



## 2024 HURRICANE SEASON LISTENING SESSION

### FEDERAL INTERAGENCY RESOURCE EXCHANGE NOTES

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) co-hosted a public meeting with prominent regional stakeholders to discuss 2024 Hurricane Season recovery needs and requests for federal governmental assistance. Below represents the collective comments submitted to the Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) team from the following organizations: Sarasota County, Charlotte County, Lee County, Hendry County, Glades County, Collier County, City of Venice, City of North Port, City of Punta Gorda, City of Cape Coral, City of LaBelle, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC), Sierra Club Calusa Group, and Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP).

#### County Introductions & Critical Unmet Needs

##### **Sarasota County**

- Health and social services needs
- Need help in identifying D-SNAP efforts to ensure better messaging and processing in future.
- Better warehouse usage and transportation needs.
- Affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households.
- Stanford Act changes – streamline to remove barriers to the recovery process
- Changes in debris collection for private roads, mobile home parks on rights of entry need to be reviewed and adjusted. Current FEMA guidance directs communities to begin collection on private roads when warranted and to complete a private-property debris removal (PPDR). However, that does not mean reimbursement will be approved. In Sarasota County, 50% of road network is private roads. One size does not fit all.
- Mobile home parks and condominiums severely damaged. A mobile home park is a commercial entity in FEMA's definition; however, each mobile home is owned by a citizen, and the park is not responsible, nor do they have the ability to handle the debris collection. The same applies for the condos when the HOA does not have insurance or ability to obtain and levy high fees to citizens in the condo.
- FEMA lowering flood zones on barrier islands (i.e., Siesta Key and Manasota Key)

## City of Venice

- Updating stormwater drainage infrastructure – Stormwater drainage failure, infrastructure that has not kept up with development and affects commercial and residential areas
- Debris pick-up
  - People ripped everything out that got wet and put it out on the street
  - Our city relied on outside haulers to come to our aid during a disaster. The outside haulers never made it to our area, they got detained up north.
  - They didn't keep the dump open
  - All of this debris became projectiles
  - Instead of relying on outside haulers for bulky waste pick-up, proposing that cities purchase stockpile open containers, claw trucks, trucks for roll off containers, so that cities and counties can pick up bulky waste immediately after a storm.
- Development is overwhelming the system – Destruction of wetlands, Need to overhaul our land use regulations and building codes to maximize stormwater onsite.
- We need to plant mangroves in Venice. Need to hire a living shoreline expert to select planting sites for living shorelines and then install them
- Our 5 mobile home parks as well as 2 other areas on the island are in special flood hazard areas. We need to get people back in new elevated mobile homes. For the 2 other areas, need to upgrade from stilt homes to elevated manufactured homes.
- We have an economic unmet need: Humphries park
  - We have 2 jetties that go out into the gulf. Within one of the jetties, there's a park there. We had to close that park after Debby. Reopened the park just before Helene. We did some fill, we had a concession stand there and restrooms, but Helene did some damage and then Milton pretty much took the whole park. We have a fence there right now.
  - That park is so important to the city. It gets visited by thousands of people a day. Surrounding businesses, restaurants impacted by the park being closed.
  - Need about \$1.5 Million for the park project
  - Jetty recovery is about \$6 Million but FEMA and USACE will be helping with that.
    - Response from EDA: Submit the project. In the past, we have been able to fund tourism-related projects. Not sure what the funding guidance language will be yet. Once guidance is finalized, will circle back and see if it's eligible.
- Flamingo Ditch – part of our outfall system
  - Right now, we have a consultant that's conducting a feasibility study to assess potential solutions to reduce or stop flooding of the roadways and properties surrounding flamingo ditch. The property is privately owned (residential area) and the City is in support of any mitigation project. The City has an easement to utilize flamingo ditch for stormwater drainage so it's public stormwater infrastructure.

