

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

Historically, the residents of the Thurston region have experienced the effects of various natural hazards. The most prevalent natural hazards have been flooding, earthquakes, storms, and landslides. As the population of the county has increased, so has the potential for exposure to natural hazards, putting the area's residents at a greater risk than in the past.

Thurston County, home to a population of 207,355 during the official census in the year 2000, is characterized by a diverse landscape and climate. This diversity lends itself to the risk for natural hazards associated with the terrain, weather, and soil conditions. Since 1962, there have been 17 federally declared disasters. Most recently was the February, 2001 Nisqually Earthquake which reached a magnitude of 6.8. The following day, the Governor requested federal assistance and estimated the economic consequences at two billion dollars.

In an effort to manage risk, contain costs, and promote sustainable communities, the Federal government outlined new mitigation planning requirements for local governments in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. Although it is difficult to predict when the next disaster will occur, or the extent of an event, collaborative among between public entities, private sector organizations and the citizens of the region will help minimize or mitigate the resulting losses.

### Multi-Jurisdictional Planning Effort

Natural hazard mitigation is defined as development and implementation of activities designed to reduce or eliminate losses resulting from natural hazards. In 2002, in response to the identified need in Thurston County for formal natural hazards mitigations planning, the County applied for and received grant funding from the Washington State Military Department and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This grant, along with the associated local match has been used to develop this planning document that addresses the hazards that have historically occurred most prevalently and have caused the most damage. Those hazards are earthquake, landslide, storm and flooding.

Early in 2003, Thurston County invited local jurisdictions and taxing entities in the Thurston region to join with them in a multi-jurisdictional planning effort. Fifteen entities have fully participated in the planning process and are covered by the plan. They are as follows:

- Thurston County
- City of Lacey
- City of Olympia
- City of Tumwater
- City of Tenino
- City of Yelm

Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation  
 Intercity Transit  
 Olympia School District  
 Rainier School District  
 The Evergreen State College  
 Thurston County Fire Chiefs Association (on behalf of Fire Districts #4, 9, and 13)  
 Tumwater School District

This plan marks the beginning step towards a formal process for natural hazard mitigation planning in Thurston County. It establishes a framework of research, information, and public education/involvement that can be expanded in the future to meet the needs of the region.

## Plan Criteria

FEMA Region X set out the following plan criteria as required in 44 CFR, Part 201 of the Federal Register. For a local plan to receive FEMA approval, all the plan criteria must receive a satisfactory or outstanding rating as well as the plan must be adopted by the governing bodies of the jurisdictions. The following table outlines the criteria and the chapter or appendix in the plan that addresses that specific requirement.

| Element | Criteria  | Chapter Number   |
|---------|---|------------------|
| 1       | Multi-jurisdictional Plan Adoption                    | Appendix A       |
| 2       | Multi-jurisdictional Planning Participation           | 2 and Appendix A |
| 3       | Documentation of Planning Process                     | 2                |
| 4       | Identifying Hazards                                   | 4                |
| 5       | Profiling Hazard Events                               | 4                |
| 6       | Assessing Vulnerability: Identifying Assets           | 4                |
| 7       | Assessing Vulnerability: Estimating Potential Losses  | 4                |
| 8       | Assessing Vulnerability: Analyzing Development Trends | 3                |
| 9       | Multi-Jurisdictional Risk Assessment                  | 4                |
| 10      | Local Hazard Mitigation Goals                         | 5                |
| 11      | Implementation of Mitigation Measures                 | 5                |
| 12      | Multi-jurisdictional Mitigation Measures              | 5                |
| 13      | Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating the Plan          | 6                |
| 14      | Implementation through Existing Programs              | 6                |
| 15      | Continued Public Involvement                          | 6                |