

# Forest County 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Prepared for:

Forest County Conservation  
District and Planning  
Department  
526 Elm Street  
Tionesta, PA 16353

Prepared by:

MCM Consulting Group,  
Inc.  
328 Innovation Boulevard  
State College, PA 16803



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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**Certification of Annual Review Meetings**

YEAR	DATE OF MEETING	PUBLIC OUTREACH ADDRESSED? *	SIGNATURE
2025			
2026			
2027			
2028			
2029			

*\*Confirm yes here annually and describe on record of change page.*

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2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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**Record of Changes**

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE MADE, MITIGATION ACTION COMPLETED, OR PUBLIC OUTREACH PERFORMED	CHANGE MADE BY (PRINT NAME)	CHANGE MADE BY (SIGNATURE)

*Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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**Table of Contents**

<b>Certification of Annual Review Meetings</b> .....	2
<b>Record of Changes</b> .....	3
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	4
<b>Tables</b> .....	9
<b>Acronyms/Initialisms</b> .....	12
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	16
<b>1.1. Background</b> .....	19
<b>1.2. Purpose</b> .....	19
<b>1.3. Scope</b> .....	20
<b>1.4. Authority and References</b> .....	20
<b>2. Community Profile</b> .....	22
<b>2.1. Geography and the Environment</b> .....	22
<b>2.2. Community Facts</b> .....	23
<b>2.3. Population and Demographics</b> .....	24
<b>2.4. Land Use and Development</b> .....	28
<b>2.5 Data Sources</b> .....	29
<b>3. Planning Process</b> .....	36
<b>3.1. Update Process and Participation Summary</b> .....	36
<b>3.2. The Planning Team</b> .....	37
<b>3.3. Meetings and Documentation</b> .....	39
<b>3.4. Public and Stakeholder Participation</b> .....	41
<b>3.5. Multi-Jurisdictional Planning</b> .....	42
<b>4. Risk Assessment</b> .....	44
<b>4.1. Update Process Summary</b> .....	44
<b>4.2. Hazard Identification</b> .....	45
<b>4.2.1. Presidential and Gubernatorial Disaster Declarations</b> .....	45
<b>4.2.2. Summary of Hazards</b> .....	46
<b>4.2.3. Climate Change</b> .....	52



*Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

<b>4.3. Hazard Profiles</b>	<b>54</b>
4.3.1. Drought	54
4.3.2. Earthquake	65
4.3.3. Extreme Temperatures	76
4.3.4. Flooding, Flash Flooding, and Ice Jam Flooding	84
4.3.5. Hailstorm	96
4.3.6. Hurricane, Tropical Storm	101
4.3.7. Invasive Species	109
4.3.8. Landslides	122
4.3.9. Lightning Strike	128
4.3.10. Pandemic, Epidemic, Endemic, and Infectious Disease	133
4.3.11. Radon Exposure	145
4.3.12. Subsidence and Sinkhole	157
4.3.13. Tornadoes/Windstorm	164
4.3.14. Wildfire	178
4.3.15. Winter Storm	187
4.3.16. Building/Structural Collapse/Blighted Properties	201
4.3.17. Civil Disturbance	204
4.3.18. Dam Failure	208
4.3.19. Disorientation	217
4.3.20. Drowning	220
4.3.21. Environmental Hazards	224
4.3.22. Substance Use Disorder	234
4.3.23. Terrorism/ Cyberterrorism	243
4.3.24. Transportation Accidents	253
4.3.25. Urban Fire and Explosion	260
4.3.26. Utility Interruptions	264
<b>4.4. Hazard Vulnerability Summary</b>	<b>272</b>
4.4.1. Methodology	272
4.4.2. Ranking Results	274
4.4.3. Potential Loss Estimates	278

*Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

4.4.4.	Future Development and Vulnerability .....	279
5.	Capability Assessment.....	280
5.1.	Update Process Summary .....	280
5.2.	Capability Assessment Findings .....	281
5.2.1.	Planning and Regulatory Capability.....	281
5.2.2.	Administrative and Technical Capability.....	288
5.2.3.	Financial Capability.....	292
5.2.4.	Education and Outreach .....	295
5.2.5.	Plan Integration .....	296
6.	Mitigation Strategy .....	299
6.1.	Update Process Summary.....	299
6.2.	Mitigation Goals and Objectives.....	308
6.3.	Identification and Analysis of Mitigation Techniques .....	310
6.4.	Mitigation Action Plan.....	313
7.	Plan Maintenance .....	339
7.1.	Update Process Summary .....	339
7.2.	Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating the Plan .....	339
7.3.	Continued Public Involvement .....	340
8.	Plan Adoption .....	342
8.1.	Resolutions .....	342
9.	Appendices .....	343
APPENDIX A:	References .....	343
APPENDIX B:	FEMA Local Mitigation Review Tool.....	343
APPENDIX C:	Meetings and Support Documents.....	343
APPENDIX D:	Municipal Flood Maps .....	343
APPENDIX E:	Critical and Community Lifeline Facilities.....	343
APPENDIX F:	2025 HAZUS Reports .....	343
APPENDIX G:	2025 Mitigation Project Opportunities .....	343
APPENDIX H:	2025 Mitigation Action Evaluation & Prioritization .....	343
APPENDIX I:	Annual Review Documentation .....	343
APPENDIX J:	Forest County & Municipal Adoption Resolutions.....	343

# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

## **Figures**

Figure 1 - Koppen-Geiger Climate Map .....	22
Figure 2 - Unemployment Rate Jan. 2014 to Aug. 2024 .....	26
Figure 3 - Forest County Basemap .....	32
Figure 4 - Forest County Watersheds .....	33
Figure 5 - Forest County Population Density .....	34
Figure 6 - Forest County Land Use.....	35
Figure 7 – Forest County Palmer Drought Severity Index 1924-2024 .....	58
Figure 8 - Current Drought Index for Pennsylvania .....	59
Figure 9 - Palmer Drought Severity Index.....	63
Figure 10 - Drought- Vulnerable Land Use and Public Water Supply .....	64
Figure 11 - Ramapo Fault System .....	65
Figure 12 - Pennsylvania Earthquake Hazard Zones .....	73
Figure 13 - Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Geology.....	74
Figure 14 - Pennsylvania Recorded Earthquake Events .....	75
Figure 15 - National Weathers Service's Heat Index Matrix .....	77
Figure 16 - National Weather Service's Wind Chill Matrix .....	77
Figure 17 - Observed and Projected Temperature Change for Pennsylvania .....	79
Figure 18 - Average Minimum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania.....	82
Figure 19 - Average Maximum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania .....	83
Figure 20 - Flooding and Floodplain Diagram .....	85
Figure 21 - Loss by Occupancy Type .....	88
Figure 22 - Historic Tropical Storms/Hurricanes in Pennsylvania.....	107
Figure 23 - Historic Tropical Storms/Hurricanes in Forest County .....	107
Figure 24 - Pennsylvania Wind Zones.....	108
Figure 25 - Emerald Ash Borer Infestation in Pennsylvania .....	110
Figure 26 - Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Infestation in Pennsylvania.....	111
Figure 27 - Pennsylvania Spotted Lanternfly Infestation .....	121
Figure 28 - Landslide Hazard Areas .....	127
Figure 29 - United States Lighting Risk Rating.....	131
Figure 30 - U.S. Lighting Strike Fatalities 2018 to 2022.....	132
Figure 31 - Pennsylvania Department of Health Districts .....	144
Figure 32 - Sketch of Radon Entry Points into a House .....	147
Figure 33 - Pennsylvania Radon Levels .....	155
Figure 34 - Radon Levels by Zip Code.....	156
Figure 35 - Sinkhole Susceptibility in Pennsylvania .....	162
Figure 36 - Unsuitable Areas for Mining in Pennsylvania .....	163
Figure 37 - Tornado Activity in Forest County .....	175
Figure 38 - Tornado Activity in Pennsylvania.....	177

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

Figure 39 - Seasonal Wildfire Percentages .....	182
Figure 40 - Wildland Urban Interface.....	185
Figure 41 - Fire Station Locations .....	185
Figure 42 - Pennsylvania Annual snowfall 1981-2010.....	199
Figure 43 - Winter Storm Events by County in Pennsylvania.....	200
Figure 44 - Forest County Dams.....	216
Figure 45 - Forest County Disorientation Vulnerability.....	219
Figure 46 - Drowning Hazards- Water Features.....	223
Figure 47 - Oil and Gas Well Locations .....	230
Figure 48 - Hazardous Waste Locations .....	231
Figure 49 - Environmental Hazard Transportation Vulnerability.....	232
Figure 50 - Annual Truck Traffic Percentages .....	233
Figure 51 - Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2022.....	241
Figure 52 - Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2023.....	242
Figure 53 - Active Shooter Incidents - 20 Year Active Shooter Summary .....	247
Figure 54 - Education Environments .....	248
Figure 55 - Major Transportation Routes .....	257
Figure 56 - Average Daily Traffic on Major Highway Vulnerability .....	258
Figure 57 - Utility Pipelines Vulnerability .....	259
Figure 58 - Forest County Working Fires.....	263
Figure 59 - Forest County Utility Interruption Vulnerability .....	271

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

---

**Tables**

Table 1 - Watersheds in Forest County.....	23
Table 2 - National Register of Historic Places in Forest County.....	24
Table 3 - Population Change in Forest County.....	25
Table 4 - Forest County Top Employers.....	27
Table 5 - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024 Annual Averages in Forest County .....	27
Table 6 - Steering Committee.....	37
Table 7 - Local Planning Team.....	38
Table 8 - HMP Process Timeline.....	39
Table 9 - Municipality Worksheets, Surveys, and Forms Participation .....	43
Table 10 - Presidential & Gubernatorial Disaster Declarations.....	45
Table 11 - Drought Preparation Phases .....	55
Table 12 - Palmer Drought Severity Index .....	56
Table 13 - Economic and Environmental Impacts of Drought Events .....	57
Table 14 - Past Drought Events in Forest County .....	57
Table 15 - Richter Scale.....	66
Table 16 - Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale .....	67
Table 17 - Recent Earthquake Trends in Northeastern United States .....	70
Table 18 - Past Extreme Temperature Occurrences for Forest County .....	78
Table 19 - Flood Hazard High Risk Zones .....	85
Table 20 - HAZUS Building Economic Loss Figures .....	87
Table 21 - HAZUS Business Interruption Economic Loss Figures.....	88
Table 22 - Past Flood and Flash Flood Events .....	89
Table 23 - Repetitive Loss Properties .....	90
Table 24 - Summary of Type of Repetitive Loss Properties by Municipality.....	90
Table 25 - Municipal NFIP Policies & Vulnerability .....	90
Table 26 - Flood Probability Summary .....	91
Table 27 - Expected Damage to Essential Facilities (HAZUS).....	92
Table 28 - County Structures Within Special Flood Hazard Area.....	93
Table 29 - Size of Hail In Related Terms .....	96
Table 30 - National Weather Service Hail Reports .....	97
Table 31 - Saffir- Simpson Scale .....	102
Table 32 - History of Coastal Storms Impacting Forest County .....	103
Table 33 - Annual Probability of Wind Speeds .....	103
Table 34 - Prevalent Invasive Species .....	112
Table 35 - Future Vulnerable Species.....	114
Table 36 - Structure Vulnerability Data.....	124
Table 37 - Pandemic Influenza Phases .....	135
Table 38 - Past Pandemic Events in the United States .....	137

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

Table 39 - West Nile Virus Control Program in Forest County since 2018 .....	138
Table 40 - Lyme Disease Data for Forest County .....	138
Table 41 - Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers.....	148
Table 42 - Radon Test Results in Forest County .....	150
Table 43 - Suggested Actions and Time Frame for Exposures to Radon Daughters .....	151
Table 44 - Enhanced Fujita Scale .....	166
Table 45 - Forest County Tornado History .....	168
Table 46 - Forest County High Wind History .....	169
Table 47 - Wildland Fire Assessment System .....	179
Table 48 - Annual Summary of Wildfire Events .....	180
Table 49 - NESIS Winter Storm Rankings .....	188
Table 50 - Recent Annual Snowfall Estimates .....	190
Table 51 - Forest County Winter Weather History .....	191
Table 52 - Population per Municipality under 5 Years or 65 Years or Older .....	196
Table 53 - Civil Disturbance Events Reported to PEMA 2018-2023.....	206
Table 54 - High- Hazard Dams Municipality Summary.....	209
Table 55 - Forest County Dam Inventory .....	209
Table 56 - Dam Classification .....	211
Table 57 - High- Hazard Potential Dams Risk Type .....	212
Table 58 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data.....	214
Table 59 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data- Infrastructure .....	215
Table 60 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data- Infrastructure (Additional).....	215
Table 61 - Hazardous Material Incidents.....	226
Table 62 - Oil and Gas Wells & Drinking Water Wells .....	228
Table 63 - Drug Overdose Mortality in Forest County.....	236
Table 64 - Drugs Present in 2020 Pennsylvania Overdose Deaths.....	236
Table 65 - PennDOT Crash Report for Forest County .....	254
Table 66 - Forest County Utility Providers.....	264
Table 67 - Utility Interruptions in Forest County .....	266
Table 68 - 2018 Winter Storms Riley and Quinn Power Outages.....	267
Table 69 - Risk Factor Value .....	272
Table 70 - Risk Factor Approach Summary .....	273
Table 71 - Risk Factor Assessment.....	274
Table 72 - Countywide Risk Factor .....	275
Table 73 - 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives Review.....	299
Table 74 - 2020 Mitigation Actions Review.....	302
Table 75 - 2025 Goals and Objectives .....	309
Table 76 - Mitigation Strategy Technique Matrix .....	312
Table 77 - 2025 Mitigation Action Plan .....	317
Table 78 - Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist.....	334
Table 79 - Objectives to Action Checklist.....	336

*Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

---

Table 80 - Actions Tied to Hazard.....	336
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# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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## **Acronyms/Initialisms**

AACT:	American Academy of Clinical Toxicology
ACHA:	American College Health Association
ACMT:	American College of Medical Toxicology
AHJ:	Authority Having Jurisdiction
AMD:	Acid Mine Drainage
ANSI:	American National Standards Institute
ASAM:	American Society of Addiction Medicine
ASHRAE:	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers
ASIRT:	Association for Safe International Road Travel
BFE:	Base Flood Elevation
CBRNE:	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, or Explosive
CDC:	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERT:	Community Emergency Response Team
CFR:	Code of Federal Regulations
CFS:	Commodity Flow Study
CHSN:	College Health Surveillance Network
CCIDRAP:	Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
CRS:	Community Rating System
DCNR:	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
DDAP:	Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
DEA:	Drug Enforcement Administration
DFIRM:	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
DMA:	Disaster Mitigation Act
DPS:	Department of Public Safety
EF:	Enhanced Fujita
EIA:	Energy Information Administration
EMA:	Emergency Management Agency
EMPG:	Emergency Management Performance Grant
EMS:	Emergency Medical Services
EOP:	Emergency Operations Plan



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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EPA:	Environmental Protection Agency
EPCRA:	Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act
EPZ:	Emergency Planning Zone
FBI:	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FEMA:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMA:	Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program
FRA:	Federal Railroad Association
GIS:	Geographic Information Systems/Sciences
HAZUS:	Hazards U.S. Software
HMA:	Hazard Mitigation Assistance
HMEP:	Hazardous Material Emergency Planning Grant
HMGP:	Hazard Mitigation Grant Planning
HMP:	Hazard Mitigation Plan
HMRF:	Hazardous Material Response Fund
HSCA:	Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act
HSGP:	Homeland Security Grant Program
HVE:	Homegrown Violent Extremist
ICC:	International Code Council
IES:	Illuminating Engineering Society
LEPC:	Local Emergency Planning Committee
LGBTQ:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer
LPT:	Local Planning Team
MAT:	Medication-Assisted Treatment
MPC:	Municipalities Planning Code
NARM:	Notification and Resource Manual
NAS:	Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
NCDC:	National Climatic Data Center
NCEI:	National Centers for Environmental Information
NFIP:	National Flood Insurance Program
NFPA:	National Fire Protection Association
NIH:	National Institute of Health

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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NLD:	National Levee Database
NOAA:	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NTP:	Narcotic Treatment Program
NWS:	National Weather Service
OIH:	Opioid-Induced Hyperalgesia
ODU:	Opioid Use Disorder
PA DCED:	Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
PA DEP:	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
PA DOA:	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
PA GWIS:	Pennsylvania Groundwater Information System
PA HART:	Pennsylvania Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team
PAWNVCP:	Pennsylvania West Nile Virus Control Program
PDMP:	Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
PDSI:	Palmer Drought Severity Index
PEMA:	Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
PennDOT:	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PHMSA:	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
PISC:	Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council
POD:	Points of Dispensing
PWSA:	Public Water Service Area
RF:	Risk Factor
SARA:	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SC:	Steering Committee
SFHA:	Special Flood Hazard Area
TRI:	Toxic Release Inventory
UCC:	Uniform Construction Code
US HHS:	United States Department of Health and Human Services
USACE:	United States Army Corp of Engineers
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
USDA FS:	United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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USGS: United States Geological Survey  
WL: Working Level  
WMD: Weapon of Mass Destruction  
WUI: Wildland Urban Interface

# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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## **Executive Summary**

Mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Hazard mitigation focuses attention and resources on county and municipal policies and actions that will produce successive benefits over time. State and local governments engage in hazard mitigation planning to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural as well as human-caused hazards and develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property from future hazard events. Mitigation plans are key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. This plan represents the work of citizens, elected and appointed government officials, business leaders, and volunteer and nonprofit groups to protect community assets, preserve the economic viability of the community, and save lives.

In 2024, the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department contracted the services of a consulting agency to revise and update the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan was successfully updated in accordance with the requirements set forth by PEMA and FEMA. The updated Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted by the Forest County Commissioners in 2021. All nine municipalities adopted the 2020 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan as the municipal hazard mitigation plan, and it is anticipated that all participating municipalities will adopt the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.

The Forest County Commissioners secured a grant to complete the 2025 update to the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan. MCM Consulting Group, Inc. was hired to assist the county with the update of the plan. The planning kick-off meeting was conducted on June 27, 2024.

The planning process for the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update consisted of the following:

- Identification and prioritization of the hazards that may affect the county and its municipalities.
- Assessment of the county's and municipalities' vulnerability to these hazards.
- Identification of the mitigation actions and projects that can reduce that vulnerability.
- Development of a strategy for implementing the actions and projects, including identifying the agency(ies) responsible for that implementation.

Throughout the planning process, the general public was given the opportunity to comment on the existing HMP and provide suggestions for the updated version. Several meetings were held in person with a virtual option, and participants were invited to submit surveys and other documents via an online survey.

The following hazards were identified by the local planning team as presenting the highest risk to the county and its municipalities:

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### Natural hazards:

- Drought
- Earthquake
- Extreme Temperatures
- Flooding, Flash Flooding, Ice Jam Flooding
- Hailstorms
- Hurricane and Tropical Storm
- Invasive Species
- Landslide
- Lightning Strike
- Pandemic and Infectious Disease
- Radon Exposure
- Subsidence and Sinkholes
- Tornado/Windstorm
- Wildfire
- Winter Storm

### Human-caused hazards:

- Blighted Properties
- Civil Disturbance
- Dam Failure
- Disorientation
- Drowning
- Environmental Hazards / Hazardous Materials
- Substance Use Disorder
- Terrorism/Cyberterrorism Incidents
- Transportation Accidents
- Urban Fire and Explosion
- Utility Interruption

A total of twenty-six hazards have been identified in the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan. A total of eighteen identified hazards were listed in the previous 2020 plan update. The new hazards include blighted properties, drowning, extreme temperatures, hailstorms, subsidence and sinkholes, substance use disorder, terrorism/cyberterrorism, and urban fire and explosion.

To mitigate against the effects of these hazards, the local planning team identified the following goals for hazard mitigation over the next five years:

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Reduce potential injury/death and damage to existing community assets due to floods, flash floods, and ice jams.
- Reduce potential injury/death and damage to community assets due to all hazards.
- Promote disaster-resistant future development.
- Promote hazard mitigation as a public value in recognition of its importance to the health, safety, and welfare of the population.
- Improve response and recovery capabilities.
- Protect critical infrastructure.

Mitigation actions are specific projects and activities that help achieve goals. A total of forty-two actions were developed for this plan update as they pertain to hazards identified by the local planning team. The 2020 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan consisted of thirty-one total actions. The individual objectives and actions that will be implemented are shown in Section 6.4. Each municipality was provided the opportunity to submit new project opportunity forms for this update. A total of eighteen project opportunity forms were submitted during the 2020 HMP update. A total of two project opportunities were submitted for this plan update.

The 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan is the cornerstone to reducing Forest County's vulnerability to disasters. It is the commitment to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a guide for decision makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of hazards. Hazard mitigation is the only phase of emergency management specifically dedicated to breaking the cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

The 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan is a living document that reflects ongoing hazard mitigation activities and requires monitoring, evaluating, and updating to ensure the mitigation actions are implemented. To facilitate the hazard mitigation planning process and adhere to regulatory requirements, the plan will be reviewed annually, and any major revisions will be incorporated into the five-year update.

# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Background**

The Forest County Board of Commissioners, in response to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000), organized a countywide hazard mitigation planning effort to prepare, adopt, and implement a multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) for Forest County and all of its nine municipalities. The Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department was charged by the County Board of Commissioners to prepare the 2025 plan. The 2020 HMP has been utilized and maintained during the five-year life cycle.

The Forest County Commissioners were successful in securing hazard mitigation grant funding to update the county hazard mitigation plan. The pre-disaster mitigation grant funding was administered by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and provided to Forest County as a sub-grantee. The Forest County Commissioners assigned the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department with the primary responsibility to update the hazard mitigation plan. MCM Consulting Group, Inc. was selected to complete the update of the HMP. A local hazard mitigation planning team was developed comprised of government leaders and citizens from Forest County. This updated HMP will provide another solid foundation for the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Program.

Hazard mitigation describes sustained actions taken to prevent or minimize long-term risks to life and property from hazards and to create successive benefits over time. Pre-disaster mitigation actions are taken in advance of a hazard event and are essential to breaking the disaster cycles of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. With careful selection, successful mitigation actions are cost-effective means of reducing risk of loss over the long term.

Hazard mitigation planning has the potential to produce long-term and recurring benefits. A core assumption of mitigation is that current dollars invested in mitigation practices will significantly reduce the demand for future dollars by lessening the amount needed for recovery, repair, and reconstruction. These mitigation practices will also enable local residents, businesses, and industries to reestablish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the economy back on track sooner with less interruption.

### **1.2. Purpose**

The purpose of this all-hazard mitigation plan (HMP) is:

- Protect life, safety, and property by reducing the potential for future damages and economic losses that result from hazards.
- Qualify for additional grant funding, in both the pre-disaster and the post-disaster environment.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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- Speed recovery and redevelopment following future disaster events.
- Demonstrate a firm local commitment to hazard mitigation principles.
- Comply with both state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.

### **1.3. Scope**

This Forest County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan serves as a framework for saving lives, protecting assets, and preserving the economic viability of the nine municipalities in Forest County. The HMP outlines actions designed to address and reduce the impact of a full range of natural hazards facing Forest County, including drought, earthquakes, flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes/tropical storms, invasive species, and severe winter weather. Human-caused hazards such as transportation accidents, hazardous materials spills, and fires are also addressed.

A multi-jurisdictional planning approach was utilized for the Forest County HMP update, thereby eliminating the need for each municipality to develop its own approach to hazard mitigation projects, common mitigation goals and objectives, and an evaluation of a broad capabilities assessment examining policies and regulations throughout the county and its municipalities.

### **1.4. Authority and References**

Authority for this plan originates from the following federal sources:

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C., Section 322, as amended
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 44, Parts 201 and 206
- Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, Public Law 106-390, as amended.
- National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4001 et seq.

Authority for this plan originates from the following Commonwealth of Pennsylvania sources:

- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code. Title 35, Pa C.S. Section 101
- Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code of 1968, Act 247 as reenacted and amended by Act 170 of 1988.
- Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act of October 4, 1978. P.L. 864, No. 167

The following Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guides and reference documents were used to prepare this document:

- FEMA 386-1: Getting Started. September 2002
- FEMA 386-2: Understanding Your Risks: Identifying Hazards and Estimating Losses. August 2001



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- FEMA 386-3: Developing the Mitigation Plan. April 2003
- FEMA 386-4: Bringing the Plan to Life. August 2003
- FEMA 386-5: Using Benefit-Cost Review in Mitigation Planning. May 2007
- FEMA 386-6: Integrating Historic Property and Cultural Resource Considerations into Hazard Mitigation Planning. May 2005
- FEMA 386-7: Integrating Manmade Hazards into Mitigation Planning. September 2003
- FEMA 386-8: Multijurisdictional Mitigation Planning. August 2006
- FEMA 386-9: Using the Hazard Mitigation Plan to Prepare Successful Mitigation Projects. August 2008
- FEMA Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning Guidance. July 1, 2008
- FEMA National Fire Incident Reporting System 5.0: Complete Reference Guide. January 2008
- FEMA Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards. January 2013
- FEMA Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams: Grant Program Guidance, June 2020

The following Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) guides and reference documents were used to prepare this document:

- PEMA: Hazard Mitigation Planning Made Easy!
- PEMA Mitigation Ideas: Potential Mitigation Measures by Hazard Type: A Mitigation Planning Tool for Communities. March 6, 2009
- PEMA: All-Hazard Mitigation Planning Standard Operating Guide, 2020.