## City of Cape Coral

- Subsequent to Hurricane Ian, concerns and lessons learned:
  - South Cape Coral had major storm surge damage and complications exacerbated by an aged storm sewer system which is being improved on a case-by-case basis
  - Extended electrical outage resulted in all major and smaller grocers, food purveyors, etc. losing inventory of refrigerated products .... Lesson learned, encourage more to install

stand by generators and city assemble added portable generator capacity to deploy as needed

- Formed a new Resiliency and preparedness department to improvement all forms of facility and operational preparedness... allow dedicated personnel to be focused full time on preparedness & recovery vs just and add on to existing operational staff already full workload staff.
  - FEMA support on actual clean-up crews hauling debris was very good, however getting reimbursement was prolonged
  - Already challenged permit system became a major impediment causing many residents to complete repairs without permits... FEMA flood insurance discount of 25% was jeopardized as a result of unauthorized or permitted repair documentation.. created new work around system which FEMA used a model for other jurisdictions
  - The Yacht Club, a city tourist draw and recreational facility for generations was destroyed.. DEP and ACOE permitting has had a major impact of moving forward with a new facility .. DEP permitting was just received and finally ACOE permitting is hoped to be received in March 2025
- A lot of citizens got fed up waiting and began fixing things themselves, making them no longer eligible for reimbursement. So, we've been helping them re-permit so they can get reimbursed.
  - Business resiliency planning grant to be more comprehensive in nature. Businesses need to harden their structures in order to prepare for these events. Looking to identify ways to capitalize a loan fund so that businesses can tap into these funds and find ways to provide technical assistance, someone to come through and evaluate what the best option would be for their structures.
  - There is a lot of confusion with the submission of renovations and plans for permits now. There are requirements for FEMA where they have to lift up their structures. There are a lot of steps and additional requirements that is hard for our businesses to respond to. There is limited capacity for our staff to work with them hand-and-hand. We are trying to see what resources and initiatives we can take on to tackle that.

### **Charlotte County**

- Following Ian, we developed an extensive long-term recovery plan that outlines a bunch of potential projects needed. None of those have really been addressed yet, with the exception of our Hazard Mitigation Grant applications that are a result of Ian that are under review.
- Charlotte County is not an entitlement community under HUD's determinations, we are working towards that, we have the 200,000 people population. Because not an entitlement community, we cannot receive a CBDGR direct allocation.
- The only benefit our community has received is in the Rebuild Florida program. And unfortunately, that has not been that beneficial. Florida Commerce numbers indicate that 1 home had been repaired as a result of Ian as of December 2024. That's primarily wind damage from Ian. With the Elevate Florida program coming in the next months, we hope our residents will take advantage to elevate their homes, but there will still be some need there.
- We weren't able to take advantage of the HMGP match because not a fiscally constrained county. We ask that part of the State Action Plan be to make HMGP match available to all counties, not just the fiscally constrained.

- There are 2 mental health facilities in Charlotte County, and one of them was destroyed and has since been destroyed. Access to Mental Health resources has been dramatically impacted, availability of services.
- We were able to mobilize our business recovery centers really quickly. 11,000 businesses in Charlotte County.

### **Lee County**

- San Carlos Estates is a 298 Special District for water right in the middle of the City of Bonita Springs. Been around 1969, even longer than the surrounding cities. It's all self-funded by the landowners. Now is a situation with all the economic development surrounding us. The impervious coverage alone, just since Irma, is around 30-40% increase in impervious surfaces surrounding us.
  - San Carlos Estates is 11,000 acres of zoned Ag-2 and there's a lot of residential and small agricultural farms with in us. In between US-41 and I-75.
  - 25 years ago, all of the residents issued a bond to themselves, and spent over 20 years \$15 Million of their own taxpayer money to re-do the canals and the swales and our private roads to handle the then forecasted hydrologic models of how much water is coming in. However, 25 years later, the amount of coverage is overwhelming the system.
  - FEMA has helped reimburse us \$317,000 for cleaning up and putting band aids on some issues with our canals and weirs.
  - We are looking for funding for building better infrastructure, we've identified 6 projects that would be more long-term solutions to the erosion and water turbidity issues of the water that go in, around, and throughout our district. Because we are little paradise in the middle of Bonita Springs with 1.25 acre lots, people are buying up the lots and building mansions.
  - Of the 1,058 acres of cypress wetlands, maybe 100-250 is left that can be built on. We're looking for grant money to turn those lots into a wetland preserve. They are overwhelming the system.
  - We've done our planning and initial hydrologic models. We are ready to say here's our project, please help us fund these long-term solutions.
  - We need to deepen our retention ponds. All dry retention needs to become wet retention. So that means we need to deepen our retention ponds. We are ready to do it but need the money.

