor, Floodplain Manager	Scott Harrison
Village of Bloomville	Wastewater Treatment Supervisor	Darin Brown
Village of New Riegel	Mayor	Larry Boullion
Village of Republic	Village Administrator	Crystal Hoepf
	Mayor	Don Holmer
City of Tiffin	City Manager	Nick Dutro
	Mayor	Lee Wilkinson
	Fire Chief	Rob Chappell
Adams Township	Fiscal Officer	Joline Humbert
Big Spring Township	Fiscal Officer	Matthew Clouse
Bloom Township	Fiscal Officer	Susan Ziegler
Clinton Township	Fiscal Officer	Stephen Welter
Eden Township	Fiscal Officer	Julie Vogel
Hopewell Township	Fiscal Officer	Laura Schreiner
Jackson Township	Fiscal Officer	Heidi Miller
Liberty Township	Fiscal Officer	Adam Richter
Loudon Township	Fiscal Officer	Victoria Coppus
Pleasant Township	Fiscal Officer	Jennifer Adelsperger
Reed Township	Fiscal Officer	Renee Miller
Scipio Township	Fiscal Officer	Karen Aichholz
Seneca Township	Fiscal Officer	Bradley Radison
Thompson Township	Fiscal Officer	Jessica Ziegler
Venice Township	Fiscal Officer	Lisa Heiser
USDA	Farm Service Agency Director	Madison Guagenti
State of Ohio	Department of Transportation	April Noel
Adjacent County EMA Offices	Wood County	Jeff Klein
	Sandusky County	Lisa Kuelling
	Crawford County	Jette Carder
	Wyandot County	Dale Risner
	Hancock County	Lee Swisher
North Central Ohio Educational Service Center	Superintendent	Brenda Luring

Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Healthcare	Mercy Health Tiffin Hospital	Keith Woodland
American Red Cross	NC Ohio Chapter	Todd James

Most municipalities and county departments participated through attendance at face-to-face meetings, but Bloomville, New Riegel, and Bettsville meetings took place through digital meetings and phone calls because of participant availability constraints. The meetings with behavioral health officials and economic and community development professionals also took place digitally. All other meetings were held at the Seneca County Public Safety Building. Times of all meetings were intended to be convenient, and some were held in evening hours to accommodate officials who fulfill their job duties as volunteers, thus unavailable during business hours.

Meetings with jurisdictions and special interest groups included all facets of the mitigation planning process. The sessions opened with a discussion of hazards and threats, the damage caused by each one, and the effects of changing weather patterns and climate modifications upon how those hazards impacted their community. They discussed the socially vulnerable, underserved and disadvantaged populations and other concerns about meeting the needs of people in their jurisdiction. Resources to meet disaster needs were reviewed and gaps were identified, as were any areas they felt were an extreme challenge. Mitigation actions and strategies, as well as their capability to apply for and manage grants, to execute large mitigation projects, and the ability to oversee a project were covered. They prioritized hazards, identified new or ongoing projects or ideas, and discussed how those actions would resolve damage or help serve residents. They discussed changes in demographics and characteristics, and how that might affect disaster damages and mitigation efforts positively or negatively. The meetings wrapped up with a discussion of the review, approval and adoption steps in the planning process. How much time was spent on each topic was dependent upon the individual participants.

Several entities were invited to meetings and encouraged to review and provide feedback for the draft plan; however, no comments were received, and they did not attend meetings with the exception of Ms. Kuelling from Sandusky County.

Because the City of Clyde, in Sandusky County, owns Beaver Creek Reservoir that is located in Adams Township in Seneca County, there was discussion between Directors Spahr and Kuelling and the Contractor about how to handle the risk, vulnerability and mitigation actions for the reservoir. Since Sandusky County will soon be updating their hazard mitigation plan, an approach that meets the needs of both counties, as well as satisfying the high-hazard dam planning requirements, was jointly developed.

It should be noted that Wood County EMA sent two representatives to the meeting on October 16th, and they appear on the sign-in sheets.

This includes the following entities.

Table 1-3: Non-Participating Organizations

Person	Position	Organization
Lisa Kuelling	Director	Sandusky County EMA
Art Mead	Director	Huron County EMA
Dale Risley	Director	Wyandot County EMA
Lee Swisher	Director	Hancock County EMA
Jette Cander	Director	Crawford County EMA

The following table lists the dates on which the various jurisdictions participated in the six planning phases of a mitigation plan. Because Seneca County is a small rural county, there was flexibility and meetings were able to adjust to the needs of those attending to facilitate full participation in spite of scheduling challenges.

