

# Section I: Introduction

This section answers a number of basic questions regarding the purpose of the Wasco Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan: why the plan was developed, how the plan was developed, and how the plan is organized.

## What is Hazard Mitigation?

Natural hazard mitigation involves permanently reducing or alleviating the losses of life, property, and injuries resulting from natural hazards through long and short-term strategies. Mitigation is an inclusive effort on behalf of federal, state and local governments; individuals, private businesses, industries and community organizations.

Engaging in mitigation activities provides jurisdictions with a number of benefits including reduced loss of life, property, essential services, critical facilities and economic hardship; reduced short-term and long-term recovery and reconstruction costs, increased cooperation and communication within the community through the planning process; and increased potential for state and federal funding for recovery and reconstruction projects.

## Why Develop a Mitigation Plan?

Wasco County developed this Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan in an effort to reduce future loss of life and property resulting from natural disasters. A natural disaster occurs when a natural hazard impacts people or property and creates adverse conditions within a community.

This plan focuses on the primary natural hazards that could affect Wasco County, Oregon, which include: drought, earthquake, flood, landslide, volcano, wildfire, and severe storm (windstorm and winter-storm).

The Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan is intended to assist Wasco County in reducing its risk from natural hazards by identifying resources, information, and strategies for risk reduction.

The plan is non-regulatory in nature, meaning that it does not set forth any new policy. It does, however, provide:

- a foundation for coordination and collaboration among agencies and the public in the County;
- identification and prioritization of future mitigation activities; and
- assistance in meeting federal planning requirements and qualifying for assistance programs.

The mitigation plan aims to complement existing plans and procedures rather than create an entirely new framework. To ensure that the plan is incorporated smoothly into County

processes, the NHMP Steering Committee, including a County Court member, shall reconvene quarterly to work on its implementation.

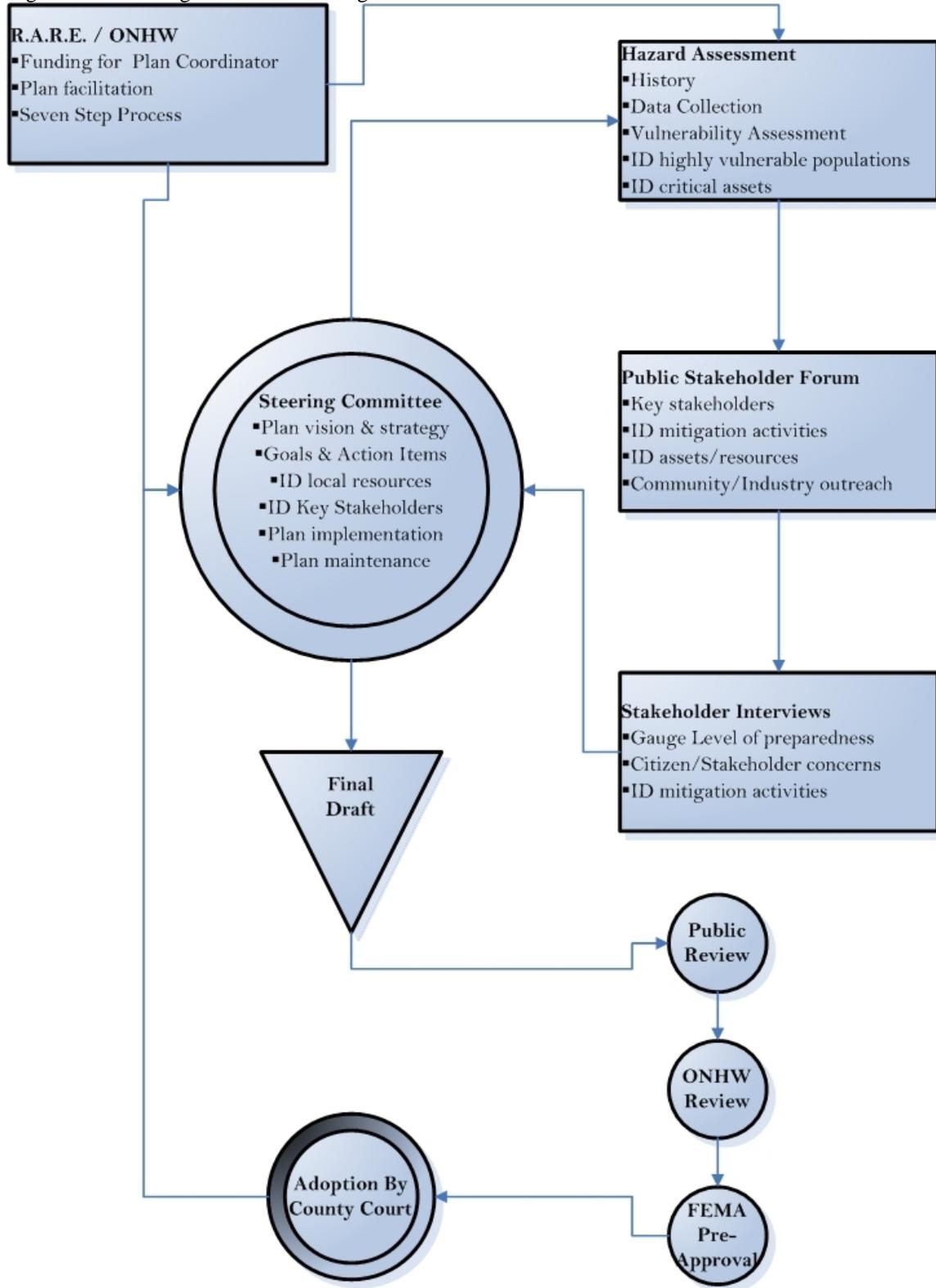
## Who Will Benefit From This Mitigation Plan?

