

A Collaborative Model for Disaster Resilience in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge

June 2008

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Mid-Columbia Gorge Counties (Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco, and, Wheeler) are susceptible to earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, flooding, drought, wildfires, and severe winter storms. Research shows that planning and mitigating for natural disasters minimizes the loss of life, property damage, and financial impacts of a disaster event. Moreover, hazard mitigation shortens the time frame communities need to recover after a disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that for every dollar spent on mitigation projects, four dollars are saved. Natural hazard mitigation may include activities such as retrofitting structures for disaster resilience, educating the public, and improving emergency communications.

The seven counties of the Mid-Columbia River Gorge all have federally approved Hazard Mitigation Plans but lack the human and financial resources to implement these plans. One common approach to leveraging limited resources is to create partnerships or collaborations. This project explored the feasibility of creating a regional collaboration to implement natural hazard mitigation plans in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge region. The project, conducted by the University of Oregon's Community Planning Workshop (CPW) in conjunction with the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience, convened a group of stakeholders to explore issues related to creating such a collaborative. This report summarizes a concept for a regional collaborative based on CPW's research and input from local stakeholders.

The Collaborative Approach

In 2004, the Mid-Columbia Gorge region partnered with the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience (PDR) at the University of Oregon to develop a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning Grant. The PDR received grant dollars in 2005 to facilitate a collaborative planning process that resulted in pre-disaster mitigation plans for the seven participating counties and many cities within the counties. Most communities in the region have now adopted mitigation plans and are eligible to seek funding to implement the mitigation strategies outlined in their plans. These plans require that communities look for multi-objective opportunities to implement mitigation through existing plans and programs such as capital improvements plans, comprehensive land use plans and economic development strategic plans.

Despite having mitigation plans in place, communities in the Mid-Columbia Gorge recognized that they lack the human and financial resources to implement the strategies identified in the plans. In many communities the plan's convener is either a Planning Director or an Emergency Manager. Typically, these positions oversee a number of

different programs and grants – natural hazard mitigation is only a small fraction of what they do on a daily basis. As such, the communities are not able to spend the time and resources necessary to implement the strategies outlined in their plans. In addition, hiring a mitigation specialist in each community in the Mid-Columbia Gorge region is not an option because of limited resources.

Collaboration is a potential solution to this problem. Collaboration is a process through which organizations or local governments work together and share resources to solve mutual problems. Collaboration can take many forms – from a formal and official commission authorized by the government – to an informal agreement between two departments.

In the context of natural hazard mitigation in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge, a collaborative can share both the costs and benefits of staff, soliciting grants, and other resources to improve the disaster resilience of the communities within the region.

While some counties in the region have the capability to implement some elements of their plans or write grants on their own, regional collaboration would be beneficial for the following reasons:

- A collaborative approach recognizes the inter-relationships among counties in the regions. Natural hazards do not following political boundaries and disasters often affect multiple jurisdictions.
- A collaborative approach recognizes the shared goals of the participating counties. A review of pre-disaster mitigation plans suggests that plans share many of the same goals and action items.
- A collaborative would allow counties to share the costs of planning and grant writing.
- A collaborative would allow counties to reduce competition for federal or state grant funding, save time and resources, and improve the chance of receiving funding.
- A collaborative would allow counties to creates partnerships that include other phases of the disaster cycle.

The remainder of this report describes a model for regional collaboration to create disaster resilient communities in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge. The Community Planning Workshop (CPW) shaped these recommendations based on research on collaboration and hazard mitigation and on the involvement of the Mid-Columbia River Gorge Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee.