### **Hendry County**

- We're anticipating a study that is coming forward and we're still an agriculture-based county.
- Any support that we can give to agriculture is vital for our county's economy.

### **Glades County**

- Need include- Healthcare, mental health, transportation, affordable housing, hardening of facilities, businesses, etc.

### **Collier County**

- Elevate Florida through FDEM is very enticing. We asked the state if it would be a multi-year project, they did not answer. I think they want to see the success/failure of the program. Have any of these federal agencies considered providing matching funds for that?
- Our Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) working group has primarily been focused on FEMA HMA programs.
- Running into a lot of bad experiences with FEMA grant technical assistance. We're finding that in our normal jobs, we're having to become grant managers and we're having a lot of issues with that. Then we're having trouble selling that to our county management because of those bad experiences. For example, we just got an opportunity for a watershed management plan under the State's planning initiative funds that they allocated from Ian and Irma HMGP, but we failed twice trying to sell that to county management based on the bad experiences we had on the stormwater capital improvement side. A little more clarity on grant technical assistance would be helpful.
- Funding for critical infrastructure/facility study – we are finding the same questions happen over and over from consultants.
- We're getting a lot of pressure right now with residential dry flood proofing. We are looking at a building code, trying to come to a middle ground on what we will allow and not allow. We understand that there's some general guidance from FEMA, but we want to know if there's going to be some long-term considerations about actual federal guidance as requirements through CFR. Locally, we're dealing with that heavily.
- Streamline the HMA process

EDA grants are done on a cost-sharing basis. If we're doing infrastructure projects, our cost-share is 50%. Under disaster supplemental conditions, typically your federal grant rate can be as high as 80%. In fiscally constrained counties, we can go as high as 100%. EDA projects should have at least one of three: job creation potential, job retention, and private sector investment.

### Infrastructure

#### **City of Punta Gorda**

- Drainage within the City of Punta Gorda. Very difficult to manage the king tides, let alone the high tides, and then potential SLR and disasters. We have a lot of flooding issues on a regular blue-sky day just with king tides.
- We have a plan in the works for drainage but trying to determine what it's going to look like.
- We have an unfunded project with the WTP for an expansion. We're limited with the amount of water we can take from the Shell Creek reservoir. The demand outweighs the supply. When demand is higher, we lose water pressure in the water lines and that is potentially bad for the entire system, where we end up with boil water notices or not being able to service parts of the community. Looking to expand the borrow system and expand the wellfield itself. That's a huge project. The other part of the project is rehabilitating the Shell Creek Surface WTP. They're adjacent to each other. Looking into a BRIC grant for this but don't know how successful that will be. Looking for other funding opportunities.
- Tiki Point Living Shoreline Project (green infrastructure) – Funding for the construction of the living shoreline that would reduce flooding in the city.

## Fisheries and Agriculture

### **Hendry County**

- Need funding for debris removal in the creeks and rivers as it's impeding flow and drainage. This debris is about 30% residential and 70% natural debris.
- Need assistance with funding for maintenance and pre-storm season cleaning of snags from natural rivers which impacts natural drainage from landscape and flooding. Also need federal aid for removing hazards to navigation.
- Characterize debris from green/white debris
- There is not really a system set up well for removing 'natural' debris
- Citrus was tremendously impacted by the recent storms
- Need to support innovation projects and hydrologic restoration, water storage
- Helping the farmer try to keep what they have. Citrus growers really believe that citrus will still be here in the future, just not at the levels it was in the past.

### **Sarasota County**

- Debris – household and natural. The household debris was cleaned up through contractors. It's the natural debris and the sediment that washed into the creeks that we need help getting dredged. It's built up over the years from all of the storms.
- With Debby and Helene, the stormwater coming from the east trying to make it to the bay overflowed the creek and then flooded people's homes and roads. We need to get our creeks back to have enough capacity to handle the stormwater.
- Red Tide – It's spurred by these storms and the nutrients that are washed into the bays and into the Gulf. Affects our economic development and local economy.

