

# Wetlands, Wildlife Habitat, and Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

## Promoting Collaboration to Restore Wetlands and Floodplains and Mitigate Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

### A 4-Part Webinar Series for Busy Professionals<sup>1</sup>

#### Resource Brief – Hazard Mitigation Planning

State and local governments are responsible for identifying the risks to life and property from disasters, such as floods and coastal storms, and for developing strategies to address the risks posed by natural hazards. The goal of hazard mitigation is to break the cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. For this call, emergency managers will describe the state hazard mitigation plan and a local hazard mitigation plan and the planning process. The West Wisconsin Land Trust will describe how they collaborated with the City of Superior to assist in the protection of critical conservation lands in areas identified as priorities in the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- ***State Hazard Mitigation Planning - Wisconsin Emergency Management***

The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 was signed into law on October 30, 2000. The law did two important things: 1) created the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program; and 2) required that state and local governments develop hazard mitigation plans in order to be eligible for federal mitigation funds. The intent of the law was to reduce disaster losses by identifying feasible and cost-effective mitigation measures before disasters occur. Good mitigation planning streamlines and expedites the recovery process when natural disasters occur. Both the State of Wisconsin Hazard Mitigation Plan as well as local hazard mitigation plans identify major natural hazards and their risks and outline a strategy for reducing future damage and addressing vulnerabilities. The State plan focuses state agency resources to help protect the health, safety, property, environment, and economy of Wisconsin from the effects of natural hazards. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Programs provide funding for hazard mitigation planning as well as for cost-effective structural and non-structural hazard mitigation activities, flood mitigation activities, and activities that reduce flood damage to properties insured under the National Flood Insurance Program. Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding is only available after a federal disaster declaration. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM), Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA), Repetitive Flood Claims (RFC) and the Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) programs are available nationwide on an annual basis. For more information on eligibility and program criteria visit <http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov> and click on "Mitigation."

- ***Local Hazard Mitigation Planning - Dane County Emergency Management***

Dane County has been affected by flooding on numerous occasions in the past - causing millions of dollars of damages and impacting all sectors of life. There is urgency to address these issues, as the frequency and magnitude of flooding events and resulting damage appears to be increasing. The causes and consequences of flooding differ widely across the County and there are many contributing factors;

---

<sup>1</sup> See [www.eli.org/pdf/wetlandsguidebook.pdf](http://www.eli.org/pdf/wetlandsguidebook.pdf) for more information on this webinar series.

changing land use patterns, development in high-risk areas, stormwater management practices, and complex hydrologic processes all play a part. The intent of Dane County's Flood Mitigation Plan is to break these matters down in order to better understand the interplay between them. The Plan, however, is not intended as only a descriptive exercise. Rather, it aims to use this understanding to formulate actions that can help to reduce the impact of future floods.

Three basic principles underpin the goals and policies of the Plan: 1) Water should be considered as a valuable resource rather than a hazard and the County should promote good stewardship of water resources in planning for the future; 2) The action of one property owner or community should not increase the flood risk of other property owners or communities unless the impact is mitigated through community or watershed planning or other actions; and 3) Climate change is leading to increased seasonal variability – including more intense rainfall and drought conditions, the implications of this increasing variability must be considered in water management practices. Finally, the plan recognizes the interconnected nature of water resources and the shortcomings of a plan that extracts a single element (flooding) from larger water management issues. Management of water resources is entwined in social and economic processes and values that are well beyond the scope of the Plan.

The Flood Mitigation Plan was developed through the involvement of Dane County citizens, local units of government, stakeholder groups, the Lakes and Watershed Commission, and various County departments. The County's Flood Mitigation Planning Committee, led by the Department of Emergency Management, guided the planning process, collected and evaluated data, organized public outreach efforts, provided specialized knowledge, developed recommendations, and drafted the Plan.

- ***Leveraging Hazard Mitigation Plans for Conservation Acquisitions***– *West Wisconsin Land Trust*

The City of Superior's 2004 Hazard Mitigation Plan outlined strategies to ensure successful response to hazards that face the city. To meet hazard mitigation goals, the Plan supported the protection of the lands around Bluff Creek, which delivers approximately 18 square miles of Watershed to Lake Superior via Allouez Bay and the St Louis River. In 2005, the Ruppert Family approached West Wisconsin Land Trust (WWLT) to request help in permanently protecting their mostly wild property along Bluff Creek in Douglas County. The land is home to numerous species of plants and animals, as well as a migratory resting place for birds and spawning grounds for fish. The Ruppert Family, WWLT, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Stewardship Program developed a grant application for a fee simple purchase of the land to transfer ownership to WWLT. The following year, Douglas County sold a 5-acre adjoining parcel to WWLT for \$1000.00. Currently, the West Wisconsin Land Trust owns the complete property and continues to pay property tax. The land is open for public use including hunting, recreational, and educational purposes. The land is monitored annually and the streams are monitored as well. Additionally, Douglas County received funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to restore a portion of the riparian area on the Bluff Creek that had been lost to invasive plants and past agricultural practices.