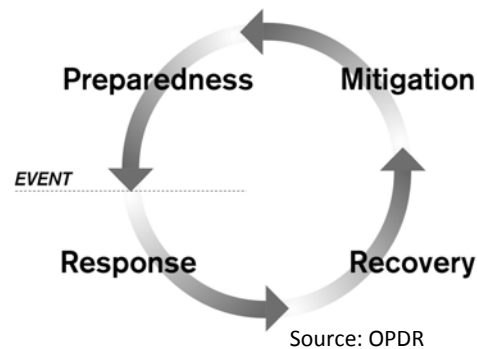
Chapter 2: Proposed Collaborative Model for Natural Hazard Mitigation in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge

Through our work with the stakeholder committee, CPW created a model for collaboration that addresses the entire disaster cycle for the seven counties of the Mid-Columbia River Gorge. This model includes a vision, a mission, objectives, staffing options, an organizational structure and funding sources.

Recommendation 1: Address the Disaster Cycle

CPW recommends the collaborative address all phases of the disaster cycle. Hazard mitigation is one of four phases of the disaster cycle:

- **Hazard Mitigation** – Preparing infrastructure and educating the public for potential disaster events.
- **Emergency Preparedness**– Planning and organizing so that when a disaster occurs, communities and services know what to do.
- **Response** – After an emergency event, response activities remove community members from immediate danger and mitigate the effects of the disaster. Response activities include fire fighting, search and rescue, and emergency medical treatment.
- **Recovery** – After a disaster occurs communities need to recover. Depending on the severity of the disaster this may include rebuilding, replanting, or other activities that bring communities back to their normal status. While communities are recovering they should also be mitigating the risk of hazards in the future.



Many of the action items in the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans overlap with other phases of the disaster cycle and cannot be addressed without looking at the whole disaster cycle. CPW recommends that the Steering Committee form a collaborative that addresses the entire disaster cycle on a regional level. By including emergency preparedness, response, and recovery the Collaborative will:

- Improve the ability of the Collaborative to create disaster resilient communities.
- Increase political and community support
- Increase the number of available funding streams.
- Address the fact that natural hazards do not follow political boundaries
- Make use of limited staff and financial resources,
- Create a forum for communication
- Identify opportunities to institutionalize natural hazard planning as a component of a broader range of government activities (e.g., capital improvement programs, etc.)

Recommendation 2: Develop an Organizational Vision, Mission, & Objectives

The vision and mission statement are the foundation of an organization. They provide a common direction for organizations with multiple partners and interests. The Steering Committee needs a shared vision for the Collaborative if they want to move forward. CPW developed a draft vision, mission, and objectives based on our research, Steering Committee feedback, and the goals and action items in the county Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Vision

We envision a disaster-prepared and resilient Mid-Columbia Gorge region.

Mission

The Mid-Columbia Gorge Natural Hazard Collaborative is committed to working together on disaster resilience to promote and sustain economic, environmental and social well-being now and in the future. We will strive for equity, mutual respect and cooperation throughout this process.

Objectives

CPW recommends the Collaborative address three main objectives which address the region as a whole.

- Objective 1: Educate the public, private businesses, professionals, and political leaders about the natural hazards in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge and disaster resilience.
- Objective 2: Coordinate and integrate hazard mitigation and disaster resilience into projects, planning, and operations of local and regional governments in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge.

- Objective 3: Identify and implement regional action items from the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a Two-Tiered Organizational Structure

CPW recommends the Collaborative have a two-tiered structure. The first tier will be made up of two representatives from each county. While each county will have the option to pick their representatives, it would benefit the collaborative if the first tier included a mixture of Emergency Managers, Fire Chiefs, Planners, and other professionals. This group will act as a steering committee or executive board. They will be responsible for decision making, project prioritization, and driving the collaborative.

The second tier will include other governmental and non-governmental organizations that have a stake in disaster resilience. These members will include cities, ports, utilities, non-profits, fire districts, etc. This tier of the collaborative will participate in projects and provide input for decision making, and potentially contribute financially.

CPW recommends this model because it provides equity between the counties by giving an equal number of votes and decision making positions to all participating counties as well as an equal financial responsibility. It also allows other entities that have a stake in disaster resilience to participate. This structure also provides a core group for decision making while maintaining the collaborative and integrated approach necessary for successful disaster resilience.