### **City of Venice**

- Water Quality is not necessarily seen as an economic driver, but it is. Water quality affects the commercial fishing industry, tourism.
- We're seeing that it's hard to sell houses in Venice right now, prices are dropping
- EDA can help fund infrastructure but there needs to be a public entity that will own & maintain it

### **City of Punta Gorda**

- NOAA has a grant out right now for habitat restoration. We are trying to pursue this for the Living shoreline project. It's an expansion of the project and will be centered at Trabue park. Trying to write up the project so that it can be done as a construction project all-in-one. This will reduce the scour coming in.

### **City of LaBelle**

- Sheet flow and flooding are major issues for City of LaBelle as well. They have a stormwater master plan but no funding for projects

Issues with living shoreline permitting process – everyone has so many issues with the permitting. Nationwide Permit 54 – specifically for living shorelines to incentivize those projects with faster permitting. Depends on scale of project.

## Tourism and Historic Resources

### **Sarasota County**

- On barrier islands, the businesses have been shut down while they're trying to recover, jobs have been lost or at least put on hold.
- Need funding for Infrastructure- right of ways, street furniture, lighting, hardscapes – things have just been washed away. We need to get it replaced. Need a lot of landscaping.

### **City of North Port**

- Warm Mineral Springs and the buildings that were significantly damaged due to Hurricane Ian
- Our commission has voted to restore 2 of the buildings, however there is another building (cyclorama) with incredible historic value for our community that is still in a very bad state
- Restoration should be fundable since its city owned.

## Workforce Development & Training

### **Lee County**

- Construction of \$42 Million, 62,000 sq. ft. technical institute (trade school)
- Looking for \$5 Million
- Looking at skill trade areas – HVAC, AC, Plumbing, Welding, Metal fabrication, etc.
- Lee County is chartering this
- These are resilient jobs. They would learn how they can help in these emergency natural disaster events.
- Current workforce is lacking in soft skills: inability to return phone calls, respond timely, customer relations
- Affordable housing is important for workforce development

**Housing and Policy Economic Development for Collier Co.** (They work with affordable housing and economic development sectors): Concur w/Lee Co that soft skills are lacking in current workforce. Issue is evolving into a larger component of the issues withing workforce development, and it is an easily solvable issue. For instance, referring the adults to the SWFL CareerSource contacts in Lee and Collier counties for interviews and soft skill training and for the high schoolers working with guidance counselors and other volunteer groups to teach the students while they are in school and work with the students when the students are volunteering/interning with the County.

Location of developments containing a component of affordable housing withing Collier Co is located here: <https://www.colliercountyfl.gov/government/growth-management/divisions/housing-policy-and-economic-development>

### **Sierra Club Calusa Group (Sanibel)**

- After natural disasters, we have a lot of displaced people that are not homeowners.

HUD: Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing - \$14 Million for the state for unsheltered folks

USDA: We have 2 programs: One is Direct loans to purchase houses for low-income folks in rural areas. We also have grants for housing repairs. The repair program has been working on getting eligibility expansion to have more people eligible for the grants.

## Housing

### **Collier County**

- Nothing specific but affordable housing is a prevalent, consistent issue
- Streamlining grant process
- 2023 Hurricane season AMI was \$100,000. It's increased since.
- Community & Human Services division primarily deals with the CDBG funding
- Education on the CDBG funding
- Issues for renters that have been evicted
- We lost a lot of traction recently with the repeal of the Federal Floodplain Management Standard. Looking for guidance on that in the future. With the state floodplain model ordinance.
- Flood Design 24-14: There are going to be a lot of changes in Florida when it comes to design

### **Glades County**

- We just need housing in general

### **Sarasota County**

- Funding for affordable housing also a need/challenge
- Considering an Affordable housing trust fund – when we rezone a property, a percentage of that increase property value would go into a trust fund and that could be used to purchase property or for affordable housing. Bridge-gap funding.
- Affordable/Workforce housing is also an issue in Sarasota. In Sarasota this is being implemented through comprehensive plan changes, rezoning of areas and additional funding from non-profits. This also involved policy changes to prescribe that developers need to include when building out.

