

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: April 24, 2025

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP)



Recommended Action: Receive an informational presentation on the City of Capitola's participation in the 2025 Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP).

Background: The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires all local governments to develop and maintain a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) to remain eligible for FEMA hazard mitigation assistance programs. The City of Capitola first adopted its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) in 2014 and updated it in 2020. As part of this next five-year update cycle, Capitola has joined the 2025 Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) effort, coordinated by the County's Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience (OR3).

The County of Santa Cruz is leading the MJHMP process through OR3, with consulting support from Dynamic Planning + Science (DP+S). The County secured a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) award in 2024 to fund the planning effort. Cities and special districts across the county are participating in the process, contributing in-kind staff time to meet the local match requirement. Using a regional approach to preparing a Hazard Mitigation Plan provides a more efficient and comprehensive approach for the City to meet FEMA requirements.

Discussion: A Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is a planning document required by FEMA that identifies natural hazards and outlines strategies to reduce long-term risks to people, property, and infrastructure. These plans help communities prepare for and recover more effectively from disasters.

Hazard mitigation planning helps reduce the long-term risks posed by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, wildfires, and extreme weather. The MJHMP will support risk reduction through informed planning, identification of project priorities, and alignment with other efforts such as general plans, climate action plans, and capital improvement programs. The plan also serves as a foundation for applying for federal mitigation grants, which can fund infrastructure improvements, drainage upgrades, vegetation management, seismic retrofits, and more. FEMA reports that for every dollar invested in mitigation, communities save up to six dollars in future disaster costs.

Planning began in late 2023, with initial outreach and grant development. The County received the HMGP award in mid-2024 and selected the consultant team in the fall. The first planning team meeting was held in January 2025. Outreach, risk assessment, and plan drafting will continue through summer 2025. Capitola is contributing to the plan through participation in the Planning Committee, coordination with the County and consultants, data sharing, review of draft materials, and assistance with public engagement. The plan is scheduled for submittal to Cal OES and FEMA in fall 2025.

A public project website has been launched at <https://mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp>, where community members can complete a survey, access background information, and track the plan's progress. Additional in-person outreach activities are planned throughout the year, including community events, stakeholder meetings, and opportunities for residents to review and comment on the draft plan later in the process.

The MJHMP is being organized in two volumes to distinguish between regional and jurisdiction-specific content. Volume 1 will cover all elements required by FEMA that apply across the entire planning area. This includes the planning process, public engagement strategy, shared goals and objectives, a countywide risk assessment, regional mitigation initiatives, and the plan maintenance strategy.

Volume 2 will be composed of “annexes” for each participating jurisdiction, including Capitola. These annexes will include information specific to each community: localized hazard profiles, assessments of vulnerabilities and capabilities, and targeted mitigation actions. The City’s annex will reflect the same planning process as the rest of the document but will be tailored to Capitola’s needs. Each participating jurisdiction will adopt both volumes, thereby ensuring their local plans meet FEMA’s standards within a regional framework.

Once adopted, the MJHMP will formally replace Capitola’s stand-alone LHMP. The City’s annex will serve as its localized mitigation plan, supporting grant eligibility and long-term resilience planning. Staff will bring the draft plan and Capitola annex to Council for review and adoption later in 2025.

Fiscal Impact: The MJHMP is funded primarily through the HMGP grant, with local jurisdictions contributing in-kind staff time to meet the 25% non-federal match requirement. Capitola’s expected contribution is approximately 80 hours of staff participation throughout the process.

Attachments: None

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