

Chapter 1 - Introduction



Alpena County is located in the northeastern portion of the Lower Peninsula. The following townships are located within Alpena County: Alpena, Green, Long Rapids, Maple Ridge, Ossineke, Sanborn, Wellington and Wilson (**Figure 1.1**). Also included in the planning area are the City of Alpena, the Census Designated Place of Ossineke, as well as the unincorporated places of Bolton, Cathro, Flanders, Herron, Hubbard Lake, Lachine, Lakewood, Leer, Long Rapids and Spratt. The City of Alpena is the county seat and is located on Lake Huron. Fifty-seven percent of the County is in public ownership and 83 percent of the county is forested.

Alpena County covers 568 square miles or 363,520 acres. It is bordered by Presque Isle County to the North, Montmorency County to the west Alpena County to the south and Lake Huron to the east. Alpena County is 27.5 miles wide from east to west at its widest point and 24 miles from north to south at its deepest point.

Alpena County is remote from other urban centers and least a two and one half-hour drive to the major areas to the south. The closest cities to Alpena County are Gaylord on M-32, which is 72 miles to the west; Cheboygan, located 72 miles to the north on US 23; and Tawas, 66 miles to the south on US 23. Of the 29,598 people living in the County, 66 percent live in the city of Alpena and Alpena Township.

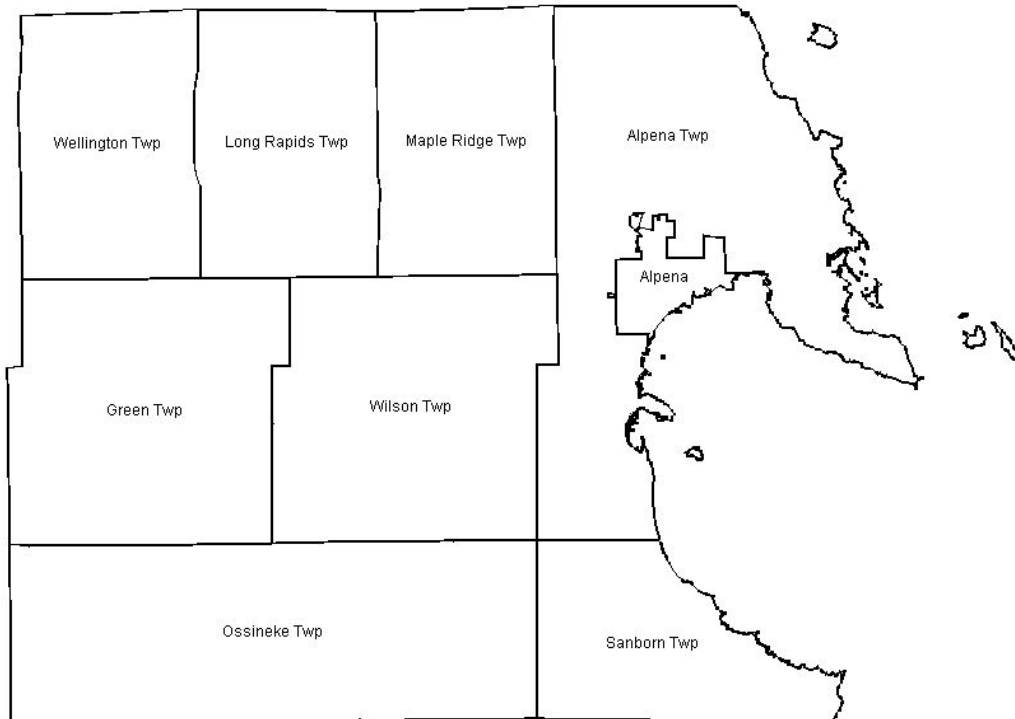


Figure 1.1

Purpose and Approach

What is Hazard Mitigation Planning?

In partnership with seven counties in Northeastern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) worked with each county in its region to prepare hazard mitigation plans. The Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 included new requirements for hazard mitigation planning. In order to become eligible for hazard mitigation grant program funds in the future, counties must prepare and adopt hazard mitigation plans. The County prepared its first Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2005. This planning document represents an update of the 2005 plan.