The following document produced by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provided additional guidance for updating this plan:

- NFPA 1600: Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs. 2011.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

## 2. Community Profile

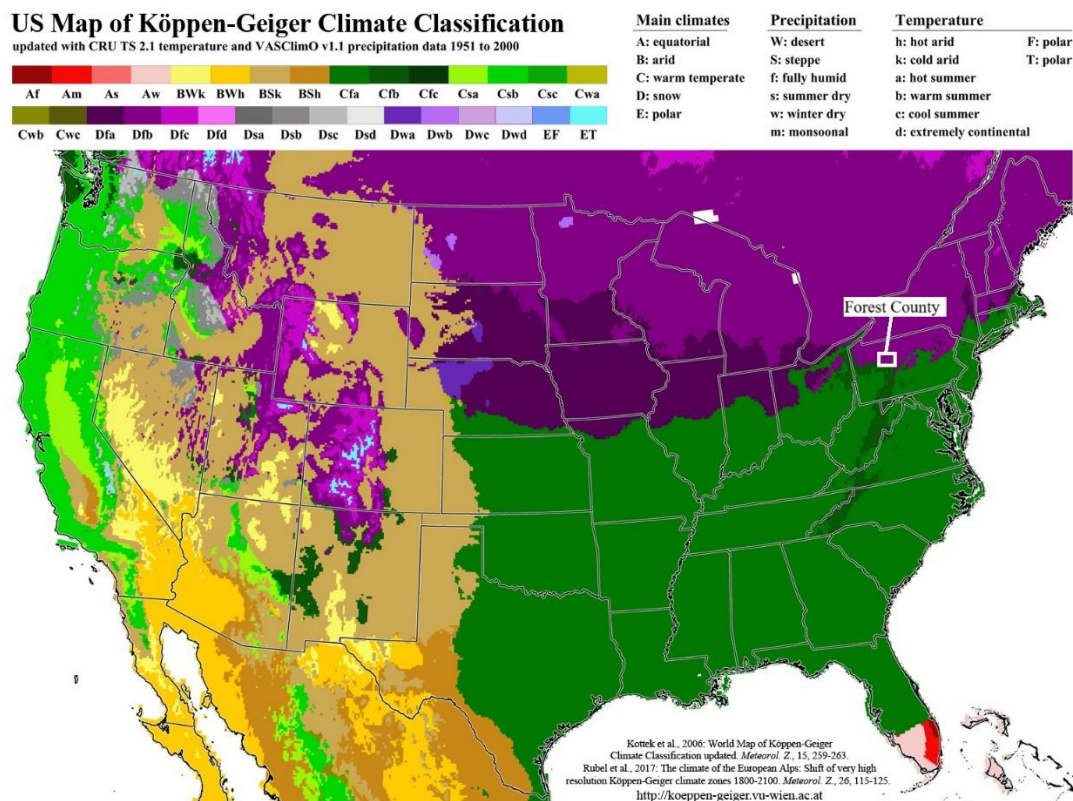
### 2.1. Geography and the Environment

Forest County covers approximately 430 square miles and is situated in north-central Pennsylvania. The county is bordered by Venango County in the west, by Warren County to the north, by Elk County to the east, and by Jefferson County and Clarion County to the south. Forest County lies within two physiographic provinces of Pennsylvania—the Appalachian Plateau Province and the High Plateau Section. The county is the third least populous county in terms of population within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There is a total of 427 square miles of land and 3.3 square miles of water.

Forest County presents a wide range of topographic features. The surface ranges from almost level on plateaus and in valleys, to rolling and hilly in other areas. Elevations in the county range from a high of 558 meters near Stony Point to a low of 313 meters near Tionesta Lake.

The Köppen-Geiger Climate Areas map classifies Forest County, and the rest of Pennsylvania, as Humid Continental, which can be seen in *Figure 1 – Köppen-Geiger Climate Map*. While the counties of Pennsylvania share many weather similarities, there are also a few unique characteristics to the area.

Figure 1 - Köppen-Geiger Climate Map



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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According to current data, the climate in Forest County is temperate, being characterized by moderately hot summers and moderately severe winters. In winter, the average temperature is 34.33°F and the average daily minimum temperature is 21.00°F. In summer, the average temperature is 58.33°F and the average daily maximum temperature is 78.33°F. The average amount of snowfall each winter is 65.60 inches.

River and stream valleys dominate the landscape of Forest County. The Allegheny River and the Clarion Rivers are the primary features and run through the entire county. Its major tributaries include Tionesta, Maple, Spring, Salmon, Little Tionesta, East Hickory, Otter, West Hickory, and Minister Creek.

Forest County is comprised of four watersheds:

*Table 1 - Watersheds in Forest County*

<b>Watersheds in Forest County</b>
Allegheny River
Clarion River
Oil Creek
Tionesta Creek

### **2.2. Community Facts**

Forest County is the only county in the commonwealth that was created by a joint resolution of legislature. Forest County detached from Jefferson County and Elk County on April 11, 1848. Forest County was enlarged on October 31, 1866, when a part of Venango County was incorporated.

The following boroughs and townships are located in Forest County:

- Boroughs: Tionesta Borough
- Townships: Barnett Township, Green Township, Harmony Township, Hickory Township, Howe Township, Jenks Township, Kingsley Township, and Tionesta Township

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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*Table 2 - National Register of Historic Places in Forest County*

<b>National Register of Historic Places in Forest County</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
Cook Forest State Park Indian Cabin District	Cook Forest State Park Indian Cabin District is located off Pennsylvania Route 36 and is located in Barnett Township. This state park goes through six counties within Pennsylvania. Cook Forest State Park Indian Cabin District was added to the National Register of Historic Places on February 12, 1987.
Anthony Wayne Cook Mansion	Anthony Wayne Cook Mansion is a historic home located in Barnett Township. This home was built in 1880. This mansion was added to the National Register of Historic Places 1979.

### **2.3. Population and Demographics**

The total population for Forest County is 6,973 based on 2020 United States Census Bureau. The total change in population for Forest County from 2010 to 2020 was a decrease of 743 residents and a change of -9.63%. The most populous municipality is Jenks Township. The municipalities in the county that had the largest percentage of decrease from 2010 to 2020 were Howe Township with a 52.10% decrease and Harmony Township with a 29.73% decrease. The municipality that had the highest percentage of increase for the period from 2010 to 2020 was Jenks Township with a 6.31% increase. *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County* illustrates the trends and data from United States Census Bureau. These figures are based off data from the United States Census Bureau in 2020. *Figure 5 - Forest County Population Density* illustrates the average population density values per census track in the various municipalities of Forest County.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Table 3 - Population Change in Forest County

Population Change in Forest County from 2010-2020			
Municipality	2010 Census	2020 Census	Percent of Change 2010-2020
Barnett Township	361	309	-14.40
Green Township	522	376	-27.97
Harmony Township	666	468	-29.73
Hickory Township	558	413	-25.99
Howe Township	405	194	-52.10
Jenks Township	3,629	3,858	6.31
Kingsley Township	363	259	-28.65
Tionesta Borough	483	428	-11.39
Tionesta Township	729	668	-8.37
Source: United States Census Bureau (2024), 2020 Census Data			

During this hazard mitigation planning period, socially vulnerable populations were reviewed for Forest County. For the purposes of this hazard mitigation plan, socially vulnerable populations include the unhoused and unsheltered populations of Forest County, individuals who have mobility challenges, and those populations which may have not had an active role in hazard mitigation planning in the past. Social vulnerability can also include portions of the population that may not have access to specific resources or community lifelines. In Forest County, this includes, but is not limited to, populations with limited internet access, those individuals who do not have easy access to public transportation, and those populations that are not near grocery or food community lifelines. In Forest County, populations located far from grocery stores or food locations are at increased vulnerability to natural and human-caused hazards.

Vulnerable populations in Forest County are represented by a variety of different groups. The Forest County department of human services represents individuals located or utilizing low-income housing. The local planning team for this hazard mitigation plan made efforts to include individuals from the Forest County Department of Human Services in the planning process.

There are approximately 6,947 housing units in Forest County, Pennsylvania. Of these housing units, there are an estimated 1,944 households within the county, with an average size of 2.26 persons. Married couples make up a plurality of households in the county, with an average household size of 2.85 persons. The estimated owner-occupied housing rate of Forest County is 76.9%. The median value of the owner-occupied housing units in Forest County from 2018 to 2023 is \$111,900.00. The median monthly owner's costs for a structure with a mortgage was \$422.00 and the median monthly owner's costs for a structure without a mortgage was \$1,073.00. The median gross rent for rental properties in Forest County was \$808.00 for the same date range.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

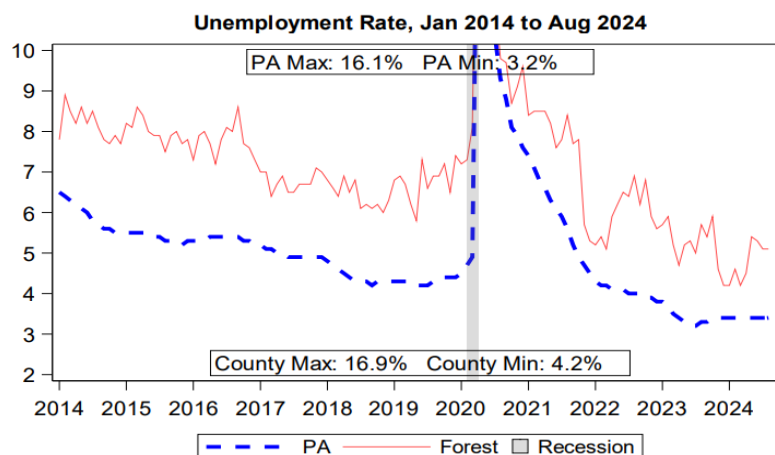
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The racial composition of the county is 79.0% White, 14.0% Black or African American, 5.0% Hispanic or Latino, 1.5% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.0% Asian, 0.1% native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 1.9% two or more races. The median age of residents in Forest County is 48.6 years of age, which is higher than the median age of Pennsylvania at 40.8 and the national median of 38.5 years of age. The percentage of Forest County under the age of 5 years old is 0.5%, between the ages of 18 and 64 years old is 75.7%, and age 65 years old and older is 24.0%.

The median household income for households in Forest County is \$50,061.00 and the poverty rate of Forest County is 19.6% of the total population. The poverty rate for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a whole is 12.1%. There are approximately 507 veterans in Forest County. The median veteran income in Forest County as of 2024 was \$34,964.00, with 6.3% of Forest County veterans living below the poverty level. The veteran unemployment rate in the county was approximately 6.3%.

The Covid-19 Pandemic created an increase in unemployment and interruptions in employment throughout the United States, to include Pennsylvania and Forest County. According to Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry data, there was a large spike in unemployment both across the Commonwealth and Forest County. At the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the spring of 2020, the unemployment rate for Forest County hit 16.9% of the working population of the county. That is higher than the peak unemployment percentage for Pennsylvania, which peaked at 16.5% of the working population of the entire state. *Figure 2 – Unemployment Rate Jan. 2014 to Aug. 2024* illustrates the trend and large spike in unemployment. The unemployment rate for Forest County in August 2024 was 5.1%, which roughly accounted for 100 working age adults (ages 16 to 65). The total estimated workforce for Forest County was 1,700 working age adults (ages 16 to 65) in August 2024.

*Figure 2 - Unemployment Rate Jan. 2014 to Aug. 2024*



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County’s leading industries are education, federal government, county government manufacturing, and retail trade. The primary employment providers within Forest County are displayed below in *Table 4 – Forest County Top Employers*.

*Table 4 - Forest County Top Employers*

<b>Forest County Top Employers (Excluding State Employers)</b>	
<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Company</b>
1	Imperium Management Services Inc.
2	Omni Manor Inc.
3	Forest Area School District
4	Northwest Hardwoods Inc.
5	Federal Government
6	Forest County
7	Roser Technologies Inc.
8	Joseph Muccio Transportation LLC
9	Fair Winds Cabins
10	West Hickory Sportsman’s Bar
Source: Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, 2024	

The top employers’ data was obtained through the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. This data only provided a list of employers, their ranking, and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) descriptions. *Table 5 – Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024 Annual Averages in Forest County* only calls out how many locations per NAICS description and total number of employees.

*Table 5 - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024 Annual Averages in Forest County*

<b>Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024 Annual Averages in Forest County (PA DLI)</b>					
<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Locations</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Employment Percentage</b>	<b>Average Wages</b>
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	5	27	1.4%	\$60,182.00
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas	2	ND	ND	ND
22	Utilities	0	0	0.0%	\$0
23	Construction	11	69	3.6%	\$41,320.00
31-33	Manufacturing	7	184	9.7%	\$36,243.00

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

<b>Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024 Annual Averages in Forest County (PA DLI)</b>					
<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Locations</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Employment Percentage</b>	<b>Average Wages</b>
42	Wholesale Trade	3	11	0.6%	\$23,870.00
44-45	Retail Trade	13	78	4.1%	\$23,263.00
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	9	ND	ND	ND
51	Information	2	ND	ND	ND
52	Finance and Insurance	2	ND	ND	ND
53	Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	1	ND	ND	ND
54	Professional and Technical Services	2	ND	ND	ND
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0	0.0%	\$0.00
56	Administrative and Waste Services	4	9	0.5%	\$16,782.00
61	Educational Services	5	ND	ND	ND
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	36	298	15.6%	\$50,425.00
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	0.0%	\$0.00
72	Accommodation and Food Services	20	176	9.2%	\$16,224.00
81	Other Services (Except Public Administration)	8	22	1.2%	\$19,140.00
92	Public Administration	16	834	43.8%	\$78,114.00
-	<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1,905</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$55,654.00</b>
NAICS (North American Industry Classification System)					

## **2.4. Land Use and Development**

Forest County is composed of nine municipalities, which include:

- Eight townships
- One borough



## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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The majority of acreage in Forest County is forested, while approximately 3,013 acres is agriculture.

