

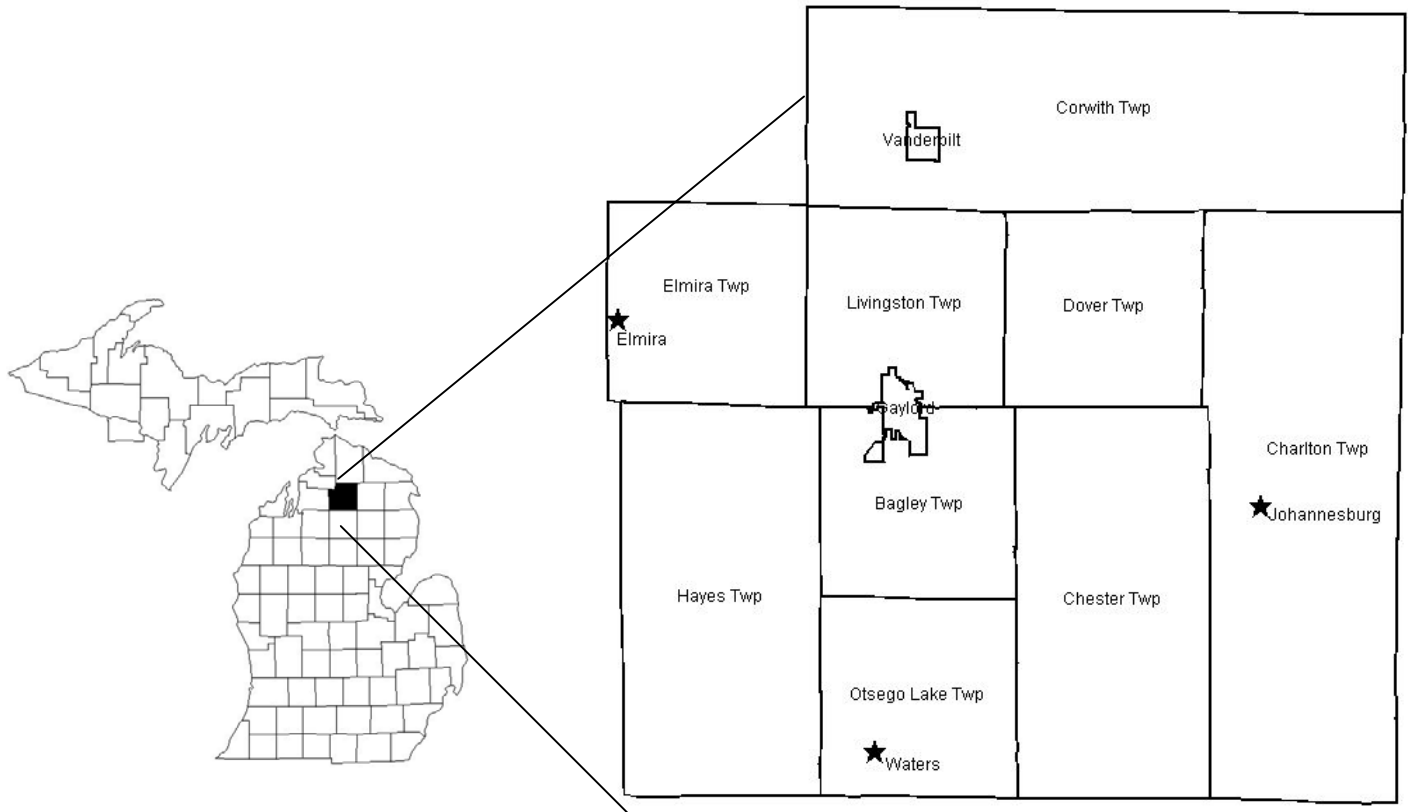
## Chapter 1 - Introduction



**Otsego County**, first known as "Okkuddo" County, was created from Michilimackinac County in 1840. Three years later, the county was renamed Otsego County after Otsego County, New York. The county is located in the north central portion of Lower Peninsula. The county is composed of nine townships: Corwith Township, Elmira Township, Livingston Township, Dover Township, Hayes Township, Bagley Township, Otsego Lake Township, Chester Township, and Charlton Township. Also located in Otsego County are two incorporated units; the City of Gaylord (the county seat) and the Village of Vanderbilt and three unincorporated places; Waters, Elmira and Johannesburg (**Figure 1-1**).

### **Location and Regional Setting**

Otsego County is bordered on the north by Cheboygan County, on the east by Montmorency County, on the south by Crawford County and on the west by Charlevoix and Antrim Counties. The county is located on the north/south I-75 corridor that receives extensive tourist traffic from the lower, more populated regions of the state. Otsego County is 60 miles from Lake Michigan, 55 miles from the Straits of Mackinac to the north, and 70 miles from Lake Huron to the east. Otsego County has a total land and surface water area of 337,415 acres.



