

## Chapter 3. Planning Process

The hazard mitigation planning process in American Samoa has followed the guidance and requirements provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The guidance standardizes the overall process but allows flexibility in determining how the planning process would best be adapted to each planning area. In American Samoa, traditional leaders and chiefs retain authority and respect along with the territorial government. Any planning process must respect the Samoan culture or “fa’asamoa” - the Samoan way of life. It is recommended that the fa’asamoa concept be nurtured into the planning framework. Unlike the 50 states, the Territory of American Samoa maintains an unyielding cultural dominion that dates back to some 3,500 years of chieftain hierarchy.

The hazard mitigation planning process for American Samoa will continue to be guided by federal requirements and by the people and government of American Samoa. This chapter describes the planning process for developing the 2020 Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan.

*S1. Does the plan describe the planning process used to develop the plan? [44 CFR §§201.4(b) and (c)(1)]*

### 3.1 Plan Update Process

The planning process for 2020 was expedited due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the short timeframe of when funding became available. However, the Territory had successfully implemented the 2015 plan which made it possible to document the update in a one-month time frame. The schedule below details the timeframe, milestones, activities and stakeholders involved in documenting the plan update.

#### Week One

- Collaboration call with FEMA Region IX to review plan update requirements and schedule.
- Review of 2015 Crosswalk.
- Data collection for risk assessment and mitigation actions.

#### Week Two

- Continue data collection.
- Outreach through SHMO to key stakeholders.
- Launch public outreach survey.
- Draft chapters and review Standard State Hazard Mitigation Plan Checklist.
- Develop profiles for Sea Level Rise and Infectious Disease.

#### Week Three

- Finalize data collection.
- Develop Mitigation Action Tracker.
- Finalize Risk Assessment maps and tables.

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Develop Capability Assessment.

### Week Four

- Assemble the draft plan and reviewed it with SHMO.

### 3.2 Project Management Team

The Governor and the American Samoa Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council has provided strong leadership and advocacy throughout the Territory, ensuring a continuous mitigation planning process. Lima Fiatoa, State Hazard Mitigation Office (SHMO), works at Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM), has been the hands-on leader for mitigation in the Territory since 2008.

Jamie Caplan Consulting LLC assembled an experienced Project Team that facilitated this 2020-updated mitigation plan as well as the plans in 2008, 2011 and 2015. The Project Team included Caroline Cunningham, Stantec and her team. This team has worked together on several of the plan updates. The Project Team will expand to include Jim Buika for the 2025 update.

The consulting team worked closely with Lima Fiatoa from the Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM). Ms. Fiatoa is the primary point of contact with FEMA for mitigation planning and implementation of mitigation projects. Ms. Fiatoa as the SHMO reports to the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR), who is the chairman of the American Samoa Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council. The SHMO reports to the Hazard Mitigation Council on the maintenance activities of the Plan as well as the implementation of mitigation projects.

The Project Team respects the Samoan culture or "fa'asamoa" and has worked with respect to "fa'asamoa". In addition, the project focused on FEMA's requirements. Ms. Fiatoa and Ms. Caplan were in direct and regular contact with FEMA Region IX throughout the planning process.

### 3.3 Coordination and Engagement with Stakeholders

*S2. Does the plan describe how the state coordinated with other agencies and stakeholders? [44 CFR §§201.4(b) and (c)(1)]*



*Figure 10 The GAR at a Hazard Mitigation STEM Exhibit.*

# Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

## 3.3.1 Involvement of Federal Agencies

Ms. Fiatoa, the SHMO, maintains a close relationship with FEMA Region IX. FEMA Region IX actively participates in mitigation activities on island. They visit on a regular basis to support training, make site visits, and provide technical assistance regarding mitigation actions. The Territory signed a letter to enable the Jamie Caplan Consulting team to speak directly with FEMA Region IX during the planning process. A copy of the letter is shown below.

