

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: March 26, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update



Recommended Action: Adopt a resolution adopting the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) 2025 Update, including Volume 1 and the City of Capitola Annex contained in Volume 2.

Background: The Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) provides a coordinated strategy to reduce the impacts of natural hazards such as earthquakes, flooding, coastal hazards, landslides, drought, and severe weather events across Santa Cruz County.

Hazard mitigation refers to sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people and property from natural hazards. Examples include infrastructure improvements, regulatory updates, emergency preparedness planning, natural resource protection, and public education.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires local governments to maintain an approved hazard mitigation plan in order to remain eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hazard mitigation grant funding programs. These plans must be updated every five years.

The City of Capitola previously adopted a local hazard mitigation plan specific to Capitola. The 2025 MJHMP update represents a new coordinated countywide planning effort led by Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience (OR3) in collaboration with participating jurisdictions:

- County of Santa Cruz
- City of Capitola
- City of Scotts Valley
- City of Watsonville
- Scotts Valley Water District
- Soquel Creek Water District
- Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
- Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
- Santa Cruz Port District
- Cabrillo College

City staff participated in the planning process, including review of hazard risk assessments, mitigation strategies, and development of the City's jurisdictional "annex."

Discussion: The MJHMP is organized into two volumes.

- Volume 1 – Base Plan: The Base Plan provides the countywide framework for hazard mitigation planning. It includes hazard identification and risk assessment, community vulnerability analysis, mitigation goals and strategies, and an implementation framework.
- Volume 2 – Jurisdictional Annexes: Volume 2 includes individual annexes for each participating jurisdiction. These annexes identify locally relevant hazards, vulnerabilities, and mitigation actions.

The City of Capitola Annex documents hazards particularly relevant to the City, including coastal erosion, sea level rise, flooding associated with Soquel Creek, seismic hazards, drought, and severe weather.

The Annex also documents mitigation activities currently underway or planned by the City. Examples include resiliency planning for the Capitola Wharf and the Cliff Drive Resiliency Project, addressing bluff erosion and coastal hazards.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The MJHMP update was developed through a multi-year planning process that included coordination among participating jurisdictions, stakeholder engagement, and opportunities for public input. The process included planning team meetings, workshops, and review of draft materials.

City staff participated in the planning process and provided input on hazard prioritization, risk assessment data, and potential mitigation strategies relevant to Capitola.

FEMA Review and Approval

The updated Plan has been reviewed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and has been forwarded to FEMA Region IX for final review. Following adoption by participating jurisdictions, FEMA will issue a formal approval letter allowing the Plan to take effect.

The adoption resolution includes language allowing minor technical revisions if required during FEMA's final approval process.

Adoption of the Plan maintains the City's eligibility for FEMA hazard mitigation grant funding programs, including the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Flood Mitigation Assistance Program.

General Plan Integration

State law allows local jurisdictions to integrate a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan into the Safety Element of their General Plan pursuant to Government Code Sections 65302, 65302.6, and 8685.9 (AB 2140). This integration may improve eligibility for certain post-disaster hazard mitigation funding.

Staff recommends adopting the Hazard Mitigation Plan at this time without amending the General Plan Safety Element. The City is currently undertaking additional climate planning efforts, including a sea level rise vulnerability assessment and a future Climate Action Plan update. Staff anticipates evaluating potential Safety Element updates in coordination with those broader planning efforts at a later date.

Fiscal Impact: There is no direct fiscal impact associated with adoption of the Plan. The plan was prepared using a regional grant obtained by Santa Cruz County at no direct cost to the City. Adoption ensures that the City remains eligible for FEMA hazard mitigation funding programs that may support future infrastructure improvements and resilience projects.

CEQA: Adoption of the Hazard Mitigation Plan is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption) and Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). The Plan provides planning guidance and mitigation strategies but does not authorize construction or other physical development. Environmental review will occur as required for any future projects implemented pursuant to the Plan.

Attachments:

1. Resolution adopting the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2025 Update
2. City of Capitola Municipal Annex (Volume 2)
3. Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan – Volume 1
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zv1r3u8q5exe646c4ejjb/Santa-Cruz-Co-MJHMP-2025-FEMA-Draft-20260227.pdf?rlkey=znvwjxv3o2lb4z68cjmyjp0sd&e=1&dl=0>

Alignment with 2025-2029 Strategic Plan Priority: Community Safety; Economic Opportunity; Healthy Families, Community, and Environment; Sustainable Infrastructure

Report Prepared By: Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk; Marc Tran, City Attorney

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager