



# **Pinellas County 2025 Local Mitigation Strategy**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

Under Section 322 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) enacted under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K), Pinellas County is required to have a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved hazard mitigation plan in order to be eligible for federal hazard mitigation funding. The purpose of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, more commonly called the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) in Florida communities, is to reduce death, injuries, and property losses caused by natural hazards in Pinellas County. The 2025 Plan identifies hazards based on the history of disasters within the county and lists goals, objectives, strategies, and actions for reducing future losses. Implementation of planned, pre-identified, and cost-effective mitigation measures not only helps to reduce losses to lives, property, and the environment but it also streamlines the disaster recovery process. This is a 5-year update of the countywide LMS that was last approved in May of 2020. While the document may refer to specific historical events for context, the plan update focuses on changes to the communities and their vulnerabilities over the last 5 years and provides an update to capabilities, programs, and actions that the participants intend to utilize to reduce exposure or consequences from the identified hazards. Hazard mitigation is most effective when based on an inclusive, comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed before a disaster occurs.

The LMS serves several purposes; including providing an explanation of how Pinellas County and its 24 municipalities identify strategies to implement an effective, comprehensive countywide Local Mitigation Strategy. The local jurisdictions participating in this plan include the Unincorporated County and all its municipalities:

- Pinellas County (Unincorporated)
- Town of Belleair
- City of Belleair Beach
- City of Belleair Bluffs
- Town of Belleair Shore
- City of Clearwater
- City of Dunedin
- City of Gulfport
- City of Indian Rocks Beach
- Town of Indian Shores
- City of Kenneth City

- City of Largo
- City of Madeira Beach
- Town of North Redington Beach
- City of Oldsmar
- City of Pinellas Park
- Town of Redington Beach
- Town of Redington Shores
- City of Safety Harbor
- City of St. Pete Beach
- City of St. Petersburg
- City of Seminole
- City of South Pasadena
- City of Tarpon Springs
- City of Treasure Island

Additionally, special districts that participate in the plan are eligible for funding provided that they comply with procedures of the working group and supply a letter from their organization in lieu of the formal adoption process used by local government participants. The full list of participating entities is documented within Table 2.2 of the plan.

The 2025 Plan is coordinated through appropriate state, local, and regional agencies, as well as non-governmental interest groups. This plan, and its future revisions, will provide guidance in merging the planning efforts of all local governments, the private sector, and non-profit organizations within Pinellas County into one viable, comprehensive, mitigation program.

The scope of the LMS is broad. The plan explains the way in which the communities implement mitigation activities within the county in coordination with local agencies. Additionally, as required by statute, the Risk Assessment portion of the LMS identifies natural hazards, as well as technological and human-caused hazards. The Risk Assessment portion analyzes vulnerability of the County in countywide terms as well as results and capabilities at the municipal level.

The purpose of the 2025 LMS is to:

- Reduce risk to people, property, and the critical infrastructure.
- Increase public awareness and education about the plan and the planning process.
- Maintain grant eligibility for participating jurisdictions.
- Update the plan in accordance with Community Rating System (CRS) requirements.
- Maintain compliance with state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.
- Complete an update of information in the plan to demonstrate progress and reflect current conditions.

Pinellas County is vulnerable to both natural hazards and technological and human-caused hazards, with hurricanes historically inflicting the most catastrophic destruction.

## Planning Process and Maintenance Section

There are 10 primary steps that comprise the LMS planning process. The process defines not only who should be involved, but how the process is going to work, and an understanding of how the process facilitates the production of the final product.

- Step 1: The Planning Organization – The development of a mitigation strategy requires the involvement of representatives from the public, private, and governmental sectors.
- Step 2: Involving the Public – An important component of the mitigation planning process involves public participation.
- Step 3: Coordination – Coordinate activities within the County and to bring back perspectives of their constituency.
- Step 4: Assessing the Hazard – Conduct and maintain a hazard identification and vulnerability assessment.
- Step 5: Assessing the Problem – Quantify the impact of the hazards identified in the previous step on the community.
- Step 6: Goals and Objectives – Revisit goals and objectives and make adjustments as appropriate.
- Step 7: Possible Activities: Mitigation opportunities and Initiatives – Identification of potential mitigation opportunities and initiatives.
- Step 8: An Action Plan – Objectives were identified for each goal to specifically identify action items and are reflected in six categories of mitigation activities.
- Step 9: Adoption of the Strategy – officially adopt the LMS.
- Step 10: Implementation, Evaluation, and Revision – The LMS is intended to be a dynamic document that will be updated regularly.

There are two main working groups responsible for the LMS planning process. The LMS Working Group (WG) consists of representatives of the jurisdictions, private sector, and non-profits as well as any members of the public as all meetings are advertised on the County's website. The Flood Risk and Mitigation Public Information Working Group (FRMPIWG) is a group of public and private stakeholders formed to supplement input into the planning process.

The County's first LMS began its planning process in March of 1998 and took approximately 15 months to complete. The plan was then updated again in 2004, 2009, 2015, and 2020. This is the fifth update of the plan, and the focus of the update was on adding new risk assessments, refining objectives, and refreshing the project list.

The 2025 LMS update began in the spring of 2024 when the County assessed its current plan and assessed it for improvement opportunities. When the plan update began, the LMS WG was presented with results of the assessment for concurrence on a path forward.

During the timeline of the plan update, the County and its jurisdictions included several other groups to supplement input into the planning process. Pinellas is a strong advocate of the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS) and had a few outreach groups in place to support those activities. A countywide Program for Public Information (PPI) is maintained and updated annually to facilitate consistent messaging across communities and provide tools for jurisdictions with limited resources. This is maintained by a group of public and private

stakeholders that is collectively known as the Flood Risk and Mitigation Public Information Working Group (FRMPIWG). The FRMPIWG uses the following mission statement:

- Increase disaster resiliency across the county through the development and dissemination of public information and educational outreach about identified flood risks, minimization of those risks through mitigation and efficacy of obtaining appropriate flood insurance coverage.
- Ensure attainment of flood insurance savings for residents and businesses within the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county through effective participation in the Community Rating System.
- Engage and educate community stakeholders to enhance planning efforts by ensuring diverse representation and to provide stakeholders the opportunity to become more knowledgeable in the subject of mitigation and to expand reach while improving their ability to provide improved customer service.
- Develop strategies, concepts and projects for reducing flooding impacts that can become part of the county's Local Mitigation Strategy plan

The FRMPIWG group (typically over 70 participants with representatives from all municipalities) aims to meet at least three times a year (in person or virtually per availability of participants) and communicates via email messaging between meetings. During the 5-year LMS Update process, the progress of the plan update is communicated to FRMPIWG members for comment. Feedback from the FRMPIWG was provided to the LMS WG to be evaluated and included in the LMS update process and the most current PPI is included as an appendix to this plan update.

After the 2025 LMS Plan Update underwent final revisions, and the plan was completed to the satisfaction of the State Hazard Mitigation Office (SHMO), which reviews the Plan for compliance on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the plan was officially adopted by Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners by adoption of a resolution. The 2025 LMS update was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on Month ##, 2025. The plan will be in effect from May 6, 2025, until May 5, 2030. Each jurisdiction within Pinellas County, has also approved and adopted the Plan within their community as identified in Appendix F. **(Will be updated at adoption in May 2025)**

## Risk Assessment Section

*It should be noted that the 2025 LMS Update was drafted prior to the devastating and historic flooding and wind damages associated with Hurricanes Helene and Milton that occurred September 26, 2024, and October 9, 2024, respectively. Their impacts to the communities of Pinellas County will be part of future updates to the Plan.*

The risk assessment for Pinellas County was intentionally structured to align with the State of Florida Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) and provides the factual basis for developing a mitigation strategy for the county. This section profiles the natural, human-caused, and technological hazards that could possibly affect Pinellas communities. This risk assessment is used not only for the LMS, but also supports the County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Each natural hazard profile includes a discussion of the geographic areas affected, the historical occurrences in the county, an impact analysis, the probability, and

the vulnerability and loss estimation by county critical facilities, and a discussion of overall vulnerability. Alternatively, the human-caused and technological hazards include similar topics of discussion, but not all aspects are able to be quantified. This is because of the limited data available and the imprecise nature of the human-caused and technological hazards.

