



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** Monday, April 14, 2025  
**TO:** CITY COUNCIL  
**WRITTEN BY:** ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS MANAGER CASSEL  
**RECOMMENDED BY:** INTERIM PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES DIRECTOR GREEN  
**APPROVED BY:** TAMARA VIDES, CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** ADOPTION OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL  
MITIGATION PLAN 2025 UPDATE

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### RECOMMENDATION:

Resolution to adopt the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2025 Update, Volume 1, and City of Watsonville Municipal Annex, Volume 2.

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### BACKGROUND:

The City of Watsonville first adopted its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) in 2019, which required an update in 2025 to meet FEMA assistance requirements. To complete this update, Watsonville has joined the 2025 Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) effort, led by the County’s Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience (OR3) with consulting support from Dynamic Planning + Science (DP+S). Once adopted, the MJHMP will formally replace Watsonville’s stand-alone LHMP.

The Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) 2025 Update (the “Plan”) provides a comprehensive strategy to reduce the impacts of natural hazards, including earthquakes, wildfires, flooding, landslides, and severe weather events. The Plan serves as a five-year roadmap for coordinated hazard mitigation actions among Santa Cruz County and its planning partners.

Adoption of this Plan ensures that Watsonville, Santa Cruz County, and other participating jurisdictions remain eligible for federal hazard mitigation grant funding administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), including the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA). Adoption also fulfills the planning requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000).

The Plan includes a countywide risk assessment and mitigation strategy and identifies 190 mitigation actions to reduce hazard risks across the Santa Cruz County planning area.

Watsonville’s mitigation actions were developed through a collaborative process informed by the updated risk assessment, local priorities, and extensive stakeholder engagement. As part of this 2025 MJHMP update, the City reviewed mitigation actions from its prior Local Hazard Mitigation Plan to determine which actions to carry forward, which to consolidate, and where entirely new strategies were required.

The plan addresses Watsonville’s most significant hazards, including flooding, earthquakes, severe storms, drought, wildfire, extreme heat, and climate change. Each mitigation action is designed to align with FEMA’s hazard mitigation guidance and the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The City’s Hazard Mitigation Action Plan identifies the department responsible, implementation timeframe, potential funding sources, and resources required to complete the action. Each action is also assigned a unique alphanumeric identifier that links the strategy to its associated hazard and supports consistent monitoring and reporting.

Watsonville’s approach recognizes that some hazards are most effectively addressed through regional efforts. Flood protection, drought resilience, and wildfire risk reduction often extend beyond the city’s boundaries and require collaboration with county, regional, and state partners. By aligning local actions with regional strategies, Watsonville helps consolidate resources, maximize funding opportunities, and ensure that mitigation projects deliver the greatest benefit to the Pajaro Valley and the wider Santa Cruz County community. Collectively, these mitigation actions provide a roadmap for reducing hazard risk, protecting vulnerable populations, and strengthening Watsonville’s long-term resilience.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Hazard Mitigation Planning**

Hazard mitigation refers to sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people and property from natural hazards. Examples include infrastructure improvements, regulatory updates, natural resource protection projects, and community preparedness initiatives.

Federal regulations require local governments to maintain an approved hazard mitigation plan to remain eligible for FEMA mitigation funding. The DMA 2000 established this requirement and directs FEMA to support mitigation planning as a means of reducing disaster losses nationwide.

### **Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort**

The Plan was developed through a collaborative planning effort led by the County’s Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience (OR3). The planning process included participation from a total of ten jurisdictions:

1. County of Santa Cruz (unincorporated areas)
2. City of Capitola

3. City of Scotts Valley
4. City of Watsonville
5. Scotts Valley Water District
6. Soquel Creek Water District
7. Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
8. Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
9. Santa Cruz Port District
10. Cabrillo College

Participating jurisdictions worked together to identify hazards, assess vulnerabilities, collect public and stakeholder input, and develop mitigation strategies across their jurisdictions and the region.

## **PLAN STRUCTURE**

The Plan is organized into two volumes.

- **Volume 1 – Base Plan:** Provides the countywide framework for hazard mitigation planning, including hazard identification and risk assessment, community vulnerability analysis, countywide mitigation goals and strategies, and an implementation framework with monitoring procedures.
- **Volume 2 – Jurisdictional Annexes:** Includes annexes for each participating jurisdiction that identify locally-relevant hazards, jurisdiction-specific vulnerabilities, and local mitigation actions and implementation strategies.

Each participating jurisdiction is responsible for adopting and implementing its respective annex.

## **PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The Plan was developed through an extensive planning and outreach process that included a community survey on hazard risks, stakeholder workshops, public outreach events, review and comment opportunities on draft materials, and coordination with local agencies and planning partners. This outreach ensured compliance with FEMA requirements for public involvement in hazard mitigation planning and was integral to identifying local hazard priorities and realistic mitigation actions.

## **FEMA REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

The Plan has undergone review by the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and has been forwarded to FEMA Region IX for final approval.

Following adoption by participating jurisdictions, FEMA will issue a formal approval letter, allowing the plan to take effect and enabling jurisdictions to remain eligible for FEMA mitigation funding.

## **GENERAL PLAN INTEGRATION (AB 2140)**

Adoption of the Plan also enables the City of Watsonville to integrate the plan into the Safety Element of the General Plan pursuant to California Government Code Sections 65302, 65302.6, and 8685.9. This integration improves eligibility for post-disaster hazard mitigation funding and strengthens coordination between hazard mitigation planning and local land-use policies.

## **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:**

Adoption of the Plan is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), Common Sense Exemption, and Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies. The Plan establishes policy guidance and mitigation strategies but does not authorize specific construction projects. Environmental review will occur for individual projects as required.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The update of the LHMP by participating in the MJHMP would support the following Strategic Plan priorities:

**Fiscal Health** – by providing eligibility for FEMA funding in the event of a FEMA-qualified event

**Infrastructure & Environment** – by prioritizing critical infrastructure processes during such events

**Public Safety** – by updating mitigation priorities to improve the resilience of public infrastructure and programs

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with plan adoption. However, adoption of the Plan maintains eligibility for FEMA hazard mitigation funding, which may support future infrastructure improvements and resilience projects across participating jurisdictions.

## **ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

No reasonable alternatives are known at this time. Adoption of the MJHMP is needed to maintain the City's eligibility for future FEMA grant funding.

## **ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (IF ANY):**

1. Santa Cruz County MJHMP 2025 Update – Volume 1 (Base Plan)
2. Santa Cruz County MJHMP 2025 Update – Volume 2, Section 3 (City of Watsonville Annex)
3. Complete plan with all other jurisdictional annexes available via project website: <https://mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp/santa-cruz-county-documents/>