



Gloucester County Hazard Mitigation Programs

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Gloucester County, Virginia

Gloucester, VA -Gloucester County and its residents are beginning to see the benefits of Hazard Mitigation. Because of its proximity to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, Gloucester County, particularly its Guinea community, is subjected to periodic flooding from coastal storms. Flooding is exacerbated in the coastal areas because of the numerous wetlands, streams, and creeks in the County.



With three flood events over four years (Hurricane Isabel, Tropical Storm Gaston, and a series of storms in the fall of 2006), the County realized the need to do something different to protect its citizens and their property. Although many families had obtained a Standard Flood Insurance Policy through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), most of the homes in the affected areas were located just inches above the ground. The limited elevation of the structures led to severe damage to hundreds of home in the community during these storms.

Shortly after Hurricane Isabel came through the County in September 2003, the County applied for its first grant through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). In the fall of 2004, Gloucester County hired the planning firm of K.W. Poore and Associates, Inc. to assist with applying for and managing its storm recovery efforts. The purpose of the application was to help purchase destroyed homes to reduce future losses or to help elevate the homes where the owners wished to rebuild in the community. With the help of K.W. Poore and Associates, Inc. the County received its first Hazard Mitigation Grant in the spring of 2005.

In Phase one of the Isabel Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP-1491) 15 properties were purchased and demolished and six homes were elevated. Phase two was awarded in the summer of 2005 and has resulted in the purchase and demolition of one additional home with work under way on the elevation of twenty-two additional homes. The County is also working on using its extra funding from the Isabel grants to potentially elevate an additional six homes from its FEMA-approved substitution list.

A subsequent grant provided because of flooding from Tropical Storm Gaston (HMGP-1566) will allow another three homes to be elevated by the middle of 2008. The Nor'easter like storms in the fall of 2006 caused flooding in many additional low-lying parts of the County. A grant application for the elevation of 18 additional homes was submitted and awarded in the spring of 2007 (HMGP-1661). To comply with Gloucester County's floodplain ordinances, all homes are elevated so that the first floor is at least one foot above the established Base Flood Elevation.

The County has also decided to apply for a 2008 Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant with the intention of purchasing five homes for clearance and creating permanent open space in some of its more problematic Zone VE areas. These will not only help reduce the potential loss of life and property in the affected areas, but will also help reduce future pollution of the Chesapeake Bay.

Additionally, the planned acquisitions will be in keeping with the Governor's initiative to acquire or conserve 400,000 additional acres of open space throughout the Commonwealth.

Interim County Administrator Georgette Hurley says "The HMPG (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) grants have allowed Gloucester County to help elevate our residents and their property out of harms way. The program has also dramatically reduced the potential for future damages at a cost that was reasonable for all residents of the County. The grant has helped to not only protect our community, but also our environment by reducing the amount of damaging material that would be washed into the local watershed and our majestic Chesapeake Bay."

Mark Westfall, Emergency Services Coordinator for Gloucester County, has been very pleased not only with the elevation process but the reduction in the calls for services, a reduction in the number of evacuees, and in the lower cost of temporary housing in hotels for residents. The acquisition of the dozens of homes that were located in various VE-10 to VE-12 zones located along the coast of Gloucester County has allowed owners to sell their homes at the fair market, pre-storm value and relocate to a safer section of the County.

Gloucester County's commitment to utilizing to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, adopting and enforcing floodplain management ordinances, and creating new permanent open space to help protect the Chesapeake Bay will significantly reduce the loss of life and property in the County during future flood events. The County's actions not only benefit it residents, but also benefit the citizens of the Commonwealth through providing better protection for the Chesapeake Bay.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region III**

State: **Virginia**

County: **Gloucester County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding; Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Elevation, Structural; Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**

Structure Type: **Wood Frame; Manufactured Housing**

Activity/Project Start Date: **09/2003**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **County of Gloucester**

Application/Project Number: **1491-073-038, 1491-073-062, 1544-073-011, 1661-073-001**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$5,400,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1544 , 09/03/2004; 1661 , 09/22/2006**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.kwpoore.com>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.gloucesterva.info/es/Mitigation.htm>

Main Points

- Because of its proximity to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, Gloucester County, particularly its Guinea community, is subjected to periodic flooding from coastal storms.
- With three flood events over four years, the County realized the need to do something different to protect its citizens and their property.
- Although many families had obtained a Standard Flood Insurance Policy through the NFIP, most of the homes in the affected areas were located just inches above the ground.
- The County hired a planning firm to help purchase destroyed homes to reduce future losses or to help elevate the homes where the owners wished to rebuild in the community.
- With the help of the firm, the County received its first Hazard Mitigation Grant in the spring of 2005.
- In addition with the work being done with the HMGP funds, the County has decided to apply for a 2008 PDM grant with the intention of purchasing five homes for clearance and creating permanent open space in some of its more problematic Zone VE areas.
- Additionally, the planned acquisitions will be in keeping with the Governor's initiative to acquire or conserve 400,000 additional acres of open space throughout the Commonwealth.
- Gloucester County's commitment to utilizing the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, adopting and enforcing floodplain management ordinances, and creating new permanent open space to help protect the Chesapeake Bay will significantly reduce the loss of life and property in the County during future flood events.



An elevated home



An elevated home



Open Space



An elevated home



An elevated home