CPW recommends that the Collaborative adopt bylaws and a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the first tier participants. These documents are important for ensuring that the collaborative has an official relationship based on mutual understanding and a shared vision.

Recommendation 4: Full-Time Staff Support

The Steering Committee unanimously agreed that they need a staff person for the Collaborative. Currently, no funding sources are available for a full time professional. While it may be possible in the future, CPW recommends the Collaborative start with a Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) participant, or a retired professional that is willing to work part time.

RARE is administered through the Community Service Center (CSC) at the University of Oregon and helps provide staff for rural communities that lack the resources to implement programs and projects. RARE is a partnership between CSC, AmeriCorps, and local communities. All RARE participants have a Bachelors degree and varying levels of experience with planning and community development.

If the Collaborative decides to pursue this option, the program requires a local cash match of \$17,000, which would be shared by all participating counties. Additionally, there will be basic operating costs for transportation, office space, etc. RARE participants are usually assigned a laptop computer from the CSC.

A RARE program coordinator will help the Steering Committee move through the start-up phase and begin the process of implementing hazard mitigation plans. Their duties will include facilitating steering committee meetings, researching opportunities for integrating disaster resilience, and researching and writing grants. One limitation is that RARE participants can only spend 20% of their time on grants.

Depending on the progress of the Collaborative within the first year, the Steering Committee may be ready to hire a full-time staff person. If they are not ready, the Steering Committee may continue working with RARE until they are able to get enough funds and support to hire a full-time staff person.

A potential issue with the RARE program is the potential lack of continuity from year to year. The Collaborative could hire a part-time retired professional that could either work with the RARE participant or simply serve as part-time staff to the Collaborative. CPW did not explore this option extensively, but it is likely that the cost would be comparable with the cost of a RARE participant. The advantages of this approach are that a retired professional would have topical expertise and experience in the region as well as relationships with key individuals and elected officials. The only potential hindrance is that a retired professional would work part-time whereas a RARE participant works approximately 35 or more hours per week.

Recommendation 5: Seek Diversified Funding Streams

Discussions about funding expose sensitive issues regarding the varying size and budget of each county. Unfortunately there is no one source of funding that exists to address disaster resilience and collaboration.

If the Collaborative goes with a RARE participant for the first year, it will cost approximately \$25,000 - 30,000. This compares to a cost of \$100,000 for a full time professional staff person. These costs include the salary and general operating costs for the organization.

Initial Funds

CPW recommends that the first tier (the counties) contribute evenly to hire a RARE participant for the first year and for the initial operations of the Collaborative. The second tier members should contribute funds or in-kind match for projects and implementation. The initial funding will be a

stepping stone to secure future grant funding for disaster resilience and hazard mitigation.

Grant Funds

The major source of hazard mitigation funding for the State of Oregon comes from the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program. The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) administers the funds through the state's Office of Emergency Management (OEM). PDM funds are available for most disaster mitigation activities. In the past, counties have used PDM funds for planning, public infrastructure seismic updating and retrofitting, fuel load reduction, and flood plain restoration.

In 2007, OEM awarded over \$1.2 million from PDM in Oregon. Since 2003, the PDM program has awarded a total of \$11.1 million dollars throughout the state. The future of this program is uncertain and it may not exist in the next few years. To implement hazard mitigation the Collaborative should investigate alternative funding streams.

If the Collaborative addresses the entire disaster cycle, the range of funding sources increase exponentially. The Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, and other agencies provide funding to address different phases of the disaster cycle (see Appendix III).

When discussing funding, it is important to address equity. All of the counties are different sizes with different populations and incomes. Thus, equity is an issue that should be addressed in the early phases of the collaborative.

During the first year the Collaborative should work on regional projects and programs to minimize equity issues. At the same time, the Steering Committee should consider how it will handle equity in the future. When the Collaborative begins county-specific projects it is unlikely that it will be able to evenly distribute projects each year. The Steering Committee will need to develop a long-term strategy to ensure equity for all of the participating counties.