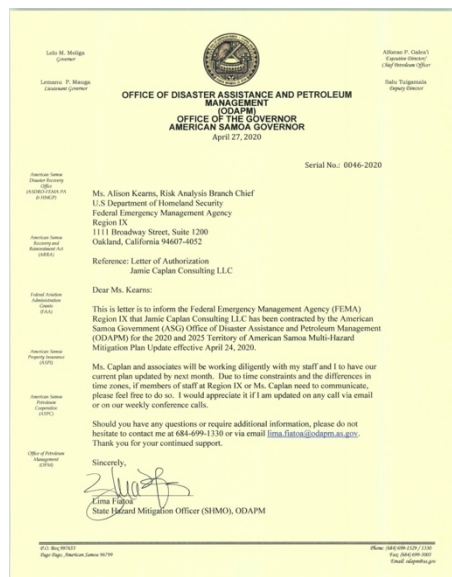


Figure 11 Letter Authorizing FEMA to Work Directly with JCC.

SHMO will discuss with the Hazard Mitigation Council and the GAR the possibility of added a Department of Public Health representative to the Council in the future. The Federal Disaster Declaration for the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the need to consider public health in the mitigation plan going forward.

## 3.3.2 Involvement of Territory Agencies and Departments

The American Samoa Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council, appointed by the Governor, ensures that policies and projects are implemented which are adequate to mitigate the risk to life and property from natural hazards. The Hazard Mitigation Council identifies and prioritizes hazard mitigation projects and oversees the implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and subsequent plans adopted by the Hazard Mitigation Council.

The key government organizations responsible for mitigation have a seat on the Hazard Mitigation Council. The table below shows the list of Hazard Mitigation Council representatives. Hazard Mitigation Council members serve for a two-year term and meet on an ad-hoc basis, called by the GAR, and have been meeting, at a minimum of two times per year since 2003. The

Table 9 Hazard Mitigation Council Membership List

Department	Title
<b>Governor’s Office</b>	GAR/Chairperson
<b>Legislative Branch (Senate)</b>	Appointed by President of Senate
<b>Legislative Branch (House)</b>	Appointed by Speaker of the House
<b>Samoan Affairs</b>	Secretary
<b>Department of Commerce</b>	Director
<b>Department of Port Administration</b>	Director
<b>Department of Public Works</b>	Director
<b>American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency</b>	Director
<b>American Samoa Historic Preservation Office</b>	SHPO

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

Department	Title
American Samoa Power Authority	CEO
American Samoa Telecommunication Authority	CEO
Chambers of Commerce	Chamber Chairperson
American Samoa Department of Homeland Security	Acting Director

The Hazard Mitigation Council functions by way of a series of bylaws which are listed below.

- Assist the Governor's Office and the Government of American Samoa in identifying hazard mitigation issues and opportunities facing the Territory of American Samoa for the purpose of developing a comprehensive hazard mitigation strategy.
- Prepare strategies, policies, and reports on hazard mitigation issues, including hazard mitigation policy recommendations to the Governor, the Fono, and key Territorial agencies involved in mitigation related areas within their normal agency missions.
- Ensure that territorial agencies collaborate and cooperate fully to develop and execute sustainable hazard mitigation policy actions that will reduce the risk posed by all hazards to the Territory, in addition to voluntary collaboration and cooperation involving private sector companies and non-governmental organizations which are engaged in work relevant to hazard mitigation.
- Coordinate with and support Territorial agencies' efforts in obtaining and administering federal and other grants, including post-disaster mitigation grants available pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, for the purposes of promoting hazard mitigation opportunities within the Territory.
- Identify and prioritize mitigation activities, on an annual basis, for funding under the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Flood Mitigation Assistance, Public Assistance, Repetitive Flood Claims, Severe Repetitive Loss, and other funds that become available.
- Encourage and support the solicitation of grant support through other territorial agencies for hazard mitigation activities.
- Term of office for Hazard Mitigation Council Members shall be staggered two-year terms, and explicitly allow for members to be reappointed.