### **City of Venice**

- In Venice, there is not much land still left to be annexed and the prices of properties are so high it's hard to do that.
- Not a single firefighter in the City of Venice lives in the City of Venice
- There's a huge amount of money in the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund – but it is rated every year by the legislators to balance the budget. There are also impediments. Venice used to be able to go out and get the money directly, now must go through a committee. Like hitting a brick wall.
- There is a Live Local act in Florida, lets try to implement it

### **Charlotte County**

- Workforce housing and affordable housing are 2 different topics

### **City of Punta Gorda**

- Our AMI is higher than what our folks can afford to work here
- Demographics just don't work for the workforce serving the county



## **Lee County**

- Struggling to keep up with developers and plan for development prior to them building out improperly. (Ex: Alico Rd. quarries in Lee County, building out housing for 10k people but no road infrastructure to support it). Need more coordination at fed, state, and local level to plan development.

## **City of Cape Coral**

- From economic development perspective- working with CDBG-MIT funds and Habitat to create more structures and supplement for affordability.

## **SWFRPC**

- The problem is that they took the mandatory coordinated review out of the statute. The RPCs don't even have to review the comprehensive plans – it's optional. We still have the plans coming in from our counties and cities. We do a cursory review but we are not state funded anymore, so we just can't do the full review.

What kind of projects is EDA interested in supporting regarding Housing?

- Post-disaster redevelopment plan
- A study that looks at workforce housing
- From EDA's perspective, it will be from a strategic planning perspective, but EDA does not build housing. Need on the groundwork to be done locally first, policies in place by counties and then federal funding may be able to be provided afterward under the umbrella of those policies.
  - Workforce housing support was provided by FEMA after Ian where this exists.

## **City of Sanibel**

- Someone needs to assess the impacts of development on resiliency and all of the investments we are making for resiliency.
- Anything for people who don't have credit and don't own a house or can't buy a house (renters)? The State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program may address some of these issues. There are resources outside of disaster assistance for rental assistance programs. We will gather information about the regular CDBG and other housing programs.

## Human Condition / Mental Health

- People don't prioritize their mental health initially after a disaster
- Kids often have to fare for themselves because their parents are dealing with the aftermath
- Project idea: Mobile unit that could respond to events with care professionals and go directly to people to provide support. The mobile unit would also be available pre-storm for those who have been through a prior disaster, during the storm (if safe) to respond to people who need to have de-escalation of systems, and post-storm to help meet them where they're at and get them what they need.
- Additionally, would be good to have a committee or group of people dedicated to providing these mental health, resiliency, and well-being services.
  - Paul Myers, US Dept. of Health and Human Services – We're working closely with FDEM and the Florida Dept. of Children and Families. Those are great ideas. I'm aware of best

practices and lessons learned from other states I've supported. We have a white paper on where to find funding sources. Encourage you to email me with your observations.

- Email me at: [paul.myers@hhs.gov](mailto:paul.myers@hhs.gov).

### Economic Development & Small Business

#### **Sierra Club Calusa Group (Sanibel)**

- Sanibel residents, local businesses, and local governments having a lot of issues when it comes to getting loans for the businesses that were affected, to the point that they are going to private loans.
- FEMA has boots on the ground, but they can't do anything to address the residents needs
- Simplify application and appeal process for both businesses and individuals seeking relief from SBA and FEMA
  - SBA revamped the loan process last year to be better. We have SBA resource centers in several local cities and counties. We're currently in Hillsborough, Manatee, Orange, Volusia counties. We can physically do the application with them so that they can get it submitted.
- Ensure funds are dispersed quickly and fewer bureaucratic hurdles to recovery
- Provide clear guidance and support throughout entire recovery process. Provide actionable steps.
- Implement a more collaborative approach between federal and state agencies regarding recovery.

#### **City of Punta Gorda**

- During Milton and Helene, we had storm surge come through the center of downtown. We own a parking lot down there called Herald Court that is surrounded by businesses. Our dry proofing did not work the way it was advertised during Milton.
- Interested in Tiger Dams for dry flood proofing businesses within the City. Is that an approach we could take for some of our businesses in the downtown area? Who owns it?
  - EDA can do tiger dams if the applicant is the City (the asset being protected is owned by the City) but not a private business. Has to be an eligible applicant, city-sponsored project. The city would also be in charge of maintaining the tiger dam, and it couldn't be sold to a private business.