Table 1-4: Jurisdiction Participation Dates and Methods Summary

Full Participation	Jurisdiction	A. Planning Process	B. HIRA Discussion	C. Strategy Development	D. Plan Maintenance	E. Plan Update Process &	F. Plan Adoption
Yes	Seneca County	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24	10-16-24 10-17-24	10-16-24 11-6-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 11-6-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 11-6-24	10-16-24 11-6-24
Yes	Village of Attica	10-16-24	10-16-24	11-4-24	10-16-24 11-4-24	10-16-24	10-16-24 11-4-24
Yes	Village of Bettsville	10-24-24	10-24-24	10-28-24	10-24-24	10-24-24	10-24-24
Yes	Village of Bloomville	11-6-24	11-6-24	11-6-24	11-6-24	11-6-24	11-6-24
Yes	City of Fostoria	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-18-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-18-24	11-5-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-18-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-18-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-18-24
Yes	Village of New Riegel	10-24-24	10-24-24	11-5-24	10-24-24	10-24-24	10-24-24
Yes	Village of Republic	10-16-24	10-16-24	11-4-24	10-16-24	10-16-24	10-16-24
Yes	City of Tiffin	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24	10-30-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24	10-16-24 10-17-24 10-28-24

1.2.2 Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

Because Seneca County’s intention was to encourage broad participation in the planning process, the key contacts listed previously in Table 1-2 were asked to bring as many parties to the table as they could. They were asked to include any and all key decision-makers or others, including any department supervisors, elected officials, committee chairman, and others. As a result, many additional individuals joined in the actual meetings. Table 1-4 identifies all of the individuals who were involved in meetings, discussions, or other planning activities. This list includes representation from business and industry, community services, economic and community development, education, government, infrastructure and engineering, natural resources and agriculture, and public safety. It also includes social agencies and organizations that provide assistance to underserved and disadvantaged populations in Seneca County. It is critical to remember that many individuals in Seneca County represent more than one entity because they wear multiple leadership positions within the county and its jurisdictions. They are also business owners and key employees of local companies. A participation spreadsheet is attached to this plan as **07 Meeting Participation**.

Table 1-5: Participating Stakeholders

Agency/Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Seneca County	Commissioner	Bill Frankart
	Prosecuting Attorney	Derek DeVine
	Media Coordinator	Sherri Trusty
	Administrator	Barb Patterson
	EMS Director	Chris Hafley
	EMA Director	John Spahr
	Soil Conservationist	Morgan Metzger
	Ditch Maintenance Technician	Andrea Smythe
	Public Health Emergency Planner	Harold Huffman
	Health Commissioner	Julie Richards
	FCFC Mentor Coordinator	Dawn Lykins
	FCFC Director	Sandy Hallett
	Seneca Mental Health	Mircea Handru
	Floodplain Manager	Bret Margraf
Village of Attica	Administrator	Bryan Shock
	Mayor	Louis Sanders
	Fire Chief	Lonnie Janes
Village of Bettsville	Mayor	Scott Harrison
Village of Bloomville	Councilperson	Carol Adams
	Wastewater Plant Supervisor	Darin Brown
	Wastewater Plant Employee	Levi Webster
Village of New Riegel	Mayor	Larry Boullion
	Mayor	Don Holmer
	Councilperson	Kevin Thompson
	Councilperson	Renee Lacy
	Councilperson	Debra Durr

Agency/Jurisdiction	Position/Title	Representative
Village of Republic	Councilperson	Tonya Hemmer
	Councilperson	Nicole Laibe
	Councilperson	Rohnda Pickering
	Administrator	Crystal Hoepf
	Fiscal Officer	Jason Shade
	Solicitor	Gina Grandillo
City of Tiffin	Mayor	Lee Wilkinson
	Fire Chief	Rob Chappell
	City Manager	Nick Dutro
	Zoning Inspector	Daniel Brickner
	Engineer	Matt Watson
City of Fostoria	Mayor	Don Mennel
	Fire Chief	Jason Root
	Engineer	Todd Jenkins
	Safety Service Director	Eric Keckler
	Compliance Officer	Jeff Huber
	Asst. Supt. WWT Plant	Jameson Botimer
City of Clyde (Sandusky County)	Water Department Supervisor	Phil Farrar
	Fire Chief	Paul Fiser
AQUA Ohio (Water Utility)	Representative	Matt Bonam
	Representative	Jason Gavitra
	Zoning Inspector	David Mengel
Educational Institutions	Fostoria Local Schools	Jason Longbrake
	Hopewell Louden School District	Matt White
	NCO Educational Service Center	Brenda Luring
	NCO Educational Service Center	Jeffrey Houbronic
	Old Fort Local Schools	Amanda Gase
	Tiffin City Schools	Greg DeVore
	Tiffin Developmental Center	Erika Fisher
	Tiffin Developmental Center	Julia Sherwood
Healthcare	Mercy Hospital Tiffin	Keith Woodland
	Mercy Hospital Tiffin	Jennifer Bowen
Federal Representation	USDA Farm Service Agency	Madison Guagenti
	Natural Resource Conservation Svcs.	Kerek Benner
State of Ohio Representation	Department of Transportation	Matt Swartzmiller
	Department of Transportation	April Noel
Economic and Community Development	Fostoria Economic Development (CIC)	Renee Smith
	Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce	Bryce Riggs
	Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership	Donna Gross
	Tiffin Seneca Economic Partnership	Noah Paris