After Tropical Storm GITA, the FEMA Advance Evaluation Team directed the American Samoa Government to create six task force that are similar to the Natural Disaster Recovery Framework of Community Planning, Economic Recovery, Health and Social Services, Housing Recovery, Infrastructure, Cultural and Natural Resources. Since the Hazard Mitigation Council already exists, they were a natural place to start meeting this requirement. The GAR directed the SHMO to run the Long Term Recovery Committee. The Department of Human Social Services was added to this Committee to cover housing. Muavaefa'atasi John Suisala manages the Department of Human Social Services and he and his staff worked with the Hazard Mitigation Council on the task force related to housing. They identified housing needs. This also served as an opportunity for the Department of Human Social Services to become more

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

acquainted with the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Director Suisala will be involved in identifying mitigation actions and the Hazard Mitigation Plan development in the future.

The Hazard Mitigation Council met several times between 2015 and 2020. They used the meetings to update the list of mitigation actions or projects, that progression is included in Chapter 6 Mitigation Strategy.

It should be noted that the Territory of American Samoa does not have “local” governments to involve in the Hazard Mitigation Planning Process.

### *3.3.3 Public Involvement and Public Preparedness Survey*

The public involvement strategy for the 2020 Mitigation Plan Update included a Public Preparedness Survey. A similar survey was released during the development of the 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. For 2020, the survey was announced via press release and social media to the community through the week of May 18, 2020. A copy of the Press Release is included in Appendix B. Sixty-nine surveys were completed. Below is a synopsis of results; complete results are in Appendix B.

Everyone who completed a survey noticed changes in recent weather patterns, and 74% felt like storms were becoming more frequent. Ninety-six percent of people reported they are very concerned with climate change. In a similar survey offered in 2015 as part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan update only 75% of people reported they are very concerned about climate change. One hundred percent of respondents reported that the hospital is a very important asset. Interestingly, 10% of people reported they have flood insurance. Many people included suggestions for mitigating risk including the following:

- Improve building codes and enforcement
- Provide training to the community
- Find environmentally friendly infrastructure solutions to substitute seawalls
- Provide education in each village
- Take historical knowledge combined with scientific knowledge to create and implement plans to help keep people safe.
- More solar energy.
- Fix old water infrastructure

### *3.3.4 Limitations to Engagement*

The consulting team for this Planning Process was hired early in May 2020 to update the 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan due to expire on May 20, 2020. The three-week timeframe for updating the plan did not allow for an extensive engagement process. Weekly calls were held with the SHMO who did conduct outreach on-island to the extent possible. The additional stress of having offices closed and people working remotely due to the Covid-19 Pandemic added to the challenge of engagement. Fortunately, the Hazard Mitigation Council includes most facets of the Territory and those members are actively involved throughout the five-year span of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. They have become acutely aware of what types of projects receive funding and have seen the benefits of maintaining the plan.

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

### 3.4 Planning Process Integration with Other Planning Efforts

The Hazard Mitigation Council informs its members, leaders from the majority of government agencies and several private companies, about the contents of the mitigation plan. They work to ensure that all members understand the scope of risk and the potential to mitigate that risk.

The Directors of Department of Public Works (DPW), ASPA, and ASTCA all sit on the Hazard Mitigation Council. They work with their technical engineers to develop projects and provide input to the hazard mitigation plan. They also use this information in projects and plans in their respective agencies.

Undergrounding utilities is a priority of this plan and each of these agencies. They coordinate undergrounding projects so utility rights of way are being excavated and accessed only one time to improve, water, sewer, communications, and power, to improve the benefits and minimize the costs.

The Project Notification and Review System (PNRS) have insured on-going integration of new projects with existing territorial plans and regulations. The Hazard Mitigation Council's endorsement of land-use management improvements proposed by Department of Commerce provided additional integration with planning activities in the Territory.