Forest County has approximately 427.26 square miles of total land area, and 3.3 square miles of water area, with a population of 16.3 per square mile based on 2020 data estimates. Forested areas make up 2,543 acres of the county, while agriculture makes up approximately 3,013 acres of the total land area in Forest County, and high density urban, low density urban, water, transitional, resource extraction, quarries, and wetlands each account for 225 acres of the land are.

### **Systems**

The specific systems in Forest County must also be considered when discussing the community characteristics. Food, water, and shelter are of primary concern when looking at a community's lifelines. As Forest County is a rural county, food areas and grocery stores are spread over a wide geographic area. Specific grocery stores can be found primarily in Jenks Township and Tionesta Borough. Water in Forest County is primarily provided by small local water authorities and public water suppliers. Local domestic water wells are also prevalent throughout the entire community. Shelter features in Forest County during emergencies can include municipal borough and township buildings and any buildings that are currently part of emergency response and recovery planning for Forest County.

## **2.5 Data Sources**

The following data sources were used during the update process:

- United States Census Bureau.
- National Climatic Data Center (NCDC).
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR).
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (PA DLI).
- Pennsylvania Groundwater Information System (PaGWIS).
- Pennsylvania Emergency Incident Reporting System. (PEIRS)
- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA).
- Forest County Comprehensive Plan 2013.

The countywide Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM) were used for all flood risk analysis and estimation of loss. The Forest County DFIRMs were approved and effective in 2013. The DFIRM database provides flood frequency and elevation information used in the flood hazard risk assessment. Other Forest County GIS datasets including road centerlines, structures, and municipalities were utilized in conjunction with the DFIRM data.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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In order to assess the vulnerability of different jurisdictions to the hazards, data on past occurrences of damaging weather events was compiled. A large number of natural-hazard events were gathered from the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) database. The NCDC is a division of the United States Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Information on hazard events is compiled by the NCDC from data gathered by the National Weather Service (NWS), another division of NOAA. The data is then presented by the NCDC as tabular data that can be queried in the United States Storm Events database, which "documents the occurrences of storms and other significant weather phenomena having sufficient intensity to cause loss of life, injuries, significant property damage, and/or disruption to commerce" (NOAA, 2006). The classification of storm events in the database is based off of data collected from around the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, so the data may not be filed under the correct storm category due to user input error. The reason for this data issue results from some storm events falling under multiple categories, including but not limited to winter storm, ice storm, tornado, hurricane / tropical storm, flooding, and flash flooding. Many of the events listed in the United States Storm Events database can fall under multiple of these categories. In an effort to include a comprehensive list of prior storm events for Forest County, search queries with multiple storm classifications were conducted for each hazard.

Throughout the risk and vulnerability assessment included in Section 4 of this Hazard Mitigation Plan, descriptions of limited data indicate some areas in which the county and the municipalities can improve their ability to identify vulnerable structures and improve loss estimates. As the county and municipal governments work to increase their overall technical capacity and implement comprehensive planning goals, they will also attempt to improve the ability to identify areas of increased vulnerability.

This hazard mitigation plan evaluates the vulnerability of the county's community lifelines. For the purposes of this plan, critical infrastructure facilities are those entities that are essential to the health, welfare, and safety of the community. This includes but is not limited to airports, emergency medical service (EMS) stations, communication facilities and towers, day care centers and preschools, fire departments, hospitals and medical facilities, police departments, schools, and senior living facilities. The locations of these facilities were provided by the Forest County GIS Department.

### **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Data**

GIS data was utilized in risk assessment, estimation of loss and the development of map products for the hazard mitigation plan update. A foundation of data was available from the Forest County GIS Department. Some of the utilized data was downloaded from the Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (PASDA). A large portion of the plan utilizes census data from the United States Census Bureau, but the 2020 census data collection and dissemination was disrupted due to the Covid-19

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The 2020 census was delayed, and the information received during the census was spread out due to social distancing and the limiting of census takers going door to door to gather information.

The Forest County GIS Department provided the following layers for use in the development of hazard profiles and hazard profile mapping for the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update:

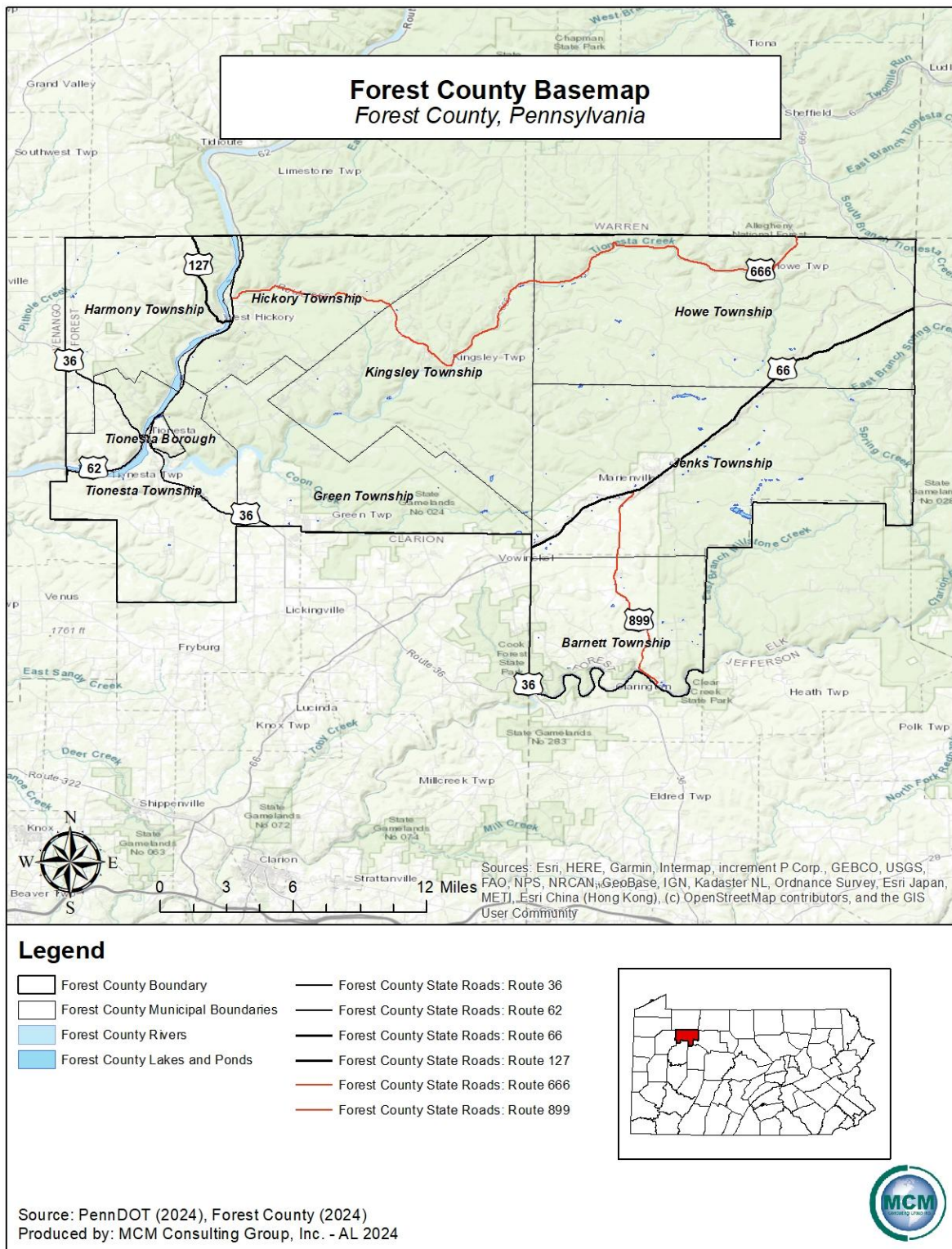
- Forest County Boundary
- Forest County Road Centerlines
- Forest County Site Structure Address Points

The following GIS Data layers were developed for use in the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update:

- Forest County Community Lifelines
- Forest County Conventional Oil and Gas Locations
- Forest County Courthouse
- Forest County Dam Inventory
- Forest County Fire Departments
- Forest County Groundwater Withdrawal Points
- Forest County Historic Streams
- Forest County Lakes and Ponds
- Forest County Land Use Values
- Forest County Municipal Boundaries
- Forest County National Forests
- Forest County Natural Areas
- Forest County Natural Gas Pipelines
- Forest County Population Density Figures
- Forest County Previous Tornado Paths
- Forest County Public Water Supply Areas
- Forest County Rivers
- Forest County Slope Features
- Forest County State Roads
- Forest County Tornado Impacted Municipalities
- Forest County Traffic Information
- Forest County Unconventional Oil and Gas Locations
- Forest County Watersheds
- Forest County Wildland Urban Interface
- Forest County Zip Codes