All unincorporated areas within the County, including all rural unincorporated communities, and special districts have an opportunity to benefit from The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The City of The Dalles, a participant in the county planning process, also benefits from the Plan in meeting the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) requirements for multi-jurisdictional participation in development of its own mitigation plan.

## How was the Plan Developed?

The planning process used to create Wasco County's Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan was developed using a planning process created by the Community Service Center's Oregon Natural Hazard Workgroup (ONHW) at the University of Oregon.<sup>1</sup> Human resources were staffed by the RARE program of the Community Service Center at the University of Oregon. The RARE participant served as full-time project coordinator for the county natural hazards mitigation plan. The planning process was designed to: (1) result in a plan that is DM2K compliant; (2) coordinate with the State's plan and activities of the Partners for Disaster Resistance & Resilience; and (3) build a network of jurisdictions and organizations that can play an active role in plan implementation. The following is a summary of major activities included in the ONHW Seven Step planning process. Main components of the planning process are diagramed in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1 Planning Process Flow Diagram



## ONHW Seven Step Process

This plan was developed using a Seven Step Process under the direction on the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (ONHW) in partnership with Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE), the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), and the Mid-Columbia Gorge Region (Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco, and Wheeler) counties. Funding for the project was made possible through a FEMA awarded Mid-Columbia Gorge Region grant in support of hazard mitigation plan development.

The ONHW Seven Step Process outlined below:

- **Step 1: Organizing to Prepare the Plan:**

Coordination for this project was provided by University of Oregon RARE participant under the supervision of Wasco County Planning & Development. Training, materials, and mitigation plan templates provided by the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup. A steering committee was formed to guide the NHMP Coordinator through the process of developing the plan.

- **Step 2: Involving the Community**

This step consisted of community forums, interviews, and surveys intended to involve the public in the plan development process.

The NHMP Coordinator conducted a NHMP Community Stakeholder Participant Forum to raise awareness about natural hazard events and solicit input from community. Invitations were sent out to key stakeholders and the community at large. Additionally, one-on-one stakeholder interviews were conducted to gain local community knowledge of hazard events and how to best address the community's risk.