The intent of a hazard mitigation plan is to inventory possible hazards, assess the vulnerability of community to hazards it faces, and to provide possible mitigation activities for those hazards. ***The focus of the hazard mitigation plan is the development of projects and policies that can be implemented to reduce or prevent losses from future disasters.*** The Alpena County Hazard Mitigation Plan includes text, tables charts and maps necessary to describe and discuss the following: 1) a hazard analysis based on, a current community profile, hazard identification, risk assessment, and vulnerability assessment; 2) a listing of the communities goals and objectives; 3) a discussion of the alternatives for solving problems; 4) evaluation and prioritization of alternatives; 5) selection of feasible mitigation strategies; and 6) recommended mitigation strategies. The plan contains a hazard mitigation element that can be easily integrated into county or township comprehensive plans.

The process of Hazard Mitigation Planning update consists of the following steps:

- Reviewed and updated Chapter 2: Environment. Updated information on the climate, soils, sites of environmental contamination, wetlands, discharge permits.
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 3: Community Profile. Updated demographics and housing information
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 4: Land Use. Updated information on oil and gas wells
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 5: Community Services. Updated all sections of the chapter
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 6: Hazard Identification. The committee updated information on wildfires, severe weather, severe wind storms, extreme temperatures, other natural hazards, and technological hazards. Information on local jurisdictions was updated including compiling new maps for each community.
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 7: Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. Evaluation criteria, and hazard analysis evaluation measures and benchmark factors were reviewed and no changes were made. Alpena County Hazard Rating was reviewed and the committee made adjustments according to updated hazard information. The Risk Assessment and Vulnerability Assessment was updated to reflect data and activities
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 8: Goals and Objectives. The committee added a goal concerning regional cooperation
- Reviewed and updated Chapter 9: Mitigation Strategies and Priorities. The committee made changes to this section, eliminating some actions, adding new actions and amending this list of responsible parties.

- Minor changes were made to Chapters 1 & 9.

NEMCOG staff worked closely with the Alpena County Emergency Management Directors and Local Emergency Management Committee to prepare the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Considerable effort was made to gain input from stakeholders in the county. This included meetings with townships; township association; county board of commissioners; local, state and federal agencies; local officials; community leaders and general public.

Information Collection

NEMCOG reviewed relevant plans, maps, studies and reports. Federal, state, regional and local government sources were reviewed to develop a current community profile. Information sources included: U.S. Census, zoning ordinances, master plans, recreation plans, capital improvement plans, parcel maps, aerial photography, MIRIS land use/land cover, USGS topographic maps, U.S. Weather Service, NRCS soils maps, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Hazard Analysis, local hazard analysis, Flood Insurance Rate Maps, emergency management plans, and Section 302 Sites from the LEPC.

Geographic Information System Support

NEMCOG's Geographic Information System (GIS) was used as a decision support tool and public education tool throughout the process. Existing data sets were incorporated and new data sets created in order to analyze existing conditions and study potential future scenarios. Specialized maps showing community hazards, land cover use, infrastructure, topography, soils, national wetlands inventory, forest cover, gas and oil wells, zoning, future land use and community facilities were prepared as part of the plan development. Maps helped identify community characteristics, vulnerable populations, and hazard areas. GIS data and maps will be retained by the community for future use to assist implementation and monitoring hazard mitigation activities.

Increased Community Awareness of Hazards and Hazard Mitigation

Information was disseminated to the communities and public through the use of public meetings, presentations, news releases, and contacts. A secondary benefit of the planning process was the education of community leaders and citizens of the community in regards to hazard awareness. This education supported the decision making process and will assist communities in making better, more informed decisions in the future. In addition, the process strengthened partnerships between local units of government, planning commissions, emergency services, public agencies and private interests to pool resources and helped facilitate communication and understanding between various entities. By fostering lines of communication and increasing awareness of the cross jurisdictional impacts of land use and policy decisions, better and more informed decisions will be made in the future.

Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee

The hazard mitigation plan was developed through the Local Emergency Planning Committee. The committee has representatives from local units of governments; local, state and federal agencies; law enforcement, fire departments and community organizations. Committee members provided feedback throughout plan development, including identification of hazards and high hazard areas, identification of hazard mitigation strategies and selection of an action plan.

Community Involvement

The planning process provided several opportunities for public, community and agency input and comments. A presentation was made to townships at Alpena County, Michigan Township Association meeting. A presentation was made to the County Board of Commissioners to present the draft plan for commissioners' approval. Staff met with the Local Emergency Planning Committee during plan development. This group has representatives from local communities, state and federal agencies and citizens. The group, together with the Emergency Management Director, was instrumental in guiding plan development.

Meetings

- Regional Meeting, January 5, 2012
- Alpena County LEPC, February 21, 2012
- Alpena County LEPC, May 17, 2012
- Alpena County LEPC Sub-Committee, June 19, 2012
- Alpena County LEPC, October 16, 2012
- Alpena County, Michigan Township Association (MTA),

Governmental Participation

During the update of the Alpena Hazard Mitigation Plan representatives from all local governmental units participated directly in one or more planning related meeting. In addition to Alpena County government, other governmental units involved in the process were: involved governmental units were: the Townships of Alpena, Green, Long Rapids, Maple Ridge, Ossineke, Sanborn, Wellington and Wilson; and the City of Alpena. These communities are continuing participants in the Alpena County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Public Input for Plan Approval

The draft hazard mitigation plan was posted on both NEMCOG's and Alpena County's web sites, and made available for review and comment by citizens, local communities and any agencies. A newspaper article was published in The Alpena News to inform the public about the plan and where the plan can be viewed on the web. The draft plan was transmitted to the Michigan State Police for preliminary review and comment. The LEPC reviewed and addressed comments from all sources.

Review and Adoption of Plan

The steering committee, stakeholders and the public reviewed a draft plan. Comments and suggestions obtained in the review process were incorporated into the final plan. The final plan contains mitigation strategies and an action plan that assigns priorities for specific hazards and mitigation measures; defines roles and responsibilities; and identifies the process for reviewing and updating the plan. Upon final approval, the hazard mitigation plan will be presented for review and adoption to the Alpena County Board of Commissioners, and transmitted to the Alpena City Council and the respective township Boards of Trustees requesting review and adoption.

Recommended Plan Implementation Process

The County LEPC will be the local group responsible for overseeing implementation of this plan. The Alpena County Emergency Management Director (EMD) will function as county staff providing program administration and project oversight. The EMD will develop a five-year action list of projects from the mitigation strategies identified in the Alpena County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The LEPC Should review the hazard mitigation plan each year to determine what projects have been accomplished and add new projects to the five-year action list.

The Hazard Mitigation Committee should identify steps needed to accomplish a chosen project, such as funding sources, staff and agencies required to complete project, timelines and overall project costs. It should be understood, that additional emergency management staff time will be required to assist the HMC in completing its mission.

Since the Hazard Mitigation Committee is a subcommittee of the Alpena County LEPC, it will function, as does the LEPC, under the umbrella of the Alpena County Board of Commissioners. Members of the HMC must be members of the LEPC, who in turn are appointed by the County Board. Staff support will be provided by the Alpena County Emergency Management office which functions as a county department and therefore the program must coordinate with the County Board of Commissioners.

Local units of government, county departments, and local, state and federal agencies will be encouraged to consider, propose and sponsor projects from the hazard mitigation plan. The HMC will coordinate and support plan implementation as well as monitor progress and determine timing and scope of plan revisions.

The HMC will meet quarterly throughout the year to review HMP projects and recommend projects to the LEPC a vote of the LEPC full membership. The Alpena County Emergency Management Office submits HMC projects to the county board of commissioners for approval and support. The Alpena County Emergency Management Office will then seek funding for HMP projects through various means such as Region 7 Emergency Management, Federal, State, or local funding sources, or through support through private funding.