**Figure 1-1, Otsego County Political Units**

## ***Purpose and Approach***

### **What is Hazard Mitigation Planning?**

In partnership with eight counties in Northeastern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) worked with each county in its region to prepare hazard mitigation plans. The Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 included new requirements for hazard mitigation planning. In order to become eligible for hazard mitigation grant program funds in the future, counties must prepare and adopt hazard mitigation plans. The DMA requires that local hazard mitigation plans that meet the requirements of the act must be in place by November 2004.

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

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

- Develop community profile and identify community hazards and risks
- Identification and definition of goals and objectives
- Identification of alternatives for solving problems
- Selection of evaluation criteria
- Selection of Alternatives
- Preparation of final plan
- Implementation of plan
- Monitoring and periodic revision of the plan

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

### ***Information Collection***

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

### **Geographic Information System Support**

NEMCOG's Geographic Information System (GIS) was used as a decision support tool and public education tool throughout the process. Existing data sets were incorporated and new data sets created in order to analyze existing conditions and study potential future scenarios. Specialized maps showing community hazards, land cover/use, infrastructure, topography, soils, national wetlands inventory, forest

cover, gas and oil wells, zoning, future land use and community facilities were prepared as part of the plan development. Maps helped identify community characteristics, vulnerable populations, and hazard areas. GIS data and maps will be retained by the community for future use to help implement and monitor hazard mitigation activities.

### **Increased Community Awareness of Hazards and Hazard Mitigation**

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

### **Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee**

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

### ***Community Involvement***

The planning process provided several opportunities for public, community and agency input and comments. Public meetings involved the County Board of Commissioners during plan development and the draft plan was presented for commissioners' approval. Staff met with the Local Emergency Planning Committee during plan development. The group, together with the Emergency Management Director, was instrumental in guiding plan development. Public meetings were advertised and held in Crawford County. Notices of the public meetings were sent to LEPC members and local communities officials. Meeting notices were also published in the local newspaper, the Gaylord Herald Times.

### **Meetings**

Otsego County LEPC, Jan 20, 2003. Project kick-off and organization.

Otsego County Michigan Township Association, March 17, 2003. HMP program introduction.

Meeting with Otsego EMD, June 2, 2003. Data availability and planning.

Otsego County LEPC, September 15, 2004. Hazard ranking.

Otsego County, LEPC Public Meeting, Jan. 19, 2004. A Public meeting to discuss Goals and objectives for the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Otsego County, LEPC, Feb. 23, 2004, program review.

Otsego County, LEPC, April 19, 2004, project identification

Otsego County, LEPC, August 16, 2004, progress update

Otsego County, Michigan, Township Association, September 21, 2004 progress update and project identification review

Otsego County LEPC, October 18, 2004, action prioritization and plan implementation

Otsego County LEPC, January 17, 2005, project review and adoption planning.

### **Governmental Participation**

During the two-year development of the Otsego Hazard Mitigation Plan representatives from all local governmental units participated directly in one or more planning and prioritization meetings held around the county. In addition to Otsego County government, other governmental units involved in the process were: involved governmental units were:

Bagley Township	Hayes Township
Chester Township	Livingston Township
Corwith Township	Otsego Lake Township
Dover Township	City of Gaylord
Elmira Township	Village of Vanderbilt

### **Community Surveys**

Early in the planning process, a local officials survey was sent to all township boards and the Otsego County Board of Commissioners. This survey was used to gather information on community understanding and perception of natural and technological hazards and community preparedness. The results were used to help guide the planning effort and as a gauge to compare information gathered from external sources and local officials understanding of hazard issues. A summary of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

### **Public Input for Plan Approval**

A copy of the draft plan on CD was sent to local communities and any agencies requesting a copy for review. In addition, printed copies of the plan were available for review at the Otsego County Emergency Management Office:

### **Review and Adoption of Plan**

The steering committee, stakeholders and the public reviewed an early draft plan. Comments and suggestions obtained in this review process were incorporated into the final plan. The final plan contains mitigation strategies and an action plan that assigns priorities for specific hazards and mitigation measures; defines roles and responsibilities; and identifies the process for reviewing and updating the plan. Upon final approval, the hazard mitigation plan will be presented to the Otsego County Board of Commissioners, the Gaylord City Council and the Vanderbilt Village Council for their review and adoption.

### ***Recommended Plan Implementation Process***

A Hazard Mitigation Committee (HMC), was formed from members of the County LEPC, and will be the local group responsible for overseeing implementation of this plan. The Otsego County Emergency Management Director will function on an ad-hoc basis as county staff providing program administration and project oversight. The HMC will develop a five-year action list of projects from the mitigation strategies identified in the Otsego County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The HMC should review the hazard mitigation plan each year, to determine what projects have been accomplished and add new projects to the five-year action list. The Hazard Mitigation Committee may assist other agencies to identify steps needed to accomplish a chosen project, such as funding sources, staff and agencies required to complete project, timelines and overall project costs. It should be understood, that HMC involvement will be determined by available emergency management staff time.

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

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