4.3 LOCAL CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

The 44 CFR 201.4(c)(3)(ii) requires the State Mitigation Strategy to include a general description and analysis of the effectiveness of local mitigation policies, programs, and capabilities. The OEMA has completed a general analysis of existing local mitigation plans to determine the effectiveness of locally identified policies, programs and capabilities to maintain and support hazard mitigation planning activities at the local level. This analysis is based upon local evaluations of the effectiveness of the identified programs and their accompanying policies within their communities. The Local Capability Assessment summarizes the assessments for twelve categories of information regarding local capabilities (see Appendix F). Below are explanations of each column and a summation of the provided assessment information.

4.3.1 COUNTIES

Hazard Mitigation Planning is underway in 76 of the 88 counties and in two municipal jurisdictions. Currently, seventeen (17) plans have been certified leaving fifty-nine (59) in the development and review phase. The information in Appendix F has been obtained from the seventeen certified plans. The state conducted a detailed search throughout these plans looking for reference of the local documents listed in Appendix F and accounted for them appropriately. If further explanation of a specific local capability is needed, it can be referenced at the local level. Section 5.2 provides a more thorough discussion of how other local plans will be included in the mitigation plan upon their certification.

4.3.2 REGION

Ohio has been divided into three regions for analysis purposes in this statewide mitigation planning process. Map 1.1.3.3.a illustrates these three regions. For each county and the two additional municipalities with certified plans, Appendix F indicates which region each jurisdiction falls under. Region 1 consists predominantly of the northeast part of the state, which is rural, agriculture in nature and generally flat topographically. The watersheds in Region 1 generally flow toward Lake Erie.

Region 2 consists mostly of Ohio’s urbanized areas. It runs diagonally through the state from the southwest to northeast corner including the cities of Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, Mansfield, Akron, and Cleveland. The more northerly watersheds in Region 2 flow toward Lake Erie with the southerly watersheds flowing toward the Ohio River. Topographically, Region 2 is a transition zone from the rural, agriculture and flatness of Region 1 to the more hilly areas of Region 3.

Region 3 covers the southeastern portion of the state and incorporates the section of the Appalachian Region in Ohio. This is a dominantly hilly area with watersheds flowing toward the Ohio River.

4.3.3 CERTIFIED PLAN

Ohio is in the process of reviewing each of the Local Mitigation Plans being developed in the remaining 59 counties. Section 4.3.1 indicates that seventeen (17) All Hazard Mitigation Plans have been certified by the OEMA. OEMA Certification
guarantees a jurisdiction’s eligibility for mitigation and public assistance funding over the next five years. After the OEMA certifies a plan, they are forwarded to the FEMA Region V office for review. If Region V expresses any concerns, those issues will be addressed by the local jurisdiction in the first five-year revision of the plan.

As seen in Appendix F and on Map 4.3.2.a there are 12 counties where no local mitigation planning is underway. It is the state’s goal to continue recruitment of the 12 remaining counties not yet participating in the planning process and incorporate their local capabilities assessment in the next revision of this document. A method for outreach and education on the need for the local plan is established in Section 5.2.

4.3.4 GIS CAPABILITY

GIS is a computer software product, which allows graphic representations of tabular data. In the PC environment, the information can easily be manipulated to include specific data of interest and present it in a concise format useful for analysis and decision-making. GIS is a growing and highly effective tool for analyzing the intersection between hazards and the developed environment. GIS is particularly effective in hazard vulnerability analysis while cross-referenced with other digital databases such as zoning, land use, water resources, property boundaries and tax data. GIS provides visual representations that not only report graphics, but also can be used for public information purposes. Local Communities have utilized the information provided from GIS data as part of the planning process to analyze their susceptibility to hazards. As shown in Appendix F, 62 of the 90 jurisdictions represented in the table have some level of GIS capabilities.

4.3.4.1 GIS via WEB

In addition to the use of GIS tools in hazard mitigation planning, some jurisdictions are now beginning to make this tool available and interactive on their County Auditor’s website. Web access of GIS information serves as quick and effective method of disseminating information to the public. The GIS information, which is provided as an image, can easily be queried by the software to provide the detailed information on hazards and their impact on the environment. This takes accessibility and efficiency to a whole new level for technicians, government agencies and the general public. Appendix F indicates that 26 of the jurisdictions listed are now using a web-based GIS process in some capacity. The state has utilized these online systems and concludes they are presented in a user-friendly format. This is further evidence that GIS technology and web-based processes are well underway in Ohio and are greatly expanding the reach of hazard mitigation planning information.