Chapter 3: Implementation

The previous chapter described a framework for a Mid-Columbia River Gorge Hazard Collaborative. The Steering Committee needs to take the next steps to move from an idea to an organization, and ultimately to plan implementation. In this chapter, CPW outlines the key steps to move this project to the next level.

The Bridge Year

Under any scenario, it seems likely that the collaborative will have a period of 6 to 12 months without funding. If the Steering Committee chooses to partner with RARE, they will not have a program coordinator until October of 2009. It is essential that the Committee continue to make progress to maintain the momentum generated by the feasibility assessment. CPW recommends the Steering Committee address the following activities in the next year (see Appendix for a timeline):

- Commit to the Collaborative
- Secure funding for the first year
- Identify and recruit membership
- Secure support from county officials
- Finalize the Vision, Mission, and Goals
- Draft and sign a Memorandum of Understanding
- Begin to address equity issues
- Apply for a RARE participant or hire staff

The Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience (OPDR) and CPW will continue to support the Steering Committee and assist with the above activities through August, 2008.

First Year Activities

When the Collaborative has a program coordinator it can begin implementing projects and programs for hazard mitigation and disaster resilience. The following activities address the mission and objectives on a regional level.

Education Campaign

All of the local hazard mitigation plans CPW reviewed included educational goals and action items. To create disaster resilient communities, the Collaborative should engage in an education campaign that targets communities, professionals, and public officials. The

Collaborative can use brochures, public service announcements, newsletters, in-school education programs, etc. to educate these groups. Many resources exist and are available for use from FEMA, Red Cross, the Center for Disease Control, and the State of Oregon. The Program Coordinator will research these resources and decide which ones will be the most informative, cost effective, and useful.

- Task 1: Develop a strategic plan or logic model for how the Collaborative will educate the public.
- Task 2: Research and review the available public domain education resources.
- Task 3: Distribute and use educational resources to educate communities, professionals, and public officials in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge.

Hazard Mitigation Project Pairing

All of the counties have plans that address land use, transportation, economic development, and other priorities for the county government. Many of the projects in these plans overlap with projects for hazard mitigation. Project Pairing involves linking projects for economic development, transportation, capital improvement, etc. with hazard mitigation projects. The goal is to improve the disaster resilience of public infrastructure.

- Task 1: Conduct an inventory of all plans and projects for the participating counties.
- Task 2: Review the plans and look for infrastructure, capital improvement, or transportation projects that incorporate hazard mitigation.
- Task 3: Write a report that details the findings and recommendations to integrate disaster resilience and hazard mitigation into planning and projects.

Five-Year Business Plan

The Collaborative must make decisions in the first year regarding what they hope to accomplish over the next five years. Many organizations develop business plans that identify key activities and outcomes and link them to funding sources. Thus, a key focus of the business plan is to identify goals and activities for the future of the Collaborative.

- Task 1: The Steering Committee should meet to determine their goals and activities over a five year timeline.
- Task 2: The program coordinator should write a Five Year Plan that includes a financial plan and a cost-benefit analysis.

- Task 3: The Five Year Plan should be adopted by the counties and the Collaborative.

Inter-departmental and Regional Coordination

Disasters pose a threat to the administration of public services. While the Department of Public Works may not see the value in coordinating with the Collaborative, it may become necessary if a sewage pipe or water main bursts as a result of a natural disaster. In order to make the process of response and recovery easier the Collaborative should facilitate meetings and develop a process for departments and jurisdictions to coordinate with emergency response and management.

- Task 1: Obtain or create organizational maps for how public services are administered.
- Task 2: Investigate existing emergency response plans for public services and infrastructure.
- Task 3: Identify weak links in the system and propose ways to bridge the gaps.
- Task 4: Facilitate the dialogue and collaboration of interdepartmental and interagency collaboration necessary to ensure continued services in the event of a disaster.