The Tualauta Drainage project was ranked #1 in 2007. It was removed from the 2011 Hazard Mitigation Plan because it was slated for funding from DR 1859. However, the project was denied funding through HMGP DR 1859 and Department of Public Works requested that the project be added to the 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan. The project remains a priority and has been funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) as a response to CDBG-DR Tropical Cyclone Gita.



Figure 12 Lima Fiatoa, SHMO Staffing the Hazard Mitigation Booth.

The mitigation leads from Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM) gave a presentation titled, "Adapting to National Disasters," at the Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources in February 2018. The ODAPM mitigation team also participated in several Department of Commerce BIZ Fests. Below is a photo from

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

the series of BIZ Fests events held in April 2018. An article from Samoa News regarding Biz Fest is included in Appendix B.

### 3.4.1 Integration with FEMA mitigation programs

ODAPM works with the Hazard Mitigation Council to submit mitigation projects to FEMA for funding. The Hazard Mitigation Council includes representatives from public and private agencies in the Territory with a stake in hazard mitigation. Many of these agencies, such as ASTCA, ASPA and DPW collaborate on projects to increase efficiency and the benefit-cost ratio of proposed projects. Agencies in the Territory have a difficult time documenting project application. They tend not to maintain records or data regarding damage during disasters. This lack of information makes a favorable benefit-cost analysis difficult to achieve. The SHMO works closely with FEMA and stays current on all FEMA mitigation programs. The photo below shows FEMA Representatives, Robert McCord, FEMA Region IX Hazard Mitigation Branch Chief, Lorena Untalan, FEMA Region IX Pacific Area Office Specialist, and Philip Wang, FEMA Region IX Hazard Mitigation Specialist conducting a site visit in the Territory on September 7, 2017. They were discussing the Fagaima Drainage project, with the Department of Public Works. This project was the Territory's top priority project for DR-4357 Tropical Storm Gita funding.



*Figure 13 FEMA Representatives visiting the Fagaima Drainage Project Site on September 7, 2019.*

### 3.5 History of the Planning Process

The Hazard Mitigation Council has facilitated an effective mitigation planning process since 2003. The turnover of Council members has created a bit of a challenge but the consistency of Lima Fiatoa, State Hazard Mitigation Officer and Planning Team Leader and support from Department of Homeland Security has made a tremendous difference. Their dedication to maintaining this plan and implementing mitigation projects has kept mitigation at the forefront of

government activities for the last decade. In addition, many stakeholders have held their positions for multiple years and understand the role of mitigation and the process of seeking grant funding. Jim Buika has participated in the planning process since 2003, and Jamie Caplan Consulting LLC has been the lead planning consultant since 2008, these consistencies have helped maintain an efficient planning process. Mitigation is a difficult concept and applying for mitigation funding is a challenging process, having a consistent group of individuals representing mitigation in American Samoa has contributed positively toward its success.

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

### *3.5.1. 2003 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan*

- The Lieutenant Governor convened the American Samoa Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council with support from the Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office (TEMCO).
- TEMCO contracted a consulting team from the Pacific Disaster Center/East-West Center and PPG Consulting to conduct the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment and facilitate the planning process. In this section, this team is subsequently referred to as the Project Team.
- The Mitigation Council agreed on 1) the general goals and objectives for the Mitigation Plan; 2) an approach to the planning process; and 3) the formation of subcommittees to address building codes and standards; land use management and regulations; infrastructure standards; flood issues; and data needs and analysis.
- The Project Team worked with American Samoa Government Agencies and the Geographic Information Systems User Group to compile digital maps and other data and conducted a risk and vulnerability assessment.
- Results of the risk and vulnerability assessment, including maps, were presented to the Hazard Mitigation Council and the general public and input was solicited on the risk and vulnerability assessment and mitigation options.
- Hazard Mitigation Council subcommittees met to assess the adequacy of 1) building codes and standards, 2) the Project Notification and Review System and other land use planning and management initiatives, and 3) infrastructure standards and the American Samoa Flood Mitigation Plan.
- TEMCO issued a request for proposals for hazard mitigation projects to be included in the plan, and a fifth subcommittee was appointed to screen projects proposed by American Samoan Government agencies for inclusion in the plan.
- The Hazard Mitigation Council met to review the recommendations of the subcommittees, consider and adopt recommendations of the subcommittees, and make final decisions on the mitigation projects to be included in the plan.
- An Executive Order was drafted to appoint the American Samoa Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council as the standing body to coordinate mitigation planning and implementation, as well as formally adopt the plan.

### *3.5.2. 2008 Mitigation Plan Update*

Jim Buika was on the island gathering data for the 2008 Mitigation Plan the week of June 4, 2007. Mr. Buika conducted meetings in American Samoa, with the purpose of conducting two Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council meetings, assisting key ASG departments to finalize development of previously submitted hazard mitigation projects, conducting a mitigation project tour, and interviewing department personnel in order to gather information and data required to augment and update the existing plan. Data collection was based on the Plan Update Gap Analysis Matrix. Jim Buika represented the 2008 Project Team to facilitate the FEMA required update of the American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan.



## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

### *3.5.3. 2011 Mitigation Plan Update*

The Hazard Mitigation Council met a total of five times since September 29, 2009 disaster. Due to the DR-1859 Tsunami, Flood and Earthquake disaster, the Governor appointed a new Governor Authorized Representative, Evelyn V. Langford to head the Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council. Council meetings were conducted on the following dates:

- February 9, 2010 to discuss HM Council's goals and objectives as well as projects currently prioritized on the project listing. The Council felt that opportunities should be given for agencies to resubmit their project proposals for consideration of funding under DR-1859.
- March 9, 2010 to review project proposals/presentations and rank priority of projects according to ranking criteria
- June 15, 2011 to initiate new members that were appointed by the Governor, discuss revisions to the plan for July 2011 update and "Call of Projects"
- June 20, 2011 to review new project proposals / presentations in preparations of updating priority listing as well as update HM Councils goals and objectives
- June 27, 2011 to prioritize projects in accordance of ranking criteria as set forth by the HM Council and HM Plan

For meetings where new project / presentations are mentioned above, a "Call of Projects" noticed was issued through advertisement in the local newspaper as well as the letters distributed to all government agencies, departments and private not for profit organizations. The departments/agencies were asked to develop a preliminary project proposal that followed five minimum criteria:

- Conform to and be included in the State Plan.
- Be both engineering and technically feasible.
- Conform to environmental laws and regulations.
- Solve a problem independently or constitute a functional portion of a solution, and
- Be cost effective.

### *3.5.4. 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*

The 2015 planning process included the same team as previous plans, Jamie Caplan Consulting and her team partnered with the Territory Hazard Mitigation Council, the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR), and Lima Fiatoa, State Hazard Mitigation Officer. The Territory Hazard Mitigation Council met several times to discuss the plan and specific mitigation actions. The consulting team was on island several times to support Ms. Fiatoa and the Territory Hazard Mitigation Council with meetings and site visits. They expanded stakeholder engagement and public outreach by hosting workshops and meeting with individual departments and agencies to discuss their capabilities and potential mitigation actions.

## 3.6 Plan Adoption

*S19. Did the state provide documentation that the plan has been formally adopted? 44 CFR §201.4(c)(6)]*

## Territory of American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan

Due to the tight planning timeframe, the Hazard Mitigation Council did not review the plan prior to its submittal to FEMA. However, the Project Management Team did carefully review the plan. The plan was submitted to FEMA Region IX for their review on May 29, 2020.

FEMA reviewed the plan and returned it to the American Samoa Government, and Lima Fiatoa, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer on June 8, 2020. At this time, Ms. Fiatoa took the plan to the Governor's Office for official adoption. The Adoption Resolution is included in the front of the document.