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

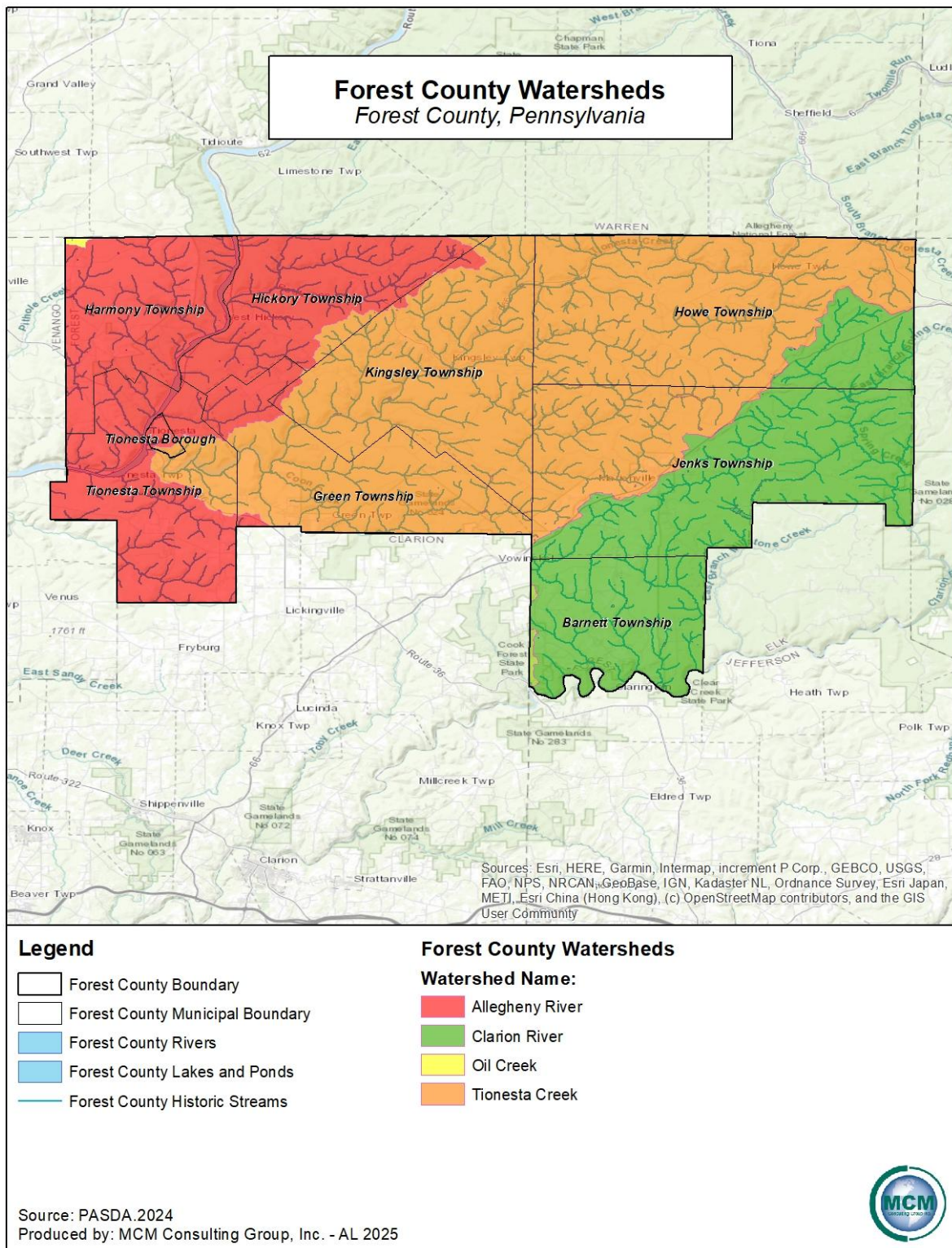
Figure 3 - Forest County Basemap





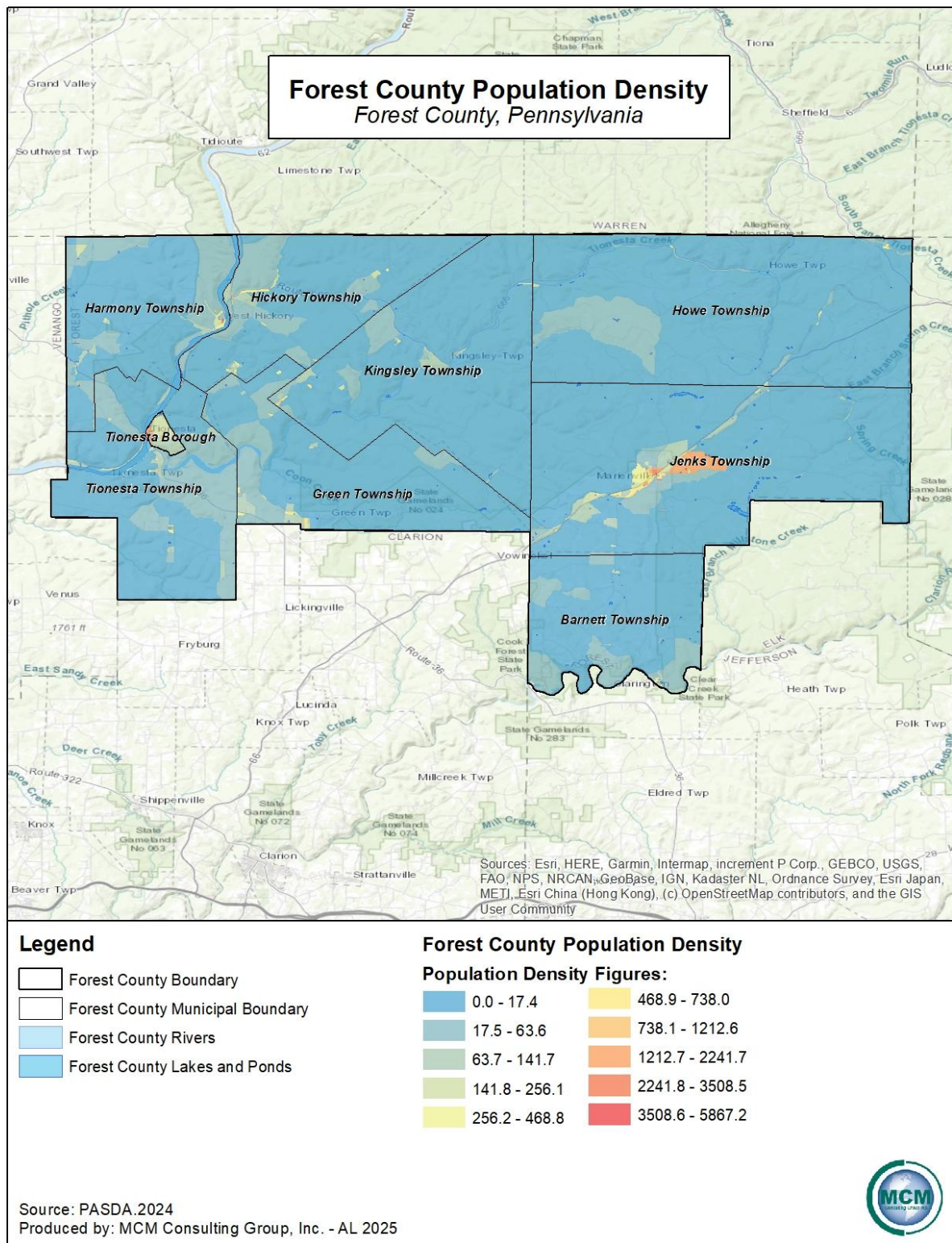
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 4 - Forest County Watersheds



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

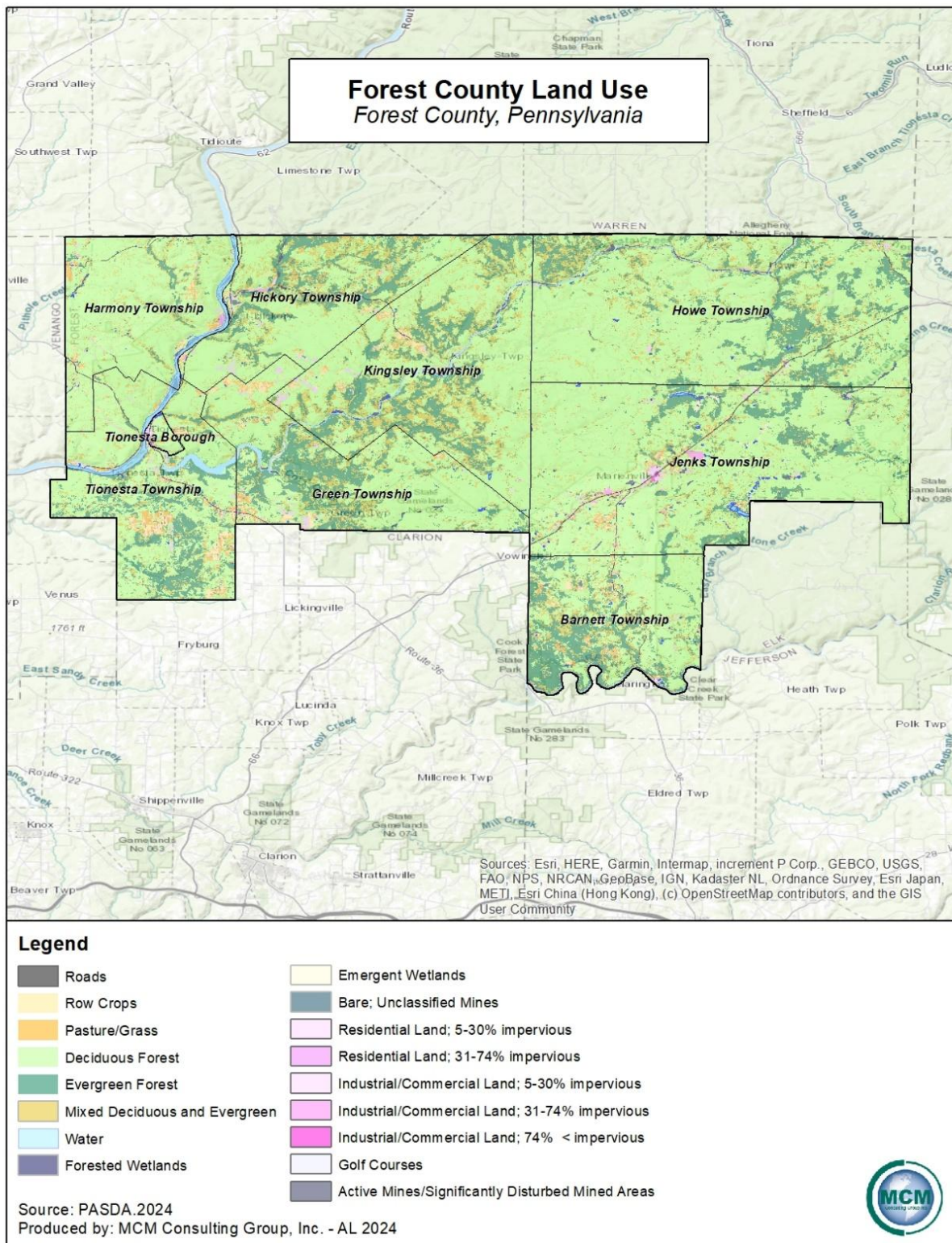
Figure 5 - Forest County Population Density





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 6 - Forest County Land Use



### **3. Planning Process**

#### **3.1. Update Process and Participation Summary**

The Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan update began June 27, 2024. The Forest County Commissioners were able to secure a hazard mitigation grant to start the process. The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department was identified as the lead agency for the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan update. The planning process involved a variety of key decision makers and stakeholders within Forest County. Forest County immediately determined that the utilization of a contracted consulting agency would be necessary to assist with the plan update process. MCM Consulting Group, Inc. was selected as the contracted consulting agency to complete the update of the hazard mitigation plan. The core hazard mitigation team, which was referred to as the steering committee, included officials from the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department, Forest County Department of Emergency Management and MCM Consulting Group, Inc. (MCM).

The process was developed around the requirements laid out in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Local Hazard Mitigation Crosswalk, referenced throughout this plan, as well as numerous other guidance documents including, but not limited to, Pennsylvania's All-Hazard Mitigation Standard Operating Guide, FEMA's State and Local Mitigation Planning How-to Guide series of documents (FEMA 386-series), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs.

MCM Consulting Group, Inc. assisted Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department in coordinating and leading public involvement meetings, local planning team meetings, analysis, and the writing of the updated HMP. The Forest County Local Planning Team (LPT) worked closely with MCM in the writing and review of the HMP. MCM conducted project meetings and local planning team meetings throughout the update process. Meeting agendas, meeting minutes and sign-in sheets were developed and maintained for each meeting conducted by MCM. These documents are detailed in Appendix C of this plan.

Public meetings with local elected officials were held, as well as work sessions and in-progress review meetings with the Forest County Local Planning Team and staff. At each of the public meetings, respecting the importance of local knowledge, municipal officials were strongly encouraged to submit hazard mitigation project opportunity forms, complete their respective portions of the capability's assessment and review, and eventually adopt the county hazard mitigation plan. Forest County will continue to work with all local municipalities to collect local hazard mitigation project opportunities.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The HMP planning process consisted of:

- Applying for and receiving a hazard mitigation planning grant (HMPG) to fund the planning project.
- Announcing the initiative via press releases and postings on the county website.
- Involving elected and appointed county and municipal officials in a series of meetings, training sessions, and workshops.
- Identifying capabilities and reviewed the information with the municipalities.
- Identifying hazards.
- Assessment of risk and analyzing vulnerabilities.
- Identifying mitigation strategies, goals, and objectives.
- Developing an implementation plan.
- Announcing completion via press releases and postings on the county website.
- Plan adoption at a public meeting of the Forest County Board of Commissioners.
- Plan submission to FEMA and PEMA.

The 2020 Forest County HMP was completed May 6, 2021. The 2025 plan follows an outline developed by PEMA which provides a standardized format for all local HMPs in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The 2025 HMP format is consistent with the PEMA recommended format. The 2025 Forest County HMP combined dam failure and levee failure profiles; and has added additional hazard profiles to the HMP, and these additional profiles increased the subsections in section 4.3 of the HMP.

### **3.2. The Planning Team**

The 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan update was led by the Forest County Steering Committee. The Forest County Steering Committee provided guidance and leadership for the overall project. The steering committee assisted MCM Consulting Group, Inc. with dissemination of information and administrative tasks. *Table 6 – Steering Committee* outlines the individuals that comprised this team.

*Table 6 - Steering Committee*

<b>Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Steering Committee</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
Donna Lynn Zofcin	Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department	Executive Director
Donald Mason	Emergency Management Coordinator	Coordinator

In order to represent the county, the Forest County Steering Committee developed a diversified list of potential local planning team (LPT) members. Members that participated in the 2020

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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hazard mitigation plan were highly encouraged to join the 2025 team. The steering committee then provided invitations to the prospective members and provided a description of duties to serve on the LPT. The invitations for members of the LPT were disseminated by the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department utilizing letters, email, and telephone calls. These invitations included local and regional agencies involved in HMP activities, agencies with the authority to regulate development, neighboring communities, businesses and academia, and representatives for county offices and agencies involved in reaching out to socially vulnerable populations. The LPT worked throughout the process to plan and hold meetings, collect information, and conduct public outreach.

The stakeholders listed in *Table 7 – Local Planning Team* served on the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Local Planning Team, actively participated in the planning process by attending meetings, completing assessments, surveys, and worksheets and/or submitting comments. All potential local planning team members were presented with an email invitation prior to the local planning team kickoff meeting on June 27, 2024.

Individuals representing local interests in dams were presented with the opportunity to participate in the local planning team. Emails were sent to officials involved in the ownership of dams. Increased participation for representatives for socially vulnerable and unserved populations in Forest County is a goal for the next planning period, and mitigation actions can be found in section 6.4.

*Table 7 - Local Planning Team*

Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan Local Planning Team		
Name	Organization	Position
Todd Huth	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Chair
Donna Zofcin	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Executive Director
Morgan Miller	DGLVR	Admin Technician
Curt Kiefer	Forest County	911 Coordinator
Ty Ryen	DCNR BOF	Forster
Richard Cramer	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Cecile Stelton	DCNR BOF	District Forster
Bob Summers	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Leonard Hetrick	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Elton Kline	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Ken Butler	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Shella Conner	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member
Robert Wagner	Forest County Conservation and Planning	Board Member

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **3.3. Meetings and Documentation**

Meetings with local elected officials and the local planning team were held as needed. At each of the meetings, municipal officials were strongly encouraged to submit hazard mitigation project opportunity forms, complete their respective portions of the capability assessment, review and eventually adopt the multi-jurisdictional HMP. *Table 8 – HMP Process Timeline* lists the meetings held during the HMP planning process, which organizations and municipalities attended and the topic that was discussed at each meeting. All meeting agendas, sign-in sheets, presentation slides, and other documentation are in Appendix C.

The draft plan was made available for public review on March 27, 2025. The draft was advertised on Forest County’s social media page and was made available digitally on the Forest County website at:

[https://www.co.forest.pa.us/departments/conservation\\_district\\_and\\_planning.php](https://www.co.forest.pa.us/departments/conservation_district_and_planning.php)

The public comment period remained open until April 25, 2025. All public comments were submitted via an online survey or in writing to Donna Zofcin the Director of the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department. Public commenting was available during the public comment period via a Survey Monkey link that was advertised on the county website and social media pages. No public comments were received for this planning period, so no comments are included in Appendix C of this hazard mitigation plan update.