1.2.3 Planning Team Engagement

The plan development schedule included multiple local meetings and work sessions, and several periods of reviews, sharing of draft documents, and formal public review. Because achieving meaningful participation from a wide range of partners through these sessions was important to the EMA and Contractor, the meeting schedule was developed to provide as many opportunities as possible for stakeholders to participate. Many individuals wore multiple hats in the process, and provided input in the context of multiple duties and orientations. Meetings were held at the Seneca County Public Safety Building in the Training Room, where many local people are familiar. This was very convenient for both county agencies and departments, as well as those traveling from other parts of Seneca County.

Invitations to meetings and work sessions were initially sent to stakeholders by e-mail because that is the typical form of most communication among government offices and organizations in Seneca County. Once meetings occurred and additional or alternate individuals attended, they were added to the notification list if they were not already on the list. If anyone notified the EMA or Contractor that they did not have e-mail access, postal mail was the alternative notification method. No one requested that option. If an email was returned as undelivered, follow-up was initiated for corrective action by the EMA office. Any continuing communication issues were addressed individually. The EMA director monitored email receipts and returns for the duration of the project to assure notifications were delivered effectively. Individual meetings were conducted when schedules did not allow participants to attend group sessions, and phone calls or online meetings were used to fill in gaps due to conflicts. Contractor phone numbers and email addresses were shared with all participants.

Planning team members were reminded to share the information they were given in meetings with additional colleagues and community members who may wish to participate. Additional handouts were available at all meetings, or by request.

Dates and times of meetings, with their location, were openly shared with jurisdictions. When invitations were sent, they encouraged sending invitations to guests and additional parties, as well as welcoming substitutes when the primary representative was unavailable to attend. Those who attended meetings were encouraged to tell others about future meetings and invite them to attend. All meetings were open to the public.

1.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Garnering broad community participation in the mitigation planning process was a priority of both the EMA and the Contractor. The EMA reached out to a broad scope of community partners, jurisdiction officials, community partners, and stakeholders to not only attend meetings, but to bring others in their community with them. These representatives and their potential guests were invited to participate and provide input throughout the planning process.

This project began with the development of a broad and inclusive planning team invitation that clearly stated the meetings were open to the public. The core planning committee from 2019's

plan gave a starting base, and all those role players and officials were updated to current ones, and others were added as needed. There were significant numbers of participants added from segments of healthcare, social agencies, and local schools to meet the social vulnerability requirements of the new standards. Extensive effort was dedicated to identifying contacts across all areas and segments of the county and creating an accurate contact list of those individuals. Invitations and reminders were sent to the planning team multiple times.

Input from all participants, including the general public representatives, was used to develop the plan. Planners took notes at all the meetings that were held, and from the phone calls and digital meetings that were conducted. This included updated information relevant to the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, the nature and characteristics of storms, the damage that were a result of these hazards, and the potential consequences that could have occurred but did not. They described, for example, that snowstorm closures are minimally damaging, but because the roads are flat and straight, drifting is often more of a problem than the actual amount of snowfall. They also described how power outages, especially long-term, make every disaster worse and more difficult, and many other topics. This information was summarized and used to develop the content of the new mitigation plan.