The risk assessment identifies 22 hazards based on an examination of past disasters, probability of occurrence, possible impacts, and vulnerability. The hazards include:

### **Natural Hazards**

- Flood
- Tropical cyclones
- Severe Storms
- Wildfire
- Erosion
- Drought
- Extreme Heat
- Geological
- Winter Storm
- Seismic
- Tsunami
- Red Tide

### **Technological Hazards**

- Transportation Incident
- Cyber Incident
- Hazardous Materials Incident
- Radiological Incident
- Terrorism
- Agricultural Disruption
- Biological Incident
- Mass Migration Incident
- Civil Disturbance Incident

## **Mitigation Strategy Section**

The LMS details goals and objectives for achieving loss reduction in Pinellas County. The six goals are listed below.

1. Become a More Disaster Resilient Community.
2. Minimize Coastal Flooding losses in the CHHA, Coastal Storm Area and Hurricane Vulnerability Zone.
3. Minimize Riverine or Inland Flooding Losses in the 25, 50, and 100-year Flood Zone.
4. Minimize Storm Wind Losses in the County.
5. Minimize Losses from Hazardous Materials Incidents.
6. Minimize Vulnerability to Technological Hazards.

Additional information on the LMS goals and objectives can be found in the mitigation strategy section of the document.

Pinellas County has policies, programs, and capabilities designed to help mitigate the impacts of hazard events. Each community has its own policies, programs, and capabilities that are catalogued within this section of the plan to identify current capacity to implement mitigation functions. These depend on factors such as the size of the geographic area, its population, or the amount of funding available through local resources. Regardless of size or wealth, each community has a unique core set of policies, programs, and capabilities at its disposal related to hazard reduction and mitigation including building codes, land use plans, and regulations, which are discussed in this section. This section also covers items related to participation in the NFIP and the CRS program which incentivizes communities that go beyond minimum floodplain management standards to better protect life and property.

During the 5-year period since the last plan, five of the Pinellas jurisdictions have improved their score such that additional flood insurance premium discounts are available to policyholders. Unincorporated County became a Class 2 community resulting in 40% flood insurance premium reductions for its policyholders. This is the only Class 2 (and highest scoring) community within Florida and one of only eleven communities nationwide to reach this achievement.

## **Potential Funding Sources Section**

The county uses a variety of programs and funds to achieve its mitigation goals, including federal grant programs such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program, Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA), and the state grant Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program (HLMP). Various grants and funding programs are discussed throughout this section.

## **Appendices**

Many documents are included with the LMS as appendices. These appendices are referenced throughout the plan and support the plan.

- Appendix A: Planning Process Documentation
- Appendix B: Floodplain Management
- Appendix C: CRS 610
- Appendix D: Mitigation Initiatives
- Appendix E: FL Review Tool
- Appendix F: Plan Adoption
- Appendix G: Plan Maintenance
- Appendix H: Program for Public Information
- Appendix I: Repetitive Loss Area Analysis
- Appendix J: LMS Procedures
- Appendix K: Vulnerability Assessment

## **Please Note:**

If you would like a copy of the full Local Mitigation Strategy Plan draft document, please call Planning at (727) 464-8200 or you can contact them via the County Website using <https://pinellas.gov/public-records/>

Please note, the draft document has been reviewed by the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM). The Plan has been revised based on all comments from the State. FDEM has provided a final "Approved Pending Adoption" letter for Pinellas County's 2025 LMS Plan, stating that LMS Plan is in compliance with Federal Hazard Mitigation Planning standards contained in 44 CFR 201.6(b)-(d).