Regional Project Prioritization

After the Collaborative has determined its regional priorities the Steering Committee should prioritize projects. The Collaborative will have to decide on the criteria they will use. They will also have to decide who is involved and what process is the most equitable for all the counties.

- Task 1: Develop criteria, possibly using FEMA guidelines for scoring projects on a regional level.
- Task 2: Each county can submit projects to be scored. The staff person or steering committee members can also submit projects for scoring.
- Task 3: Hold meeting to score and prioritize projects for the region.

Grant Writing

The Steering Committee uniformly identified grant writing as a necessary function of the Collaborative. The program coordinator will need to research what grants the Collaborative is eligible for, what the timelines are for those grants and which ones will fund the priority activities for the Collaborative.

- Task 1: Research potential funding sources for regional projects

- Task 2: Develop a timeline for when grant applications need to be submitted.
- Task 3: Write and submit grant applications. (This activity will probably require the assistance of a contractor)

Appendix I: Methodology

CPW pursued the following activities to assist the Collaborative in identifying potential strategies for regional collaboration and hazard mitigation implementation:

Review of Existing Literature on Regional Collaboration - CPW reviewed approximately 15 publications on regional collaboration and hazard mitigation from both academic sources and best-practices guides in order to gain a broader understanding of the body of knowledge surrounding this subject.

Case Study Research - CPW researched 11 different regional collaboratives throughout the United States and compared the structures, organization, successes, and other factors to gain a greater understanding of how principles from the existing literature fit into actual practice.

Successful Hazard Mitigation Implementation - In order to understand how other entities have successfully implemented hazard mitigation plans, CPW researched two counties in Oregon that have successfully implemented their hazard mitigation plans.

Mid-Columbia Gorge Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans Review and Analysis - CPW reviewed six plans from the Mid-Columbia Gorge counties, analyzed the plans, and looked for similarities and differences in overall structure as well as between the specific goals and action items.

Collaborative Interviews - In order to get a better understanding of the perspective and expectations of the Collaborative, CPW interviewed each of the 7 members of the Collaborative.

Collaborative Meeting - After the initial research stage CPW presented their findings to the Collaborative and received feedback. CPW collected information from the Collaborative regarding the future direction for developing a collaborative model.

Collaborative Options Memo - CPW put together four potential options for each of the components of a collaborative model. The options were sent to Collaborative members with a web survey to provide feedback.

Model Selection - CPW used the cumulative information from all of the above project components along with Collaborative input to develop a recommended model for the implementation of Hazard Mitigation in the Mid-Columbia River Gorge.

Proposal Feedback - CPW presented the proposed collaborative model to the Steering Committee on May 28, 2008. CPW incorporated the feedback and changes from that meeting into the recommendations in this document.

Appendix II: Potential Funding Sources

Funding Source	Part of Hazard Cycle	Eligible Organizations	What They Fund
Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S)	Prevention, Mitigation	Fire departments, and national, regional, state, local, or community organizations recognized for their experience and expertise in fire prevention and safety programs and activities. These include private and public nonprofit organizations.	Applicants can apply for up to three projects, including Public education campaigns, Smoke Alarms, Sprinkler Awareness, Code Enforcement/Awareness, Firefighter Safety, Training, Wildfire Prevention /Awareness, Arson Prevention/Awareness, Risk Assessment, and General Prevention/Awareness. Applicants requesting Risk Assessments are precluded for applying for additional projects
Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)	Response	Fire departments (both career and volunteer) and fire fighter organizations	To provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations in order to help them increase the number of trained, "front-line" firefighters available in their communities
Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) - State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)	Preparedness and Planning	Governor designated State Administrative Agency	SHSP supports the implementation of State Homeland Security Strategies to address the identified planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs for acts of terrorism and other catastrophic events. In addition, SHSP supports the implementation of the National Preparedness Guidelines, the National Incident Management System, and the National Response Framework
Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG)	Response	Fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations	Funds for critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards
Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)	Preparedness, Mitigation, Comprehensive Coordination	State and local Jurisdictions	Sustain and enhance catastrophic planning capabilities, to include addressing the findings of the FEMA gap analysis program and similar capability assessment efforts, and assisting state and local jurisdictions to address national and regional catastrophic planning needs. In FY 2008, specific planning focus areas of evacuation planning, logistics and resource management, continuity of operations (COOP) / continuity of government (COG) planning, and recovery planning have been identified as national planning focus areas