As part of the regional PDM grant, ONHW implemented a region wide household preparedness survey. The survey gauged household knowledge of mitigation tools and techniques and assessed household disaster preparedness. The survey results improve public/private coordination of mitigation and preparedness for natural hazards by obtaining more accurate information on household understanding and needs. The results of the survey are documented in the plan's Appendix C: Regional Household Survey.

ONHW, with commitment from the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) provided individuals in the Region with access to, and use of, the IBHS interactive, web-based Open for Business property protection and disaster recovery planning tool. The purpose of the planning tool is to: 1. create understanding of the importance of disaster planning; 2. teach local businesses how to navigate the interactive, web-based Open for Business property protection and disaster recovery planning tool; 3. Assist small businesses in developing their own plans during the training; and 4. teach businesses how to communicate the importance of developing and utilizing plans for property protection and recovery from business interruption. A summary of the outcomes is available in Appendix A: Public Process.

- **Step 3: Describing the Community**  
 The County developed a community profile in an effort to gain a better understanding of the community assets that might be at risk from natural hazards. The Community Profile section of this plan was created using information from the OR State Profile, County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Economic Development Plan, and US Census.
- **Step 4: Identifying and Characterizing the Hazards Impacting the Community**  
 Risk assessment performed by project coordinator, Steering Committee, and the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) with comparative data provided by local sources, Technical Resource Guide, and Oregon’s NHMP Risk Assessment and Regional Profile.
- **Step 5: Developing Plan Goals**  
 Community input during stakeholder interviews was a critical aspect of goal development. Mitigation plan goals and goal statements were drafted by NHMP Coordinator using assistance from ONHW. Draft goals were brought before the Wasco County Steering Committee for review and approval. Goals were revised with Steering Committee input before adoption by committee
- **Step 6: Developing Solutions**  
 Action Items were identified by Steering Committee in conjunction with stakeholder interviews and participant feedback from Stakeholder Forum.
- **Step 7: Setting the Plan in Motion**  
 Wasco County Planning & Development shall serve as convener of this plan. The NHMP Steering Committee which guided the development of this plan shall also serve as the coordinating body to ensure implementation the mitigation plan.

### Steering Committee

The Wasco County Steering Committee was comprised of individuals best suited to guide the county through the planning process and ensure that the mitigation plan is fully implemented once adopted.

Its mission is to ensure proper development and implementation of the county natural hazards mitigation plan by:

- setting goals;
- establishing sub committee work groups to address specific needs;
- ensuring public, private and federal participation;
- distributing and presenting the plan;
- facilitating public discussion/involvement;
- developing implementation activities; and
- coordinating plan maintenance and implementation strategies.

The Wasco County Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from eight County area organizations:

Table 1.1 Steering Committee Members

Name	Title	Organization
Dan Boldt	Director	Wasco County Public Works
Mike Davidson	Emergency Manager	Wasco County Emergency Management
Todd Cornett	Director	Wasco County Planning & Development
Jennifer Clark	Project Coordinator	Wasco County SWCD
Richard Gassman	Senior Planner	City of The Dalles
Sherry Holliday	County Commissioner	Wasco County Court
Stu Nagle	Fire Marshall	Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue
Hannah Settje	District Manager	Red Cross

Three Steering Committee sessions were held over the course of the 2006 calendar year:

- 1) Introduction & Overview: 17 January 2006
- 2) Hazard Risk Assessment: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006
- 3) Goals & Action Items: 13 July 2006

Through raising awareness and citizen involvement, the Committee’s end goal is to make hazard mitigation a part of the community’s routine decision-making process.

