

# CITY OF RUSSIAN MISSION HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN (HMP)

May 2013

Newsletter 2

*This newsletter discusses the preparation of the City of Russian Mission Hazard Mitigation Plan. It has been prepared to inform interested agencies, stakeholders, and the public about the project and to solicit comments. This newsletter can also be viewed on the State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Website at <http://www.ready.alaska.gov/plans/localhazmitplans.htm>.*

## HMP Development

The City of Russian Mission was one of 15 communities selected by the State of Alaska, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) for a Hazard Mitigation Planning (HMP) development project. The plan identifies natural hazards that affect the community including earthquake, erosion, flood, ground failure, severe weather, and tundra/wildland fire. The HMP also identifies the people and facilities potentially at risk and potential actions to mitigate community hazards. The public participation and planning process is documented as part of the project.

## What is Hazard Mitigation?

Across the United States, natural disasters have increasingly caused injury, death, property damage, and business and government service interruptions. The toll on individuals, families, and businesses can be very high. The time, money, and emotional effort required to respond to and recover from these disasters take public resources and attention away from other important programs and problems.

People and property throughout Alaska are at risk from a variety of hazards that have the potential for causing human injury, property damage, or environmental harm.

The purpose of hazard mitigation is to implement projects that reduce the risk severity of hazards on people and property. Mitigation programs may include short-term and long-term activities to reduce hazard impacts or exposure to hazards. Mitigation could include education, construction or planning projects. Hazard mitigation activity examples include relocating buildings, developing or strengthening building codes, and educating residents and building owners.

## Why Do We Need A Hazard Mitigation Plan?

A community is only eligible to receive grant money for mitigation programs by preparing and adopting a hazard mitigation plan. Communities must have an approved mitigation plan to receive grant funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for eligible mitigation projects.

## The Planning Process

There are very specific federal requirements that must be met when preparing a HMP. These requirements are commonly referred to as the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, or DMA2000 criteria. Information about the criteria may be found on the Internet at: <http://www.fema.gov/mitigation-planning-laws-regulations-guidance>.

The DMA2000 requires the plan to document the following topics:

- Planning process
- Community Involvement and HMP review
- Hazard identification
- Risk assessment
- Mitigation Goals
- Mitigation programs, actions, and projects
- A resolution from the community adopting the plan

FEMA has prepared Planning Guidance which are available at:

<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?fromSearch=fromsearch&id=4859>, and "How to Guides" that explain in detail how each of the DMA2000 requirements are met. These guides are available at <http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources>. The Russian Mission Hazard Mitigation Plan will follow those guidelines.

The planning process kicked-off in June, 2012 by establishing a local planning committee and holding an introduction teleconference. The planning committee examined the full spectrum of hazards listed in the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and identified six hazards the HMP would address.

After the first public meeting, City staff and URS began identifying critical facilities, compiling the hazard profiles, assessing capabilities, and conducting the risk assessment for the identified hazards. Critical facilities are facilities that are critical to the recovery of a community in the event of a disaster. After collection of this information, URS helped to determine which critical facilities and estimated populations are vulnerable to the identified hazards in Russian Mission.

A mitigation strategy was the next component of the plan to be developed. Understanding the community's local capabilities and using information gathered from the public

and the local planning committee and the expertise of the consultants and agency staff, a mitigation strategy was developed. The mitigation strategy is based on an evaluation of the hazards, and the assets at risk from those hazards. Mitigation goals and a list of potential actions/projects were developed as the foundation of the mitigation strategy.

Mitigation goals are defined as general guidelines that explain what a community wants to achieve in terms of hazard and loss prevention. Goals are positively stated future situations that are typically long-range, policy-oriented statements representing community-wide visions. Mitigation actions and projects are undertaken in order to achieve your stated objectives. On April 20, 2013, the local planning committee identified projects and/or actions for each hazard that focus on six categories: prevention, property protection, public education and awareness, natural resource protection, emergency services, and structural projects. A representative sample of the mitigation actions identified as a priority by the planning team are listed below, and explained in more detail in the plan.

The selected projects and/or actions will potentially be implemented over the next five years as funding becomes

available. A maintenance plan was also been developed for the hazard mitigation plan. It outlines how the community will monitor progress on achieving the projects and actions that will help meet the stated goals and objectives, as well as an outline for continued public involvement.

The draft plan is available in the City Office for public review and comment. Comments should be made via email, fax, or phone to Scott Simmons (listed below) and be received no later than May 10, 2013. The plan will be provided to DHS&EM and FEMA for their preliminary approval and returned to Russian Mission’s City Council for formal adoption.

### The Planning Committee

The plan was developed with the assistance from the community’s planning committee consisting of a cross section from the community. Planning Team members who helped with developing the plan City Administrator Agnes Housler with assistance from Mayor William Pitka, City Clerk Anastasia Larson, and the City Council, and URS Corporation.

Sample of the City of Russian Mission’s Mitigation Actions. Review the draft HMP for a complete list.		
Identify and pursue funding opportunities to implement mitigation actions.	Acquire emergency warning sirens to communicate critical emergency warnings and alerts.	Develop prioritized list of mitigation actions for threatened critical facilities and other buildings or infrastructure.
Disseminate FEMA pamphlets to educate and encourage homeowners concerning structural and non-structural retrofit benefits.	Develop, incorporate, and enforce building ordinances commensurate with building codes to reflect survivability from flood, fire, wind, seismic, and other hazards to ensure occupant safety.	Increase power line wire size and incorporate quick disconnects (break-away devices) to reduce ice load and windstorm power-line failure during severe wind or winter ice storm events.
Relocate and acquire (buy-out and demolish) structures to remove from hazard prone area (erosion, flood, ground failure, etc.) Property deeds “must be” restricted for open space uses for perpetuity to keep people from rebuilding in known hazard areas.	Purchase and install generators with main power distribution disconnect switches for identified and prioritized critical facilities susceptible to short term power disruption. (i.e. first responder, medical facilities, schools, correctional facilities, and water and sewage treatment plants, etc.)	Evaluate infrastructure erosion damages caused by rain and snowmelt run-off. Example damages occur at utility pole bases, cemetery erosion, structure foundation damages, culverts, and sewage lagoon fencing.
Relocate the City boat dock and access road as they are located in a major water run-off area.	Determine and implement most cost beneficial and feasible mitigation actions for locations with repetitive flooding, significant historical damages, or road closures.	Elevate residential, public, or critical facilities at least two feet above the base flood elevation (BFE)
Protect wastewater treatment systems flood protection to prevent erosion damage and sewage lagoons out-wash.	Promote permafrost sensitive construction practices in permafrost areas.	Hold FireWise workshop to educate residents and contractors concerning fire resistant landscaping.

*We encourage you to learn more about the City of Russian Mission’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed and to allow you every opportunity to voice your opinion regarding this important project. If you have any questions, comments, or requests for more information, please contact:*

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