Funding Source	Part of Hazard Cycle	Eligible Organizations	What They Fund
Public Safety Foundation of America (subsidiary of the Association for Public Safety Officials)	Planning and Preparedness	APCO International Committees and Approved Project Groups and Task Forces, APCO Partner Organizations (nonprofit only), APCO Subsidiary Organizations and Parent	Planning and Coordination – expenses related to determining how best to plan for or coordinate a major organizational public safety communications project. Strategic Initiatives – expenses related to high level programs addressing organizational challenges and issues related to improving the overall quality of a public safety communications agency or organization. PSAP Equipment and Technology – expenses associated with the physical equipment required for an acquisition or upgrade within a public safety communications agency or organization. Education – expenses associated with developing and implementing programs to educate public safety agencies and other stakeholders about the importance of public safety communications or public safety communications issues.
Citizen Corps Program (CCP)	Emergency Preparedness	Grant recipients must register their Citizen Corps Council on the Citizen Corps website (http://www.citizencorps.gov) and manage their program and contact information listed on the site	Bringing together the appropriate leadership to form and sustain a Citizen Corps Council; Developing and implementing a plan or amend existing plans to achieve and expand citizen preparedness and participation; Conducting public education and outreach; Ensure clear alerts/warnings and emergency communications with the public; Develop training programs for the public, for both all-hazards preparedness and volunteer responsibilities; Facilitate citizen participation in exercises; Implement volunteer programs and activities to support emergency responders; Involve citizens in surge capacity roles and responsibilities during an incident in alignment with the Emergency Support Functions and Annexes; Conduct valuations of programs and activities.

Appendix III: Bridge Year Timeline

Bridge Year Timeline

Activity	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Counties commit to funding and participation															
Outreach to other potential members															
First official meeting of the Collaborative steering Committee															
Finalize mission, vision, and goals for the Colaborative															
Sign Memorandum of Understanding															
Finalize costs for the first year operations of the Collaborative															
Steering Committee meeting, decide who will write the application for the RARE participant.															
Apply for a RARE Participant															
Interview/hire a RARE participant															

Appendix IV: Sample Public Service Announcements

The following Public Service Announcements are from the Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control. The Collaborative may be able to use some of these scripts directly or they can use them as templates to write Mid-Columbia Gorge specific PSAs.

Script 1:

This is an important message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you're under a hurricane [severe storm] watch or warning, you should take important steps to prepare for the storm:

- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and emergency shelters.
- Make plans to protect people with special needs and pets.
- Stock your home and vehicle with emergency supplies.
- Secure or protect potential home hazards, such as utilities.
- Stay tuned to your radio or television and listen to local authorities.

Script:

This is an important message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Home fires are a threat after a natural disaster and fire trucks may have trouble getting to your home. If the power is out, use flashlights or other battery-powered lights if possible, instead of candles. If you must use them, place candles in safe holders away from anything that could catch fire. Never leave a burning candle unattended. To learn more, call the CDC at 800-CDC-INFO.

Script:

This is an important message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. After a storm, many roads may be flooded. Avoid driving through these areas, especially when the water is moving fast. Drownings can result from driving through water. In fact, as little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle, and as little as two feet of water will carry most cars away. To learn more, call the CDC at 800-CDC-INFO.

More PSA scripts and public information for emergency preparedness can be found at the Department of Health and Human Services CDC website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/psa/driving.asp>.