*Table 8 - HMP Process Timeline*

<b>Forest County HMP Process Timeline</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Description</b>
06/27/24	Local Planning Team: HMP Update Kick Off Meeting	This meeting was used to review the project schedule and discuss roles and responsibilities for the hazard mitigation plan. Initial worksheets were introduced and reviewed (Haz ID, Capability assessments, project opportunity, and NFIP survey).
06/27/24	Municipality Kickoff Meetings	This meeting was used to review the project schedule and discuss roles and responsibilities for the hazard mitigation plan at the municipal level. Initial worksheets were introduced and reviewed (Haz ID, capability assessment, project opportunity, and NFIP survey).

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County HMP Process Timeline</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Description</b>
07/25/24	Local Planning Team: Risk Factor Assessment Meeting	This meeting was used to review initial documentation. Selection of hazards for the 2025 hazard mitigation plan was conducted. Risk factor scores were also updated based on changing conditions in Forest County since the 2020 HMP.
10/03/24	Local Planning Team: Mitigation Strategy Meeting	This meeting was used to begin the local planning team work on the mitigation strategy section of the hazard mitigation plan. This included a review of the previous mitigation goals, objectives, and actions.
10/03/24	Municipality Mitigation Opportunity Form Development	This meeting was used to review the municipality mitigation opportunity forms and to work with individual municipalities on form development.
10/24/24	Local Planning Team: Mitigation Strategy	This meeting was used to continue the mitigation strategy discussions and finish the review of the 2020 goals and objectives and mitigation actions. Meeting was used to start development on 2025 mitigation strategy goals, objectives, and actions.
01/08/25	Public Meeting: Risk Assessment Section	This meeting was used as a public meeting to review the completed risk assessment section with constituents of Forest County.
01/23/25	Local Planning Team: Finalize Mitigation Strategy	This meeting was used to finalize the 2025 mitigation strategy goals, objectives, and actions and to review the mitigation action evaluation and prioritization process.
03/04/25- 03/25/25	Local Planning Team: Draft Plan Review	This meeting was used to review the draft plan with the Forest County local planning team.
03/27/25	Public Meeting: Draft Plan Presentation	Meeting was used as a public meeting to review the draft hazard mitigation plan with the constituents of Forest County.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **3.4. Public and Stakeholder Participation**

Forest County engaged numerous stakeholders and encouraged public participation during the HMP update process. Advertisements for public meetings were completed utilizing the local newspaper and the Forest County website. Copies of those advertisements are in Appendix C. Municipalities and other county entities were invited to participate in various meetings and encouraged to review and update various worksheets and surveys. Copies of all meeting agendas, meeting minutes and sign-in sheets are located in Appendix C. Worksheets and surveys completed by the municipalities and other stakeholders are located in appendices of this plan update as well. Municipalities were also encouraged to review hazard mitigation related items with other constituents located in the municipality like businesses, academia, private and nonprofit interests.

The tools listed below were distributed with meeting invitations, provided directly to municipalities for completion and return to the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department or at meetings to solicit information, data, and comments from both local municipalities and other key stakeholders. Responses to these worksheets and surveys are available for review at the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department.

1. **Risk Assessment Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluation Worksheet:** Capitalizes on local knowledge to evaluate the change in the frequency of occurrence, magnitude, or impact and/or geographic extent of existing hazards and allows communities to evaluate hazards not previously profiled using the Pennsylvania Standard List of Hazards.
2. **Capability Assessment Survey:** Collects information on local planning, regulatory, administrative, technical, fiscal, and political capabilities that can be included in the countywide mitigation strategy.
3. **Municipal Project Opportunity Forms and Mitigation Actions:** Copies of the 2020 mitigation opportunity forms that were included in the current HMP were provided to the municipalities for review and amendment. These opportunities are located in Appendix G. The previous mitigation actions were provided and reviewed at update meetings. New 2025 municipal project opportunity forms are included as well, located in Appendix G.

In an effort to capture public input, the Forest County LPT held in-person meetings and offered on-line meetings. Members of the public were also encouraged to contact Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department or MCM Consulting Group, Inc. with any comments or questions regarding this update. Any public comment that was received during public meetings or during the draft review of the plan were documented and included in the plan. Copies of newspaper public meeting notices, website posted public notices, and other correspondence are included in Appendix C of this plan.

### **3.5. Multi-Jurisdictional Planning**

Forest County used an open, public process to prepare this HMP. Meetings were conducted and letters were sent to municipal officials to inform and educate them about hazard mitigation planning process and the local requirements. Municipal officials provided information related to existing codes and ordinances, the risk and impacts of known hazards on local infrastructure and critical facilities and recommendations for related mitigation opportunities. The pinnacle to the municipal involvement process was the adoption of the final plan. *Table 9 – Municipality Worksheets, Surveys, and Forms Participation* reflects the municipalities participation by completing worksheets, surveys, and forms.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 9 - Municipality Worksheets, Surveys, and Forms Participation*

<b>Forest County HMP Worksheets, Surveys, and Forms Participation</b>				
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Capability Assessment Survey</b>	<b>Risk Assessment Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluation Worksheet</b>	<b>NFIP</b>	<b>Hazard Mitigation Opportunity Form Review and Updates</b>
Barnett Township	X	X		
Green Township	X	X	X	
Harmony Township		X		
Hickory Township		X		
Howe Township	X	X	X	
Jenks Township	X	X	X	
Kingsley Township	X	X	X	
Tionesta Borough	X	X		1 new
Tionesta Township			X	
Forest County		X	X	

All nine municipalities within Forest County adopted the 2020 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan as the municipal hazard mitigation plan. The goal of the Forest County Local Planning Team is to have 100% participation by municipalities in adopting the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation.

The table above was completed with the most accurate information available at the time of the writing of this Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.

## **4. Risk Assessment**

### **4.1. Update Process Summary**

A key component to reducing future loss is to first have a clear understanding of what the current risks are and what steps may be taken to lessen their threat. The development of the risk assessment is a critical first step in the entire mitigation process, as it is an organized and coordinated way of assessing potential hazards and risks. The risk assessment identifies the effects of both natural and human-caused hazards and describes each hazard in terms of its frequency, severity, and county impact. Numerous hazards were identified as part of the process.

A risk assessment evaluates threats associated with a specific hazard and is defined by probability and frequency of occurrence, magnitude, severity, exposure, and consequences. The Forest County risk assessment provides in-depth knowledge of the hazards and vulnerabilities that affect Forest County and its municipalities. This document uses an all-hazards approach when evaluating the hazards that affect the county and the associated risks and impacts each hazard presents.

This risk assessment provides the basic information necessary to develop effective hazard mitigation/prevention strategies. Moreover, this document provides the foundation for the Forest County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), local EOPs and other public and private emergency management plans.

The Forest County risk assessment is not a static document, but rather, is a biennial review requiring periodic updates. Potential future hazards include changing technology, new facilities and infrastructure, dynamic development patterns and demographic and socioeconomic changes into or out of hazard areas. By contrast, old hazards, such as brownfields and landfills, may pose new threats as county conditions evolve.

Using the best information available and geographic information systems (GIS) technologies, the county can objectively analyze its hazards and vulnerabilities. Assessing past events is limited by the number of occurrences, scope and changing circumstances. For example, ever-changing development patterns in Pennsylvania have a dynamic impact on traffic patterns, population density and distribution, storm water runoff and other related factors. Therefore, limiting the risk assessment to past events is myopic and inadequate.

The Forest County Local Planning Team (LPT) reviewed and assessed the change in risk for all natural and human-caused hazards identified in the 2020 hazard mitigation plan. The mitigation planning team then identified hazards that were outlined within the Pennsylvania Hazard Mitigation Plan but not included in the 2020 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan that could



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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impact Forest County. The team utilized the hazard identification and risk evaluation worksheet that was provided by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

The Forest County Steering Committee met with municipalities and provided guidance on how to complete the municipal hazard identification and risk evaluation worksheet. Eight out of nine municipalities in Forest County returned a completed worksheet. This information was combined with the county information to develop an overall list of hazards that would need to be profiled.

Once the natural and human-caused hazards were identified and profiled, the local planning team then completed a vulnerability assessment for each hazard. An inventory of vulnerable assets was completed utilizing GIS data and local planning team knowledge. The team used the most recent Forest County assessment data to estimate loss to particular hazards. Risk factor was then assessed to each of the twenty-six hazards utilizing the hazard prioritization matrix. This assessment allows the county and its municipalities to focus on and prioritize local mitigation efforts on areas that are most likely to be damaged or require early response to a hazard event.

### **4.2. Hazard Identification**

#### **4.2.1. Presidential and Gubernatorial Disaster Declarations**

*Table 10 – Presidential & Gubernatorial Disaster Declaration* contains a list of all Presidential and Gubernatorial disaster declarations that have affected Forest County and its municipalities from 1972 through 2020, according to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

*Table 10 - Presidential & Gubernatorial Disaster Declarations*

<b>Presidential Disaster Declarations and Gubernatorial Declarations and Proclamations</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Hazard Event</b>	<b>Action</b>
June 23, 1972	Tropical Storm Agnes	Presidential Disaster Declaration
June 3, 1985	Severe storms/ tornados	Presidential Disaster Declaration
March 16, 1993	Severe snowfall	Presidential Disaster Declaration
January 21, 1996	Severe flooding	Presidential Disaster Declaration
August 23, 2003	Severe storms/ flooding	Presidential Disaster Declaration
September 19, 2004	Tropical Depression Ivan	Presidential Disaster Declaration
September 10, 2005	Hurricane Katrina	Gubernatorial Proclamation of Emergency
October 29, 2012	Hurricane Sandy	Presidential Disaster Declaration
January 10, 2013	Hurricane Sandy	Gubernatorial Proclamation of Emergency
March 13, 2020	COVID-19	Presidential Disaster Declaration
March 30, 2020	COVID-19 Pandemic	Gubernatorial Proclamation of Emergency

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Presidential Disaster Declarations and Gubernatorial Declarations and Proclamations		
Date	Hazard Event	Action
<i>Source: Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Federal Emergency Management Agency</i>		

### **4.2.2. Summary of Hazards**

The Forest County LPT was provided the Pennsylvania Standard List of Hazards to be considered for evaluation in the 2025 HMP Update. Following a review of the hazards considered in the 2020 HMP and the standard list of hazards, the local planning team decided that the 2025 plan should identify, profile, and analyze twenty-six hazards. These twenty-six hazards include all of the hazards profiled in the 2020 plan. The list below contains the hazards that have the potential to impact Forest County as identified through previous risk assessments, the Forest County Hazard Vulnerability Analysis and input from those who participated in the 2025 HMP update. Hazard profiles are included in Section 4.3 for each of these hazards.

#### ***Identified Natural Hazards***

##### **Drought**

Drought is defined as a deficiency of precipitation experienced over an extended period of time, usually a season or more. Droughts increase the risk of other hazards, like wildfires, flash floods, and landslides or debris flows. This hazard is of particular concern in Pennsylvania due to the prevalence of farming and other water-dependent industries, water dependent recreation uses, and residents who depend on wells for drinking water.

##### **Earthquake**

An earthquake is the motion or trembling of the ground produced by sudden displacement of rock usually within the upper 10-20 miles of the Earth's crust. Earthquakes result from crustal strain, volcanism, landslides, or the collapse of underground caverns. Earthquakes can affect hundreds of thousands of square miles, cause damage to property measured in the tens of billions of dollars, result in loss of life and injury to hundreds of thousands of persons and disrupt the social and economic functioning of the affected area.

##### **Extreme Temperature**

Extreme heat often results in the highest number of annual deaths of all weather-related hazards. In most of the United States, extreme heat is defined as a long period (2 to 3 days) of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees. Extremely cold air comes every winter in at least part of the country and affects millions of people across the United States. The arctic air, together with brisk winds, can lead to dangerously cold wind chill values. People exposed to extreme cold are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia in a matter of minutes.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Flooding, Flash Flooding, and Ice Jam Flooding**

Flooding is the temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land, and it is the most frequent and costly of all-natural hazards in Pennsylvania. Flash flooding is usually a result of heavy localized precipitation falling in a short time period over a given location, often along mountain streams and in urban areas where much of the ground is covered by impervious surfaces. Winter flooding can include ice jams which occur when warm temperatures and heavy rain cause snow to melt rapidly. Snow melt combined with heavy rains can cause frozen rivers to swell, which breaks the ice layer on top of a river. The ice layer often breaks into large chunks, which float downstream, piling up in narrow passages and near other obstructions such as bridges and dams.

### **Hailstorm**

Hailstorms occur when ice crystals form within a low-pressure front due to the rapid rise of warm air into the upper atmosphere and the subsequent cooling of the air mass. Frozen droplets gradually accumulate on the ice crystals until, having developed sufficient weight, they fall as precipitation in the form of balls or irregularly shaped masses of ice greater than 0.75 inches in diameter. Hailstorms can cause significant damage to homes, vehicles, livestock, and people.

### **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Hurricanes, tropical storms, and nor'easters are classified as cyclones and are any closed circulation developing around a low-pressure center in which the winds rotate counterclockwise (in the Northern Hemisphere) and whose diameter averages 10-30 miles across. Potential threats from hurricanes include powerful winds, heavy rainfall, storm surges, coastal and inland flooding, rip currents, tornadoes, and landslides. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30.

### **Invasive Species**

An invasive species is a species that is not indigenous to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic, environmental, or human harm. These species can be any type of organism: plant, fish, invertebrate, mammal, bird, disease, or pathogen.