4.3.5 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT/DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This category of assessment refers to the preparation of a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) by one or more of the jurisdictions within a Local Mitigation Plan. A county, municipality, or individual department within those governments can develop a CIP on an annual or biannual basis. Capital improvement plans provides detailed actions the jurisdiction intends to take to enhance and enlarge the built environment.
The plans provide clear direction to the community and allow decision makers to consider mitigation concerns. The information that is provided in each CIP is specific to the communities. Local governments and departments could identify action items in their Mitigation Plans and help implement the goals and objectives that are consistent with capital improvement/development goals. Appendix F indicates that two of the 17 certified plans incorporate a CIP Plan within their jurisdictions.

4.3.6 FLOOD PLAN

Between 1964 and 2004, flooding has caused or contributed to 27 of 36 Federal Disaster declarations in Ohio. As flooding is one of Ohio’s major hazard threats, it is key that preparations be made to anticipate where flooding is likely to occur and mitigate against it. Flood plans provide a clear blueprint of actions, which will reduce or eliminate flood exposure to the built environment. Actions may include floodplain regulations, structure acquisition/elevation/retrofitting or stream restoration. This assessment category determined whether the local mitigation plans included provisions for a specific plan dealing with flood prevention, control or mitigation.

As Appendix F displays, thirteen counties currently have a flood plans in place. Thirteen is a small number out of 88 total counties in the state. It is possible that the local plans were not consistent in referencing flood plans in place or flood programs underway. For example, two counties (Athens and Washington) with flood plans in place fail to reference it in their Mitigation Plan.

Athens County has adopted a Flood Damage Prevention Resolution that governs activity in designated flood prone areas. The regulations are intended to reduce loss of human life and property damage resulting from flooding, avoid actions that can increase flood risks, and preserve the natural and cultural values of floodplains. Similar to Athens, Washington County also has a Flood Hazard Reduction Program in place with standards and procedures to protect flood prone areas. The state intends to emphasize to the counties that this type of local capability should be documented and receive recognition.

Additionally, countywide plans generally do not take into consideration whether municipal governments are participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. This too should be recognized as a measure of local capability regarding flooding. Communities that adopt and enforce a Floodplain Management Ordinance to reduce future flood risks to new construction in Special Flood Hazard Areas, the Federal Government will make flood insurance available within the community as a financial protection measure against flood losses. In Ohio, 722 (91.5%) of the state’s 789 municipalities currently participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

4.3.7 ZONING

Zoning is a tool used by jurisdictions to coordinate development. Simply stated, zoning is a locally enacted law that regulates and controls the development and land use of private property. It is an effective tool in hazard mitigation by preventing development in inappropriate places (e.g., flood plains, steep ravines, lands with underground caves, etc…) or by regulating the use of land to protect flood prone areas. Zoning has actively been utilized to regulate land use in Ohio. Cities and
villages have the authority to administer zoning in Ohio. County commissioners administer zoning in unincorporated areas outside cities and villages. The administrators have primarily used the zoning to control development in floodplains and on unstable soils to avoid a number of potentially dangerous conditions. Appendix F shows that thirteen of the counties who are conducting hazard mitigation planning in Ohio indicated some type of zoning powers or plans in place.

4.3.8 LAND USE PLAN
Land Use Plans, like zoning, can be an effective tool in mitigation planning. The land use plan lays out land development goals and priorities. The plan details how specific parcels of property will be used, allowing safe and coordinated development. Land use plans take into consideration the hazards associated with any give area in a jurisdiction. Some Ohioans consider land use planning an encroachment on their personal property, but the process allows jurisdictions to identify site-specific hazards and avoid placing people or property in harms way. It includes a land use map that specifies the future uses of land in a community, hence, provides the opportunity to protect, avoid, or mitigate potential hazard areas. Zoning is the tool by which local governments can implement their land use plans. Both zoning and land use plans are more effective when they are developed together and are closely coordinated and administered. Appendix F identifies five counties that have indicated they were employing a land use plan. It should be noted that the majority of development in Ohio occurs in incorporated cities and villages. Land use plans are more predominant in cities and villages and thus they have a greater opportunity to use this tool in hazard mitigation.