#### **Collier County**

- A lot of companies pushing different products in the floodplain management world. Non-traditional dry flood proofing products. Residents with dry flood proofing is becoming an issue. Even in a commercial setting, if that product fails and it was not an authorized product, you have potential to lose any flood claim you put in. So, when you're talking about city infrastructure, just be careful and make sure its certified and permitted properly.
- The maintenance and evacuation plan are the biggest challenges.
- Another issue is that flood underwriters will pay the claim out if there's dry flood proofing there, even if it wasn't deployed. There's the fast claim payout. There needs to be more regulation on that flood claim payout.
- ICC (increased cost compliance) allows you to flood proof, elevate, relocate, or demo. What I like to tell homeowners is, you can't flood proof your home, you're not going to relocate, so we have elevation and demolition. ICC is regulated by building permit- they have to work with the adjuster,

flood underwriter, have to go through entire process to get it permitted before they get the final claim payout of up to \$30,000.

- Counties have to be the regulatory arm for FEMA. That's the agreement we made when we got into bed with FEMA. If they do a claim payout because you didn't deploy it properly and you still get the money, they're going to put you on a National Violation Tracker list and you lose your CRS discount among other things.
- Be cautious of your CRS claim management under the FEMA floodplain program

### Project Ideas Discussion

Approx. 31 projects (some are summarized/rolled up by topic and response below)

- ✓ IRC will create project/response matrix. Focus for funding is economic development projects.
- ✓ Project sheets being accepted within the next 1-2 weeks, but asap.
- ✓ They will be collated and added to master spreadsheet from all workshops and then drill down to major projects. Send to RPC who will fwd. to EDA.
- ✓ Responses below are top level ideas for how/by what org projects could be funded.
- Lee County work force training programs have 60% funding- starts March 2025
  - Response- EDA funding for projects, projects cannot be started until grant process is completed (process is 6-9 months)
  - What about phases? No phases can be started.
- Sarasota Sailing Squadron wave-fence- Economic access to sailing for Sarasota youth program
  - Response- not EDA, but maybe community foundation or other non-profit program
- Sarasota Save Our Seabirds Community Rescue Program- rebuilding/flooding
  - Cannot fund for profit but can work with non-profit on projects that are for economic development.
- Mariah canal weir project (spring creek downstream) & San Carlos Estates water control district. Water storage, quality, flow and wetland management.
  - ACOE may be able to provide tech assistance or work with FDEP.
  - Weir projects/water retention can all go to ACOE (there are several weir/water control projects submitted not listed here)
- San Carlos Estates Transportation projects
  - EDA funding cannot be used for roads in residential areas.
- Venice south jetty Humphries park revitalization.
  - Maybe CDBG state funded project.
- Venice debris removal project
  - Maybe CDBG state funded project.
- Incident stress response team for families/ Prevention workshops for families/pro bono mental health services/D-SNAP rollout
  - Paul Myers will send information and share with pertinent agencies.
- Myakka state park program control structure project.
- Infrastructure resiliency hardening- Sarasota Co
- Commercial revitalization on Siesta Key- infrastructure
  - EDA will consider this project

- Tiki Point living shoreline project
  - EDA will consider this project & pass along to NOAA. The City of Punta Gorda does have FDEP resiliency funding for pilot project, this is for a project to abut the CDRZ zone downtown and expand the economic impact in commercial areas.
- Tiger Dam project
- Laishley park marina (public marina) destroyed during Milton. Need mitigation for 6-10 ft storm surge.
  - EDA will consider this project & pass along to NOAA.
- Venice living shoreline and mangrove planting
- Manufactured Housing revitalization/mitigation for flooding in Venice
  - CDBG funding administered by the state, there is a CDBG Price program that municipalities can apply for funding from the state.
- Waste collection project
- Stormwater drainage project in public neighborhood- flamingo ditch outfall- design project already completed. Looking to improve stormwater drainage infrastructure
  - ACOE and Florida Commerce CDBG funding also being considered.
- Updating land use regs. And building codes to address flood mitigation
  - Planning project- reach out to FL Commerce on this- 'Community Planning Section'
- Planning for business continuity after storm event
  - Could be SBA or EDA project