Discussions about social vulnerability related the data identified in online sources for communities in Seneca County, and the social issues and circumstances experienced by the planning participants who were frequently provided by people in need. While they talked about isolated and very elderly residents not being able to clean up after severe storms by themselves, they identified local sources of assistance that were commonly available and willing to help them. Sometimes these individuals need transportation assistance. The transportation issue is not always that they do not own a car or cannot afford one, it is instead that they are unable or unwilling to drive due to their advanced age, especially at night or inclement weather. At other times, participants talked about residential instability, as opposed to homelessness that might be experienced in large cities or metropolitan counties. Residential instability occurs when a household has a home, but when it is damaged by storms, they lack the financial means to relocate or to repair the home. Those who live in rental properties, which are not readily available, despite being plentiful, in Seneca County, have difficulty finding alternate housing should a landlord be unable or unwilling to repair a storm-damaged home for them. These examples were all very personalized, localized applications of underserved and disadvantaged populations as it applies in Seneca County and are representative of the kind of information and interpretations that were collected.

These examples of personalization and application are present throughout the plan. Data was researched, shared with participants, and personalized to illustrate the effect on Seneca County and its communities.

To provide easy, convenient access to planning information for the committee and public, the draft plan was posted on the Seneca County website which is found at senecacountyohio.gov and the EMA website, senecacountyema.org. This was used to post draft sections of the plan for public review, and to inform reviewers of how to submit

questions, concerns or suggested changes. There was open access to this site, and no accounts or passwords were necessary for access. Documents were posted in PDF format, but were downloadable for reader convenience, or available to read without download. The entire plan was posted on Wednesday, November 27, 2024 and left for open review through Friday, December 13, 2024.

The availability of the drafted plan was announced at two meetings on Monday, November 25, 2024 in Tiffin. A printed copy of the plan was kept at the Seneca County EMA Office at 126 Hopewell Avenue in Tiffin. A link to the plan was also posted on the Seneca County EMA social media page. Copies were available at the libraries in Tiffin and Fostoria. A notice was published in the local newspaper, the Tiffin Advertiser Tribune. All persons who attended or were invited to mitigation meetings were notified by email that the plan was available for review and comment.

Stakeholders were encouraged to actively engage in the review process and to submit any thoughts or comments to the EMA Director by email or phone call. The Contractor and EMA Director were available to answer questions, address comments, and explain segments of the plan.

All agency and jurisdiction representatives who participated on the planning team were notified of the review period by email on Wednesday, November 27, 2024. To notify the public, the EMA placed a news release in The Tiffin Advertiser Tribune newspaper, which was printed on <insert dates>. All notifications included a link to the website where the plan was posted, the timeline for public review, and instructions for submitting comments. A printed copy of the plan was available at the Seneca County EMA during regular business hours for anyone wishing to view and comment on the plan but with limited computer access, special needs, or other accessibility challenges.

There was <no feedback> during the public review period.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

A significant amount of research was performed to develop the hazard mitigation plan, which is based on multiple sources of information. Research was conducted through reviews of existing data, plans, and reports and through interviews and conversations with county stakeholders and subject-matter experts. This information was used both in work sessions for discussion, as well as included in the written documents.

Since Seneca County's most recent plan was approved in 2019, the Contractor obtained hazard information and data from 2019 through 2023 to ensure that the new plan included current, relevant, and accurate hazard and risk information. The information contained in the previous plan that continued to be accurate and relevant was maintained as part of this plan.

Additional information was identified through research of recorded events from the National Climatic Data Center Storm Events Database. Incidents that were researched included past

ones included in former plans simply for verification, and new incidents after 2018 so that the most recent storms were included. Data was presented to the stakeholders represented on the planning team. Their knowledge of the impact, consequences, and recovery efforts of any past disaster incident was documented. These anecdotal points were included as appropriate in the revised plan.

The county profile includes information discovered through the study of various county documents. Information about community development, business and industry, land use regulations, and community life were researched and findings that were relevant to mitigation planning were included as parts of narratives and explanations. Online sources like US Census Bureau data and the Ohio Seneca County Profile were accessed for statistical data. Federal, state, and local government agency websites and reports were utilized for statistical and historic information.

The hazard identification was developed through research of actual recorded events based on records from the Storm Events Database of the National Climatic Data Center. Supporting data was obtained from the Ohio EMA, FEMA, Tornado History Project, Stanford University Dam Program, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and other sources. Planning team members provided additional detail, context, and descriptions of the community impact for many historical incidents. The most significant events for each hazard are described in narrative form in the HIRA. Appendix A includes a complete list of all recorded occurrences of each hazard, organized by type of hazard between 2019 (when the last plan was approved) and 7-31-2024.