4.3.9 WILDFIRE RESPONSE PLANS
While there have been no federally declared Wildfire disasters in Ohio, they do occur. The development of wildfire plan, as a minimum, involves consideration of the sizes/types of vegetation, topography, prevailing winds, water sources, seasonal variations and firefighting equipment locations. The ODNR Division of Forestry administers a national program which not only includes fire response planning but also a variety of land use and vegetation control measures to reduce exposure called Firewise. The program takes the community through a comprehensive planning process intended to educate residents and mitigate the hazard. Two county hazard mitigation plans (Lucas and Vinton) have incorporated treatment of wildfires into their plans, as indicated in Appendix F.

4.3.10 DAM FAILURE RESPONSE PLAN
Dam failures are important hazards to be dealt with in mitigation planning because their failures can be catastrophic in themselves, but additionally, dam failures can have a significant impact on flooding. Dam response plans are crucial for the safety of lives and property. The plan includes specific information regarding the construction and reservoir capacity. The most important portion of the plan is an inundation map that depicts where the water will go and how deep it will be. Together the document and map provide a blueprint for first responders to use in the
event of a failure. Appendix F indicates that one county has included responding to dam failures in their countywide hazard mitigation plans.

4.3.11 COASTAL EROSION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Coastal Erosion Management Plans are being recognized as a critical hazard mitigation tool in coastal areas such as along the shore of Lake Erie. The plan provides a clear understanding of what is at risk and the actions property owners can take to minimize the hazard. The National Flood Insurance Program does not include and has not mapped flood areas along coastlines, but it has been estimated that 25 percent of homes and other structures within 500 feet of the U.S. coastline and the shorelines of the Great Lakes will fall victim to the effects of erosion within the next 60 years. It is imperative that local authorities begin considering hazard mitigation along coastlines. A proactive plan allows the property owners and jurisdictions to coordinate efforts, which will limit the amount of property lost from coastal erosion. In Ohio, according to Appendix F, one county (Lucas) has included a coastal erosion management plan in their all hazard mitigation plan. So far, two of the eight coastal counties in Ohio have certified plans.

4.3.12 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Stormwater management problems are generally regional in nature and impacts to stormwater management systems often go across typical community boundaries. A Stormwater Management Plan is designed to unify the stormwater management framework throughout a county and to establish a set of minimum standards that will apply to all new development throughout the county. The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is an excellent example. Construction plans for new stormwater collectors include several large, long-term projects, which will significantly improve the problems throughout Cuyahoga County. The Stormwater plans will take into consideration anticipated development runoff and existing problems to develop a blueprint for long-term solutions. Typically, stormwater management plans set out how to regulate the discharge of stormwater from development activities. The plans mitigate flood hazards by anticipating the flooding hazards and offset damages when floods occur. These include requirements for detention/retention, standards for sediment and erosion control plans, and mechanisms for protecting floodplains and wetlands that are not regulated by the USACE.

4.3.13 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan outlines goals, objectives, strategies, and implementation actions for a wide variety of community development topics and issues. There are references within the comprehensive plan to other planning tools, which cover the topic in detail and can be utilized by local jurisdictions to organize goals and actions for their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. Among these are land use, transportation, housing, economic development, and natural resource protection. A comprehensive plan often includes a land use plan, which provides an opportunity to cross-reference comprehensive community goals and objectives with hazard mitigation goals and objectives. It is a way to further protect or avoid potential hazard areas from development. Appendix F shows that seven counties utilized the
comprehensive plan as a local capability tool for implementation of hazard mitigation objectives.
Multi-Jurisdictional Mitigation Planning Projects

Legend
- **State Certified**
- **In Progress**
- **Not conducting mitigation planning**

Produced by Ohio EMA

Disclaimer: The information presented on this map has been compiled through various sources, the Ohio EMA does not guarantee its accuracy.

Source: OEMA