



**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Assistant County Administrator /
Department of General Services**

Date: May 31, 2017
To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners
Thru: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Thru: Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator
From: Beth Powell, Conservation Lands Manager
Subject: Notice of Application for Hurricane Matthew HMGP Grant Funding

DESCRIPTIONS AND CONDITIONS:

On February 8, 2017, the Florida Division of Emergency Management announced the availability of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds resulting from the Presidential Disaster Declaration for Hurricane Matthew (FEMA 4283-DR-FL). The purpose of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is to assist communities in implementing hazard mitigation measures following a major federal disaster declaration. The HMGP program is a federally funded program that is allocated and distributed by the State. There are three funding tiers: Tier One is the initial allocation of submitted and eligible projects which are funded in order of priority as endorsed by the LMS Working Group; Tier Two and Three allocates remaining funds to applicants whose projects are not funded through the Tier One phase as funding is available.

HMGP is a cost-reimbursement grant program and will fund up to 75% for eligible projects. The 25% match may be a combination of cash and in-kind sources. Hazard mitigation is any action taken to reduce or eliminate long term risk to people and property from natural hazards. Indian River County is an eligible applicant as it has a FEMA-approved local mitigation plan and has a formally adopted Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) (Resolution No. 2010-059 adopted on July 13, 2010, and revised Resolution No. 2015-078 adopted July 7, 2015). Indian River County's estimated funding allocation for Hurricane Matthew is \$437,838.87.

Indian River County's LMS Working Group members met on January 6, 2017, and created a prioritized project list for the HMGP eligible projects. That list was narrowed down to a total of 18 projects that were considered not only eligible, but practical. This list was revised again in April 2017 after Florida Division of Emergency Management review and narrowed further to a list of 12 county-wide projects which included Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ranked #1) and Conservation Area Prescribed Burn (ranked #6) for the purpose of reducing wildfire threats by creating defensible space through vegetation management.

THE PROJECT:

Two conservation lands projects were identified and approved on the LMS list and ranked by the LMS Working Group. Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area ranked #1 for the creation of defensible space within 10 acres adjacent to the Forest Park Subdivision, a highly vulnerable area due to the proximity of homes, dense vegetation and lack of access for emergency suppression in the event

of a wildfire. The second project for consideration ranked #6 and would provide a combination of wildfire reduction activities and possible prescribed burns (to reduce wildfire threat) on vulnerable conservation areas throughout the county.

Project Priority #1 – Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area – Wildfire Protection

Creation of approximately 10 acres of defensible and accessible space created through vegetation management along the perimeter of the north property line adjacent to Forest Park Subdivision. This project was initially estimated to cost approximately \$50,000. Upon receiving a bid from a contractor to conduct the work, the cost has been revised to \$65,000. This project would protect over 70 homes that were built in the late 1970s and early 80s. Some homes are wood frame construction and have wood shake roofs, creating a higher level of vulnerability. At this time there is no defensible space and many homes that immediately abut the conservation area have less than 10 feet of property with mature vegetation that creates an elevated threat. Creating a defensible space includes establishing a firebreak which can be maintained, reduction of fuel and vegetation that would cause probable harm to adjacent and surrounding homes and businesses in the event of a wildfire, provide emergency vehicle access in the event of a wildfire and further reduce the threat of windblown debris in the event of a storm. Wildfire mitigation activities will reduce emergency costs in the event of a wildfire and provide safe access for emergency management.

Project Priority #6 – Conservation Areas Prescribed Burn & Wildfire Protection

Vegetation management, firebreak installation and prescribed burns (if conditions allow) on conservation lands throughout the county that have a high likelihood or history of wildfire. At this time, 10 conservation areas have been identified as being vulnerable to wildfire. These conservation areas contain over 1,200 acres of vulnerable habitat and 4 have historically had wildfires, some more than once within the last 17 years. Grant funding would be utilized to create firebreaks, reduce vegetation and conduct prescribed burns (if conditions allow). Each year county staff work with the Florida Forestry Services Mediation Team to provide wildfire protection to vulnerable conservation areas and private lands, however, this team is only available to the entire district two weeks out of the year. Forestry and county staff identify the most vulnerable areas, but due to limited time, this leaves many areas untreated until conditions worsen. This project would provide funding to create defensible space, reduce wildfire threat and reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfires. All of the conservation areas identified lie within highly urban areas with homes and businesses vulnerable to damage caused by wildfire. In addition, these homes and businesses may not have adequate defensible space creating increased cost and more difficult conditions for emergency responders. Funding for this project has been revised from \$255,000 after review by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) for eligibility to \$150,000 as equipment purchase is not an eligible expense. The funds provided would utilize contractors and the Florida Forestry Services (FFS) (if available) to install firebreaks, reduce vegetation and create defensible space on each property identified. County and FFS staff will create a fire management plan for each conservation area further assisting in long-term management and maintenance. Any funding remaining will be allocated to highly vulnerable county-owned parcels (i.e. Sandridge Golf Course and the Shooting Range) and secondarily to other vulnerable municipal properties (i.e. Vero Beach Airport or Sebastian Airport) and private lands with owner consent.

FUNDING:

A potential funding source identified for both projects is the Native Upland Mitigation Fund (12721037-033490). If awarded, the grant agreement will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for final funding approval and grant execution. Project #1 – Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area would require a match of \$16,250 of cash and/or in-kind services. Project #6 – Conservation Area Prescribed Burns would require a match of \$37,500 of cash and/or in-kind

services. It is anticipated that \$10,000 would be in-kind services for mapping, prescribed burn plan creation and other staff time related to the project leaving a \$27,500 cash match by the County.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- Authorization for staff to finalize and submit the HMGP Application for Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area, identified by the LMS as Project Priority #1 for Indian River County in the amount of \$65,000, and further authorize the County Administrator to sign the grant application after review by the County Attorney for legal sufficiency.
- Authorization for staff to finalize and submit the HMGP Application for Conservation Area Prescribed Burn & Wildfire Protection, identified by the LMS as Project Priority #6 for Indian River County in the amount of \$150,000, and further authorize the County Administrator to sign the grant application after review by the County Attorney for legal sufficiency.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Indian River County Local Mitigation Strategy Project Prioritization list for HMGP Applications related to Hurricane Matthew (FEMA-4283-DR) updated April 5, 2017.

Attachment B – State of Florida – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Application Form

Attachment C – LMS Approval Letter dated May 12, 2017 and signed by John King, Director – LMS Chairman – Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area

Attachment D – LMS Approval Letter dated May 12, 2017 and signed by John King, Director – LMS Chairman – Conservation Area Prescribed Burn