The vulnerability assessment and risk analysis were developed using multiple data sources. The National Risk Index was used to examine and consider natural hazards and the loss estimates associated with each hazard. Current critical facility and key resource locations were identified through use of the RAPT online tool, confirmed by local residents and officials. The 2019 Seneca County Hazard Mitigation Plan contained information that was still reflective of risks, vulnerabilities, and conditions, which were retained in this plan where applicable. FEMA documents were referenced to identify how many losses were reported, when, and because of what impact in the past. Included in this estimation were possibility, probability, magnitude, and frequency of each category of hazard and its potential impact upon Seneca County.

Although not recently updated, Watershed Discovery Reports for the Maumee, Sandusky and Huron Rivers were used to facilitate discussion about waterway and watershed management issues. There were many issues of agricultural interest as the reports were applied to Seneca County and specific points were discussed. The reports were referenced, and meeting participants were informed of those findings. Copies of the plan and online locations were offered to participants, and some natural resources stakeholders were already familiar with the Discovery Reports. Discussions took place regarding the mitigation actions and management practices that were recommended in the Discovery Reports. In some cases, local stakeholders agreed with the reports, and mitigation actions were crafted to support and facilitate the Discovery Report recommendations. The mitigation strategies in this plan are reflective of the plan participant input.

New mitigation standards require research and identification of social vulnerabilities for communities. Information was obtained from a variety of new online resources, as listed in Table 1-5 that follows. Discussions with local stakeholders also identified and verified this information during the work sessions that were held. Discussions included identification of underserved and disadvantaged populations, the needs and circumstances that would require assistance, and the possible sources of those assistance efforts. There was considerable discussion in many work sessions about where and for what groups additional assistance has been provided, and where the recovery from past disasters has been difficult or incomplete. Where gaps in capabilities were identified, or shortages based upon escalated after-storm needs, potential additional resources and alternate providers were discussed.

There was significant discussion about changing weather patterns and the potential for climate change to affect Seneca County in all work sessions. Changes in how and when storms strike, the amount of precipitation or the force of winds was covered in detail. Discussion included considerations of urban sprawl into Seneca County, as well as metropolitan industrial influence on the community. These discussions, when compared to online climate projections, were in sync.

Significant discussion ensued regarding resources needed during and after catastrophic level events. Because of the rather low population, all stakeholders expressed doubts that Seneca County would receive outside resources in an event that involved other counties. As a rural county, the pervasive opinion was that Seneca County will automatically and successfully fend for themselves. While the county residents perceive themselves as highly resilient and willing to take care of themselves, there are challenges that come with this commitment. For example, across Ohio and the Midwest, volunteerism is declining. The average age of volunteers is rising, and the younger generations to someday take their places are not as interested in volunteering as previous generations. Therefore, in-depth conversations took place about diminishing volunteerism, especially in public safety organizations. An emphasis upon mutual aid agreements, department planning for equipment purchases in collaboration with adjoining departments, and other forms of collaboration were believed to be best practices for local entities. The exodus of adequate sheltering and family assistance by social organizations that are used to help after residents were displaced from homes is a huge concern for Seneca County. They now receive assistance from adjacent counties or nearby metropolitan areas. There is concern whether this regional help will continue in the coming decades. Seneca County is concerned for the same response resource reasons as most rural counties in Ohio.

Table 1-7 provides a list of the sources utilized in the research phase of this project.

Table 1-7: Studies, Reports, and References

Document	Author/Agency	Date
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Document	Author/Agency	Date
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUP)	United States Department of Agriculture	2019
Federal Disaster Declaration Statistics	FEMA	2024
The Climate Explorer	Online resource	2024
Floodplain Management Community Contact List	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	2023
Seneca County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan	Seneca County Health Dept.	2022 - 2023
Seneca County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2019	Seneca County EMA	2019
Emergency Action Plans for all included reservoirs	City of Fostoria; Village of Attica; City of Clyde	n/d
State of Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan	Ohio EMA	2019 and 2023
Storm Events Database	NOAA	2024
Downtown Tiffin Strategic Growth & Development Plan	City of Tiffin	2016
United States Census	US Census Bureau Seneca County Profile	2020
Seneca County Multijurisdictional Comprehensive Plan	Seneca Parks District/Tiffin/Fostoria	2020
Headwaters Economics – Economic Profile System for Seneca County OH	Socioeconomic and Neighborhoods at Risk Reports	2024
National Risk Index	FEMA	2024
Resilience Analysis Planning Tool (RAPT)	FEMA	2024
Climate Risk and Resilience Portal (ClimRR)	FEMA	2024
National Inventory of Dams	FEMA	2024
National Levee Database	FEMA	2024
Ohio Department of Natural Resources GIS Maps	ODNR	2024
National Agricultural Statistics Service Bulletin – Ohio Annual Bulletin	USDA	2023
Ohio County Profile	Ohio Office of Research	2022
Ohio Economic Profile Seneca County	OH DJFS	2021
Maumee Watershed TDML Report	ODNR	2007
Sandusky Watershed TDML Report	ODNR	2007
Climate Risk and Resilience Portal		2024
Rural Housing Market Analysis	Tiffin Seneca Economic Partnership	2023
Housing Opportunities Analysis	City of Tiffin	2019
Seneca County Active Transportation Plan	Seneca County	2018