### **Landslide**

In a landslide, masses of rock, earth or debris move down a slope. Landslides can be caused by a variety of factors, including earthquakes, storms, fire, and human modification of land. Areas that are prone to landslide hazards include previous landslide areas, areas on or at the base of slopes, areas in or at the base of drainage hollows, developed hillsides with leach field septic systems, and areas recently burned by forest or brush fires.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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### **Lightning Strike**

Lightning is a giant spark of electricity resulting from the build-up of positive and negative charges within a thunderstorm. The flash or "bolt" of light can occur within the thunderstorm cloud or between the cloud and the ground. Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. Although most lightning victims survive, people struck by lightning often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms.

### **Pandemic and Infectious Disease**

A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new virus emerges in the human population, spreading easily in a sustained manner, and causing serious illness. An epidemic describes a smaller scale infectious outbreak, within a region or population, which emerges at a disproportionate rate. Infectious disease outbreaks may be widely dispersed geographically, impact large numbers of the population, and could arrive in waves lasting several months at a time.

### **Radon Exposure**

Radon is a radioactive gas produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock that can lead to lung cancer in people exposed over a long period of time. Most exposure comes from breathing in radon gas that enters homes and buildings through foundation cracks and other openings. According to the DEP, approximately 40% of Pennsylvania homes have elevated radon levels.

### **Subsidence/Sinkhole**

Land subsidence is a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the ground surface due to the movement of subsurface materials. A sinkhole is a subsidence feature resulting from the sinking of surficial material into a pre-existing subsurface void. Subsidence and sinkholes are geologic hazards that can impact roadways and buildings and disrupt utility services. Subsidence and sinkholes are most common in areas underlain by limestone and can be exacerbated by human activities such as water, natural gas, and oil extraction.

### **Tornadoes/Windstorm**

A tornado is a narrow, violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground. About 1,250 tornadoes hit the U.S. each year, with about sixteen hitting Pennsylvania. Damaging winds exceeding 50-60 miles per hour can occur during tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, winter storms, or coastal storms. These winds can have severe impacts on buildings, pulling off the roof covering, roof deck, or wall siding and pushing or pulling off the windows.

### **Wildfire**

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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A wildfire is an unplanned fire that burnt in a natural area. Wildfires can cause injuries or death and can ruin homes in their path. Wildfires can be caused by humans or lightning, and can happen anytime, though the risk increases in periods of little rain. In Pennsylvania, 98% of wildfires are caused by people.

### **Winter Storm**

A winter storm is a storm in which the main types of precipitation are snow, sleet, or freezing rain. A winter storm can range from a moderate snowfall or ice event over a period of a few hours to blizzard conditions with wind-driven snow that lasts for several days. Most deaths from winter storms are not directly related to the storm itself, but result from traffic accidents on icy roads, medical emergencies while shoveling snow, or hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold.

### ***Identified Human Caused Hazards***

#### **Building/Structural Collapse/Blighted Properties**

Buildings and other engineered structures, including bridges, may collapse if their structural integrity is compromised, especially due to effects from other natural or human-made hazards. Older buildings or structures, structures that are not built to standard codes, or structures that have been weakened are more susceptible to be affected by these hazards.

#### **Civil Disturbance**

A civil disturbance is defined by FEMA as a civil unrest activity (such as a demonstration, riot, or strike) that disrupts a community and requires intervention to maintain public safety.

#### **Dam Failure**

Dam failure is the uncontrolled release of water (and any associated wastes) from a dam. This hazard often results from a combination of natural and human causes, and can follow other hazards such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and landslides. The consequences of dam failures can include property and environmental damage and loss of life.

#### **Disorientation**

Large numbers of people are attracted to Pennsylvania's rural areas for recreational purposes such as hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. As a result, people can become lost or trapped in remote and rugged wilderness areas. Search and rescue may be required for people who suffer from medical problems or injuries and those who become accidentally or intentionally disoriented. Search and rescue efforts are focused in and around state forest and state park lands.

#### **Drowning**

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Drowning is death from suffocation, typically associated with swimming, fishing, boating or bridge accidents, or suicide. It can be a significant hazard in communities with numerous residential pools or water bodies (e.g., ponds, lakes, rivers, etc...) and extensive outdoor recreational activities. Drowning rates are particularly high for children ages 1-14. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that drowning is the second leading cause of injury death (after motor vehicle crashes) among children ages 1-14.

### **Environmental Hazards/Hazardous Materials**

Environmental hazards are hazards that pose threats to the natural environment, the built environment and public safety through the diffusion of harmful substances, materials, or products. Environmental hazards include the following:

- Hazardous material releases: at fixed facilities or as such materials are in transit and including toxic chemicals, infectious substances, biohazardous waste and any materials that are explosive, corrosive, flammable, or radioactive (PL 1990-165, § 207(e)).
- Air or Water Pollution; the release of harmful chemical and waste materials into water bodies or the atmosphere, for example (National Institute of Health Sciences, July 2009; Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Disaster PSAs, 2009).
- Superfund Facilities: hazards originating from abandoned hazardous waste sites listed on the National Priorities List (Environmental Protection Agency, National Priorities List, 2009).
- Manure Spills: involving the release of stored or transported agricultural waste, for example (Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Impacts of..., 1998).
- Product Defect or Contamination; highly flammable or otherwise unsafe consumer products and dangerous foods (Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2003).

Hazardous material releases can contaminate air, water, and soils and have the potential to cause injury or death. Dispersion can take place rapidly when transported by water and wind. While often accidental, releases can occur as a result of human carelessness, intentional acts, or natural hazards. When caused by natural hazards, these incidents are known as secondary events.

### **Substance Use Disorder**

Substance use disorder occurs when an individual becomes physically dependent on a drug, either legal or illegal. The most likely focal point of substance use disorder relates to opioid addiction, a class of drugs that reduces pain. “Opioid” is used as a broad term and includes opiates, which are drugs naturally extracted from certain types of poppy plants, and narcotics. Substance abuse can lead to overdose, which can be fatal.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Terrorism/Cyberterrorism Incidents**

Terrorism is use of force or violence against persons or property with the intent to intimidate or coerce. Acts of terrorism include threats of terrorism; assassinations; kidnappings; hijackings; bomb scares and bombings; cyber-attacks (computer-based); and the use of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons. Cyber-attacks have become an increasingly pressing concern. Cyberterrorism refers to acts of terrorism committed using computers, networks, and the internet. The most widely cited definition comes from Denning's Testimony before the Special Oversight Panel on Terrorism: "Cyberterrorism...is generally understood to mean unlawful attacks and threats of attack against computers, networks, and the information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political or social objectives. Further, to qualify as cyberterrorism, an attack should result in violence against persons or property, or at least cause enough harm to generate fear."

### **Transportation Accidents**

Transportation accidents are technological hazards involving the nation's system of land, sea, and air transportation infrastructure. A flaw or breakdown in any component of this system can and often does result in a major disaster involving loss of life, injuries, property and environmental damage, and economic consequences.

### **Urban Fire and Explosions**

Urban fires and explosions include those fires and explosions that occur within urban, or developed, regions, and often pose an increased threat due to their tendency to easily spread to neighboring structures. The effects may be minor or severe and include injury, loss of life, property damage, and residential or economic disruption/displacement.

### **Utility Interruption**

Utility interruption hazards are hazards that impair the functioning of important utilities in the energy, telecommunications and public works and information network sectors. Utility interruption hazards include the following:

- Geomagnetic Storms; including temporary disturbances of the Earth's magnetic field resulting in disruptions of communication, navigation, and satellite systems (National Research Council et al., 1986).
- Fuel or Resource Shortage; resulting from supply chain breaks or secondary to other hazard events, for example.
- Electromagnetic Pulse; originating from an explosion or fluctuating magnetic field and causing damaging current surges in electrical and electronic systems (Institute for Telecommunications Sciences, 1996).



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Information Technology Failure; due to software bugs, viruses, or improper use (Rainer Jr., et al, 1991).
- Ancillary Support Equipment; electrical generating, transmission, system-control, and distribution-system equipment for the energy industry (Hirst & Kirby, 1996).
- Public Works Failure; damage to or failure of highways, flood control systems, deep-water ports and harbors, public buildings, bridges, dams, for example (United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, 2009).
- Telecommunications System Failure; Damage to data transfer, communications, and processing equipment, for example (FEMA, 1997)
- Transmission Facility or Linear Utility Accident; liquefied natural gas leakages, explosions, facility problems, for example (United States Department of Energy, 2005)
- Major Energy, Power, Utility Failure; interruptions of generation and distribution, power outages, for example (United States Department of Energy, 2000).

### **4.2.3. Climate Change**

Humans have become the dominant species on Earth and our society and influence is globalized. Human activity such as the large-scale consumption of fossil fuels and de-forestation has caused atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations to significantly increase and a notable diversity of species to go extinct. The result is rapid climate change unparalleled in Earth's history and an extinction event approaching the level of a mass extinction (Barnosky et al., 2011; Wake & Vredenburg, 2008). The corresponding rise of average atmospheric temperatures is intensifying many natural hazards, and further threatening biodiversity. The effects of climate change on these hazards are expected to intensify over time as temperatures continue to rise, so it is prudent to be aware of how climate change is impacting natural hazards.

The most obvious change is in regard to extreme temperature. As average atmospheric temperatures rise, extreme high temperatures become more threatening, with record high temperatures outnumbering record low temperatures 2:1 in recent years. As climate change intensifies, it is expected that the risk of extreme heat will be amplified whereas the risk of extreme cold will be attenuated. Some studies show increased insect activities during a similar rapid warming event in Earth's history. Other studies make projections that with the warming temperatures and lower annual precipitation that are expected with climate change, there will be an expansion of the suitable climate for mosquitos, potentially increasing the risk of infectious disease.

Climate change is likely to increase the risk of droughts (Section 4.3.1). Higher average temperatures mean that more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, snow will melt earlier in the spring, and evaporation and transpiration will increase. Along with the prospect of decreased annual precipitation, the risk of hydrological and agricultural drought is expected to



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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increase (Sheffield & Wood, 2008). Correspondingly this will impact wildfires. Drought is accompanied by drier soils and forests, resulting in an elongated wildfire season and more intense and long-burning wildfires (Pechony & Shindell, 2010). However, the Southwest United States is at a greater risk of this increased drought and wildfire activity than Forest County in the Eastern United States.

While it may seem counterintuitive considering the increased risk of drought, there is also an increased risk of flooding associated with climate change (Section 4.3.4). Warmer temperatures mean more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow. Combined with the fact that warmer air holds more moisture, the result is heavier and more intense rainfalls and dam and levee failures. Similarly, winter storms are expected to become more intense, if possibly less frequent. Climate change is also expected to result in more intense hurricanes and tropical storms. With the rise of atmospheric temperatures, ocean surface temperatures are rising, resulting in warmer and more moist conditions where tropical storms develop (Stott et al., 2010). A warmer ocean stores more energy and is capable of fueling stronger storms. It is projected that the Atlantic hurricane season is elongating, and there will be more category 4 and 5 hurricanes than before (Trenberth, 2010).

Climate change is contributing to the introduction of new invasive species (Section 4.3.7). As maximum and minimum seasonal temperatures change, non-native species are able to establish themselves in previously inhospitable climates where they have a competitive advantage. This may shift the dominance of ecosystems in the favor of non-native species, contributing to species loss and the risk of extinction.

This type of sudden global change is novel to humanity. Despite the myriad of well thought out research, there is still much uncertainty surrounding the future of the Earth. All signs point to the intensification of the hazards mentioned above, especially if human society and individuals do not make swift and significant changes combat species losses.

Where applicable, climate change will be discussed for each hazard profile in this hazard mitigation plan. All natural hazards will have a discussion on climate change vulnerability, while certain human-caused hazards may not experience significant vulnerabilities from climate change adaptation and will not have direct narrative addressing those impacts.

Climate change was also taken into account when capabilities were being reviewed and mitigation actions were being developed and updated.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3. Hazard Profiles**

#### **4.3.1. Drought**

##### **4.3.1.1 Location and Extent**

While Pennsylvania is generally more water-rich than many U.S. states, the commonwealth may experience drought conditions intermittently throughout the calendar year. A drought is broadly defined as a time period of prolonged dryness that contributes to the depletion of ground and surface water. Droughts are regional climatic events, so when such an event occurs in Forest County, impacts are not restricted to the county and are often more widespread. The spatial extent of the impacted area can range from localized areas in Pennsylvania to the entire Mid-Atlantic region.

There are three types of droughts:

**Meteorological Drought** – A deficiency of moisture in the atmosphere compared to average conditions. Meteorological drought is defined by the duration of the deficit and degree of dryness and is often associated with below average rainfall. Depending on the severity of the drought, it may or may not have a significant impact on agriculture and the water supply.

**Agricultural Drought** – A drought inhibiting the growth of crops, due to a moisture deficiency in the soil. Agricultural drought is linked to meteorological and hydrologic drought.

**Hydrologic Drought** – A prolonged period without rainfall that has an adverse effect on streams, lakes, and groundwater levels, potentially impacting agriculture.

Droughts are often the leading contributing factor to wildfires, as they leave areas with little to no moisture.