## How is the Plan Organized?

Each section of the mitigation plan provides specific information and resources to assist readers in understanding the hazard-specific issues facing Wasco County citizens, businesses, and the environment. Combined, the sections work together to create a mitigation plan that furthers the community’s mission “...to protect life, property and the environment through coordination and cooperation among public and private partners, which will reduce risk and loss, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Wasco County . This plan structure enables stakeholders to use the section(s) of interest to them.

### Section 1: Introduction

The Introduction briefly describes the County’s mitigation planning efforts and the methodology used to develop the plan. It also includes information about the steering committee’s role, and how stakeholders provided input.

### Section 2: Community Profile

The Community Profile briefly describes the County in terms of demographic, economic, and development trends as well as geography and environment, housing and transportation. The Community Profile also documents existing plans, policies, and programs, as well as completed mitigation activities.

### Section 3: Risk Assessment Summary

This section describes the risk assessment process and summarizes the best available local hazard data. It is organized according to the federal requirements for a risk assessment: hazard identification; profiling hazard events; and vulnerability assessment/inventorying assets.

## Section 4: Mitigation Plan Goals and Action Items

This describes the plan components which guide implementation of the identified mitigation strategies. This section also documents the plan vision, mission, goals, objectives, and actions.

## Section 5: Plan Maintenance

This section provides information on the implementation and maintenance of the plan. It describes the process for prioritizing projects, and includes a suggested list of tasks for updating the plan to be completed at the annual and 5-Year review meetings.

## Hazard Specific Annexes

The purpose of the hazard specific annexes is to provide additional resources and documentation of the hazard. The hazard annex consists of the regional risk assessments from the State Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan as well as the hazard chapters from the Technical Resource Guide. The State regional risk assessments include information on hazard characteristics, hazard history, probability, and vulnerability. The Technical Resource Guide chapters provide hazard specific information on a statewide basis for the following topics: hazard history, hazard type and characteristics, hazard identification, hazard related legal issues, mitigation examples and best practices, and resources. Where extensive local data is available beyond the scope of information provided in Section 3, the additional local data is located in the annex. The hazard specific annexes included with this plan are the following:

- Earthquake;
- Flood;
- Landslide/Debris Flow;
- Volcanic Event;
- Wildfire;
- Drought;
- and Severe Storm (Windstorm and Winter Storm)

In addition to the State Risk Assessment and Technical Resource Guide information, the Earthquake Annex includes a seismic risk assessment report provided by DOGAMI.

## Resource Appendices

The resource appendices are designed to provide users of the Wasco County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan with additional information to assist them in understanding the contents of the mitigation plan, and provide them with potential resources to assist with plan implementation.

#### A: Public Process

This appendix outlines the public involvement process in great detail. It serves (1) to document how the public was involved in the development of this plan, and (2) as a starting point for future public outreach methods.

#### B: Resource Directory

This appendix provides a one-stop listing for hazard related resources to assist the County in planning and preparation for hazard events.

#### C: Regional Household Preparedness Survey

This appendix includes the survey instrument and results from the household preparedness survey implemented by ONHW throughout the region. The survey aims to gauge household knowledge of mitigation tools and techniques to assist in reducing the risk and loss from natural hazards, as well as assessing household disaster preparedness.

#### D: Economic Analysis of Natural Hazard Mitigation Projects

This appendix describes the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) requirements for benefit cost analysis in natural hazards mitigation, as well as various approaches for conducting economic analysis of proposed mitigation activities.

#### E: Existing Plans & Programs

This appendix summarizes the existing plans, policies and programs in Wasco County. The first section covers plans and policies on the books for the County and the second section covers social service providers.

#### F: Mitigation Tools

This appendix summarizes the mitigation tools provided by the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (ONHW) website:

<http://www.oregonshowcase.org/index.cfm?mode=resources>

#### G: List of Acronyms

This appendix provides a list of acronyms for county, regional, state and federal agencies and organization that may be referred to within the Wasco County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.

---

<sup>i</sup> More information on the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup can be found at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~onhw>