1.5 PLAN MAINTENANCE

Plan maintenance is a critical element of the hazard mitigation plan. Diligent plan maintenance establishes a schedule to re-engage stakeholders in the mitigation plan at regular intervals

during the plan's validity period and lays a solid groundwork for the required five-year update. Continual attention to mitigation allows for and facilitates purposeful actions and planning efforts. By reviewing disaster occurrences on an annual basis and frequently assessing the county's progress on mitigation activities, a five-year update can be a quick and efficient process. Upon approval of this plan, Seneca County is determined to follow a regular plan maintenance schedule. The EMA Director will lead this effort and involve countywide stakeholders, jurisdictions, and the community, maintaining and strengthening the solid foundation in place for the plan update in 2029.

1.5.1 Plan Maintenance Methodology

A significant challenge in conducting annual plan reviews is the difficulty in holding meetings that are well attended. Many stakeholders perceive these meetings as unnecessary or not critical and do not attend, yet others struggle to combine demanding jobs and volunteer leadership roles and struggle to be available. Government officials, community leaders, and other key stakeholders have busy schedules and competing demands on their time and must and prioritize their attendance at different events. In Seneca County, most jurisdictions and organizations have only a few employees. In the villages and townships, many elected and appointed officials serve in a part-time or volunteer capacity. Yet the city and the larger villages have an array of employees to share the work and attend planning meetings. These staffing realities often make conducting community-wide meetings a challenge. Seneca County's plan maintenance strategy attempts to address these barriers by incorporating other communication and data-collection methods throughout the five-year life of the plan.

Traditional face-to-face meetings have been the most common method to discuss disaster responses, catastrophic incidents, and storms. The 2019 Pandemic made face-to-face meetings impossible, and people became accustomed to online meetings, written or digital surveys, and email communication. Even in the rural communities in Seneca County, officials and workers have gotten used to digital meetings, and avoiding the travel required to meet in a face-to-face manner. This familiarity has led to acceptance of alternatives to meeting in person, and those digital and remote options will be seriously considered in the coming five years. The EMA will also work closely with the villages, asking each to consider reviewing their plan sections and submitting comments each year as an individual community rather than a whole county. The EMA Director can then compile these reports and share across the entire county. Records of participation, copies of results, and other communication surrounding these events will be maintained just as it would be for a meeting.

1.5.2 Annual Plan Review

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team will be called upon to review, evaluate, and discuss the plan annually, on or about the anniversary of the plan approval date. Annual plan maintenance discussions may be conducted through traditional in-person meetings or remote meetings, electronic surveys, questionnaires, or other forms of communication. The choice of methodology will be at the discretion of the EMA Director based on what best meets the needs of stakeholders and ensures that mitigation strategies are considered on a regular basis. All information-gathering efforts will include evaluation of the past year's disaster incidents and a

summary of the resulting damages, costs, and recovery efforts. Status reports on any mitigation projects in process and an update on progress towards achieving the mitigation strategies and actions developed by each jurisdiction will also be included. The EMA will maintain records of these annual discussions.

As part of the annual review process, jurisdictions will be asked to conduct an internal analysis of the mitigation strategies developed by their jurisdiction and submit a short report to the EMA with their findings. The report will include an assessment of any disaster incidents that occurred during the year, a summary of damages and recovery efforts, and a status report on the status of adopted mitigation strategies as a result of those incidents. If a strategy has been completed, the jurisdiction will evaluate its effectiveness at reducing losses. This information will be shared with the countywide planning team during the annual countywide review process. The EMA will maintain a summary of these reports and findings.

The EMA Director may choose to convene a planning team meeting after any significant disaster or large-scale emergency to review and document any changes, needs, additions, or deletions that should be considered at the five-year update. The EMA may also convene a committee if a significant development project, change in land use, or addition of a major industry occurs to review the effect of that incident on mitigation intentions. Any time a disaster is declared in Seneca County, the planning team will assemble after the incident is closed to review the plan with emphasis on the strategies and the status of each. Given the direction of new mitigation guidance, the records of incidents will include social vulnerability concerns as well as physical damage information. Who served special needs, what organizations helped the underserved, and what gaps existed will be documented. Best practices and opportunities for improvement will be recorded and addressed. They will consider the integration of mitigation goals into the emergency operations plan, and make any changes that improve the manner and extent to which Seneca County can serve disadvantaged and underserved populations. The EMA will maintain records of these meetings and findings.

At each review point, the EMA will review the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment for completeness and accuracy, as well as changes that occur due to changing weather patterns or history. Loss estimates will be evaluated for ongoing accuracy and any significant developments will be added to the list and mitigation strategies will be reviewed for progress and effectiveness. All findings will be recorded and saved for the 2030 update process.

1.5.3 Community Participation

While the EMA is responsible for leading the plan maintenance effort, that process only works if stakeholders are engaged. Ongoing consideration of hazard mitigation strategies is critical to creating a resilient and sustainable community. It is the EMA's intention that the stakeholders representing the municipalities, jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations involved in plan development will continue to participate in its ongoing review and maintenance. Without their participation, ongoing input will not be comprehensive or accurate. Therefore, all parties involved in developing this plan must perceive the annual review process as critical to the pre- and post-disaster welfare of the county. The new mitigation partners who address issues of

social vulnerability and community resilience will be critical parties moving forward, and will continue to be critical companions in mitigation planning and implementation.

Public involvement is an important component of ongoing mitigation planning efforts. To encourage public involvement in plan maintenance, notices of annual plan review activities will be published through local media and appropriate websites and social media accounts of participating jurisdictions and agencies. The general public will be invited to participate in these activities and provide input. Meeting announcements will include the date, time, and location of the session and adequate notice so that people have reasonable time to plan their attendance. As with all meetings conducted during plan development, annual update meetings will be open to the public and community input will be encouraged. If surveys and other electronic tools are utilized to collect feedback from stakeholders, these documents will also be made available to the community.

1.5.4 Integration with Community Planning Mechanisms

Local government participation in plan maintenance activities is a major factor in the implementation and achievement of mitigation strategies as well as assessment for new and additional mitigation actions. This participation occurs during intentional mitigation plan review and, more importantly, during daily operations within each jurisdiction that guide the growth and development of specific communities.

Most Seneca County villages do not have planning commissions or a committee within the jurisdiction's elected council that addresses growth and development issues for the municipality. Bloomville has a committee that works to provide social and local vendor opportunities to village residents, but this is not a planning commission. The other villages do not have a planning commission either. Only Tiffin and Fostoria have comprehensive planning and written comprehensive development plans. Community development in all others, and sometimes in those two communities as well, is a joint effort between the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership, the Fostoria Economic Development Corporation, and the Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce. These organizations are responsible to their own boards of directors and operate through a representative leadership of the membership structure, but as of mid-2024 have been designated responsible for the county regional planning functions. How that will look, and how integration will occur with villages and townships is yet to be developed. The need for countywide involvement is well-taken by leadership, and the intent is to involve all in the community growth process. The general decision to drive most commercial and industrial development to the areas rich in infrastructure and support services is shared by communities large and small, and they are working to design the specific details of integration countywide at this time.

It is extremely difficult to obtain regular and ongoing planning input from the villages because they are so extremely small in population. At the time of this planning effort, many experience vacancies on mandatory councils. Most of the villages are under a thousand residents, making it very difficult to staff committee and council positions.

There is a very collaborative and communicative relationship between Seneca County officials, the municipalities, and the economic and regional planning professionals. The professionals involved in economic and community growth do communicate with individuals and municipal officials on a regular basis to remain updated on plans, issues and concerns of those communities, and to share development goals and activities that are in planning and implementation stages. There is ongoing communication and collaboration between countywide partners. While this communication is not all formally done through meetings and activities, it is effective for Seneca County.

It is yet to be determined if the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership will have a board that includes representation from outside the county and city government. The villages are involved in the discussion, and whatever that structure becomes, will be the outcome of joint discussion and consideration.

Table 2-15 in Section 02 HIRA of this plan identifies the capabilities of each jurisdiction and should be used as reference for this integration discussion.

Ideally officials will all bring new development and growth concepts back to their communities to implement Seneca County initiatives. They provide leadership for recruiting, promoting, and securing new industries, businesses, and residential facilities. These groups work together to guide the construction of new buildings and homes, and oversee and inspect new structures.

The Soil and Water Conservation District serves as the floodplain manager, and only some municipalities have a designated floodplain manager. The GIS officer is part of the Auditor's office and the tax map officer is part of the County Engineer's office. Mortgage lenders work with the floodplain managers to comply with flood prevention regulations as part of the lending process, and they use external commercial providers to validate floodplain status for mortgage purposes. The lending institutions work with the floodplain manager and county auditor to determine floodplain locations, and the zoning officers enforce land use regulations to manage construction of homes, farm facilities, and businesses. Seneca County floodplain managers work with updating and improving floodplain regulations and keeping in step with county and state requirements. The EMA Director works with the various county officials in a non-official capacity to advise and assist in disaster mitigation efforts regarding potential development projects. In those communities that do not have floodplain, and therefore have no floodplain manager, the mayor or the zoning inspector serves to link mortgage lenders to residents, although with no floodplain, special insurance is not required.

Because Seneca County is a small community, there is an informal structure to the inclusion of mitigation efforts in other economic and community development activities. With some development organizations and other agencies reaching into neighboring counties they are part of, Seneca County works to achieve benefits of these regulation and planning entities. It is up to the representatives to make sure Seneca County's voice is heard. Fostoria is the most-affected municipality because of formal linkages to other counties. The county has determined that they should consider hazard mitigation with all community planning efforts, especially in the

comprehensive planning efforts, and intends to include information about hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities in all planning areas in future endeavors. The EMA will share responsibility to integrate mitigation planning into economic development, land use planning, land use regulation, conservation, response plans, and other plans that are important to the daily operation of the county with other county officials. Disaster mitigation will be promoted as part of community development, making its way into a comprehensive array of disciplines and interests. Key stakeholders, including the County Commissioners, Tiffin Seneca Economic Partnership, Fostoria Economic Development Corporation, floodplain administrators, engineer's offices, zoning officials, and public safety officers from across the county will be important partners in this effort. The elected and appointed officials from all jurisdictions are considered partners in mitigation efforts, and will work with and beside one another to include the efforts described in this plan into the guiding documents for their jurisdiction. Whether the person charged with this responsibility is the elected mayor, the appointed administrator, or a volunteer committee chairman or council member, they will be expected to work with other jurisdictions to exchange ideas, implement efforts, develop regulations, and create guidance for future efforts and endeavors. These individuals will work through their respective agencies to promote mitigation planning and its inclusion in the plans, procedures, guidelines, and priorities of each agency, thus making mitigation a true community-wide effort.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan has previously been integrated into the Seneca County Emergency Operations Plan and the Hazardous Materials Response Plan. The EMA Director is responsible for developing and maintaining the Seneca County Emergency Operations Plan, and he uses the Hazard Mitigation Plan as the hazard identification and risk analysis for that plan. The emergency response actions are based upon the conditions and vulnerabilities established by the mitigation plan. The EMA Director also carries the hazard mitigation plan information into the creation of a Hazardous Materials Response Plan as the vulnerability to natural hazards intersects with a hazardous materials spill or release, either due to related or unrelated factors of natural hazard incidents. The EMA Director works with high-hazard dam owners to include what is necessary in the EOP to cover an actual emergency, and works to integrate the dam safety issues into department plans in those jurisdictions.

1.5.5 Documentation of Plan Maintenance

Seneca County will consider communication with stakeholders and the public regarding hazard mitigation to be an annual necessity. The EMA will schedule, complete, and record these communications and the results of all meetings to facilitate an expeditious plan update in 2030. It will be the EMA's responsibility to maintain documentation of all ongoing plan maintenance activities. These records should include the date, time, and attendance at review meetings, findings of each review, and recommendations from stakeholders for changes, additions, or deletions at the next update. Results from any surveys and questionnaires used to collect information should be maintained, as well as reports submitted by jurisdictions. Electronic mail and written communication from stakeholders and the public should be saved for consideration during annual review activities. All reports, documents, and files can be saved electronically so that they are easier to find and less cumbersome to maintain.

1.5.6 Plan Update Cycle

Seneca County's Hazard Mitigation Plan will expire in 2030. With generous documentation of ongoing plan maintenance, the county should be positioned to submit an updated plan well before the current plan's expiration date. To ensure the appropriate timeline is met, formal efforts to update the plan will begin in mid-2028. The EMA Director will ensure that the appropriate and necessary steps are taken to complete this process.