##### **4.3.1.2 Range of Magnitude**

The average annual precipitation of 47.06 inches (rain) occurs primarily during the spring and summer months. This value is derived from an average of ten years of mean annual precipitation data for Forest County. Rural farming areas of Forest County are most at risk when a drought occurs. A drought can create a significant financial burden for the community. Approximately 83.0% of Forest County farms are family-owned and operated. Additionally, 32.57% of the county farmland use is devoted to crop cultivation, 43.99% of farmland is woodland, 19.55% is pastureland, and 3.89% is for other purposes. Wildfires are often the most severe secondary effect associated with drought. Wildfires can devastate wooded and agricultural areas, structures near high wildfire loads, and farm production facilities, thus threatening natural resources. Prolonged drought conditions can have a lasting impact on the economy and can cause major ecological changes, such as increases in scrub growth, flash flooding, and soil erosion.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Long-term water shortages during severe drought conditions can have a significant impact on agribusiness, public utilities, and other industries reliant on water for production services. Forest County also has a growing agritourism business that would be threatened by long-term drought.

Local municipalities may, with the approval of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council, implement local water rationing. These individual water rationing plans, authorized through provisions of 4 PA code Chapter 120, will require specific limits on individual water consumption to achieve significant reductions in use. Under mandatory water usage restrictions imposed by the commonwealth and/or local municipalities, procedures are provided for granting of variances to consider individual hardships and economic dislocations. *Table 11 – Drought Preparation Phases* shows the FEMA-defined levels of drought severity along with suggested actions, requests, and goals.

*Table 11 - Drought Preparation Phases*

<b>Drought Preparation Phases</b>				
<b>Phase</b>	<b>General Activity</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>Drought Watch</b>	Early stages of planning and alert for drought possibility.	Increased water monitoring, awareness, and preparation for response among government agencies, public water suppliers, water users, and the public.	Voluntary water conservation.	Reduce water use by 5%.
<b>Drought Warning</b>	Coordinate a response to imminent drought conditions and potential water shortages.	Reduce shortages – relieve stressed sources, develop new sources if needed.	Continue voluntary water conservation, impose mandatory water use restrictions if needed.	Reduce water use by 10 – 15%.
<b>Drought Emergency</b>	Management of operations to regulate all available resources and respond to emergency.	Support essential and high priority water use and avoid unnecessary uses.	Possible restrictions on all nonessential water uses.	Reduced water use by 15%.
Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 2017				

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The commonwealth uses five parameters to assess drought conditions:

- Stream flows (compared to benchmark records)
- Precipitation (measured as the departure from normal, thirty-year average precipitation)
- Reservoir storage levels in a variety of locations such as three New York City reservoirs in the upper Delaware River Basin
- Groundwater elevations in several counties (comparing to past month, past year, and historic records)
- Soil moisture via the Palmer Drought Index as seen in *Table 12 – Palmer Drought Severity Index*, which is a soil moisture algorithm calibrated for relatively homogenous regions which measures dryness based on recent precipitation and temperature.

*Table 12 - Palmer Drought Severity Index*

<b>Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI)</b>	
<b>Severity Category</b>	<b>PDSI Value</b>
Extremely Wet	4.0 or more
Very Wet	3.0 to 3.99
Moderately Wet	2.0 to 2.99
Slightly Wet	1.0 to 1.99
Incipient Wet Spell	0.5 to 0.99
Near Normal	0.49 to -0.49
Incipient Dry Spell	-0.5 to -0.99
Mild Drought	-1.0 to -1.99
Moderate Drought	-2.0 to -2.99
Severe Drought	-3.0 to -3.99
Extreme Drought	-4.0 or less

The effects of a drought can be far-reaching both economically and environmentally. Economic impacts include reduced productivity of aquatic resources, mandatory water use restrictions, well failures, cutbacks in industrial production, agricultural losses, and limited recreational opportunities. Environmental impacts of drought include those found in *Table 13 – Economic and Environmental Impacts of Drought Events* and qualifies the potential economic and environmental impacts from a drought event.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 13 - Economic and Environmental Impacts of Drought Events*

<b>Economic and Environmental Impacts of Drought Events</b>	
<b>Economic</b>	<b>Environmental</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced productivity of aquatic resources</li> <li>- Mandatory water use restrictions</li> <li>- Well failures</li> <li>- Cutbacks in industrial production</li> <li>- Agricultural losses</li> <li>- Limited recreational opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hydrologic effects</li> <li>- Adverse effects on animal populations</li> <li>- Damage to plant communities</li> <li>- Increased number and severity of fires</li> <li>- Reduced soil quality</li> <li>- Air quality effects</li> <li>- Loss of quality in landscape</li> </ul>

### **4.3.1.3 Past Occurrence**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) maintains the most comprehensive data on drought occurrences across the commonwealth. Descriptions of drought status categories (i.e., watch, warning, and emergency) are included in the “Range of Magnitude” section above. The declared drought status from 1980 to 2023 is shown in *Table 14 – Past Drought Events in Forest County*.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has archived records showing extreme droughts for the commonwealth in 1931 and a prolonged event in the 1960s as seen in *Figure 7 – Forest County Palmer Drought Severity Index 1924-2024*.

Based on the county’s more recent disaster history and other drought occurrence data, the worst drought event in Forest County occurred in the summer of 1991 to the spring of 1992. Extended dry weather spurred Governor Robert Patrick Casey Sr. to declare a drought emergency throughout most of the Commonwealth.

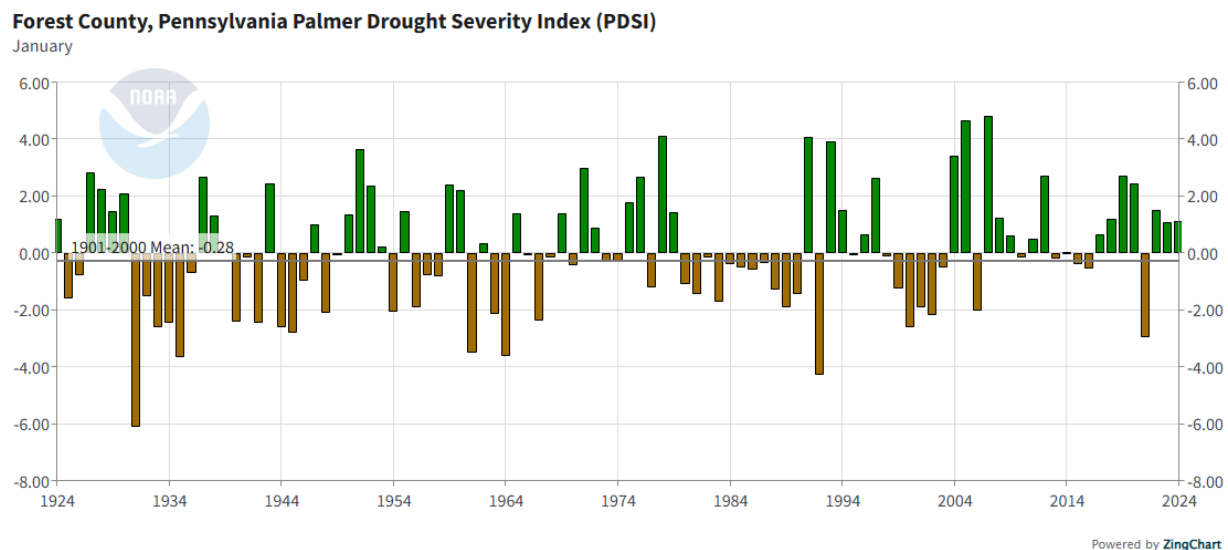
*Table 14 - Past Drought Events in Forest County*

<b>Past Drought Events in Forest County</b>			
<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Drought Status</b>	<b>Event Duration</b>
07/07/1988	08/24/1988	Watch	48 days
08/24/1988	12/12/1988	Warning	110 days
03/03/1989	05/15/1989	Watch	73 days
06/28/1991	07/24/1991	Watch	26 days
07/24/1991	08/16/1991	Warning	23 days
08/16/1991	04/20/1992	Emergency	248 days
04/20/1992	06/23/1992	Warning	64 days
06/23/1992	09/11/1992	Watch	80 days

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Past Drought Events in Forest County			
Start Date	End Date	Drought Status	Event Duration
09/01/1995	12/16/1995	Watch	106 days
12/03/1998	12/14/1998	Watch	11 days
12/14/1998	03/15/1999	Warning	91 days
03/15/1999	09/30/1999	Watch	199 days
09/30/1999	02/25/2000	Warning	148 days
02/25/2000	05/05/2000	Watch	70 days
08/24/2001	05/13/2002	Watch	262 days
04/11/2006	06/30/2006	Watch	80 days
08/06/2007	01/11/2008	Watch	158 days
11/07/2008	01/26/2009	Watch	80 days
09/16/2010	12/17/2010	Watch	92 days
08/05/2011	09/02/2011	Watch	28 days
07/19/2012	08/31/2012	Watch	43 days
08/02/2016	11/03/2016	Watch	93 days
09/10/2020	01/07/2021	Watch	119 days
06/15/2023	08/24/2023	Watch	70 days
Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 2024			
**Gubernatorial Disaster Declaration			

Figure 7 – Forest County Palmer Drought Severity Index 1924-2024



## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

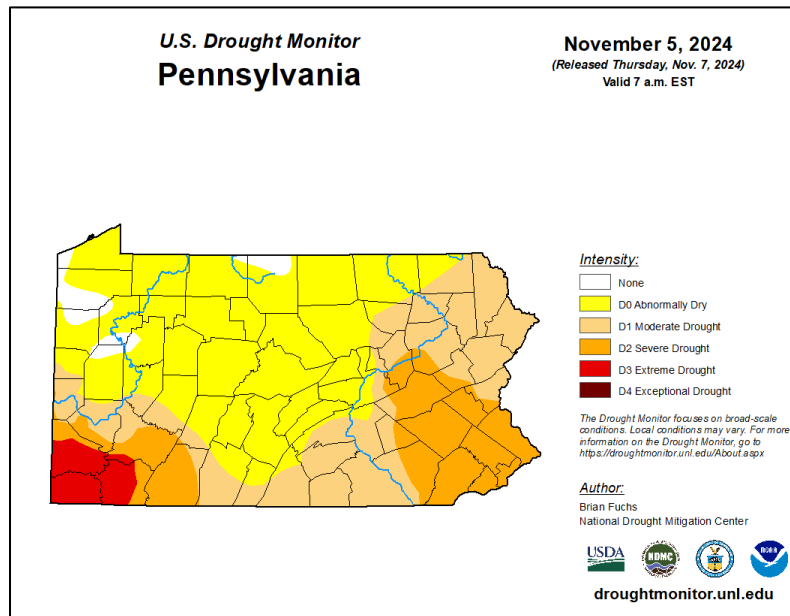
The warmest July on record in Pennsylvania occurred in 2020, and sixteen counties entered Drought Watch status on August 21 of that year. In June 2021, dry conditions were again affecting the commonwealth. *Figure 8 – Current Drought Index for Pennsylvania* illustrates the conditions of drought in Pennsylvania at the time of the report

### 4.3.1.4 Future Occurrence

It is difficult to forecast the exact severity and frequency of future drought events. Climate change may lead to increased uncertainty and extremity of climate events. Forest County experienced severe drought about 5% of the time between 1895 and 1995, as seen in *Figure 9 – Forest County Palmer Drought Severity Index*. This report can be used to make a rough estimate of the future probability of drought in Forest County, although it does not account for changes introduced by climate change. Drought conditions are expected to become more severe with climate change, as evaporation and transpiration will increase with higher temperatures.

*Figure 8 – Current Drought Index for Pennsylvania* below shows that Forest County is currently under abnormally dry conditions as of November 5, 2024.

Figure 8 - Current Drought Index for Pennsylvania



The potential for a drought to occur in Forest County is moderate. Given the frequency of drought watches issued for Forest County and its municipalities, the county can reasonably expect to be under a drought watch at least once every two years. While some form of drought condition frequently exists in Forest County, the impact depends on the duration of the event, severity of conditions, and area affected. The map above shows that Forest County, and most of Pennsylvania, is currently under abnormally dry conditions.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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As stated above, trends indicate climate change will influence the frequency of droughts in the future. As global temperatures rise, weather patterns will change, increasing the number of dry days an area experiences. This could result in more drought periods for a local or regional area. Droughts could also become longer in duration, compared to previous patterns.

#### **4.3.1.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

The magnitude of drought vulnerability depends on the duration and area of impact. However, other factors contribute to the severity of a drought. Unseasonably high temperatures, prolonged winds, and low humidity can heighten the impact of a drought.

Extended periods of drought can lead to lowered stream levels, altering the delicate balance of riverine ecosystems. Certain tree species are susceptible to fungal infections during prolonged periods of soil moisture deficit. Fall droughts pose a particular threat because groundwater levels are typically at their lowest following the height of the summer growing season.

Land use and major development is a factor that has the potential to impact the vulnerability to drought in Forest County. Land use, especially agricultural land use, can exacerbate dry conditions, and these agricultural areas can be damaged by drought. There are 5,781 acres of farmland in Forest County. If the number of agricultural acres increases, that increases the potential vulnerability for drought impacts. Conversely, if the agricultural acres decrease, the potential vulnerability of agriculture to drought decreases. Drought can also have an adverse effect on forested areas. There are two state game lands, two state forests, one state park, and one national forest that make up a large portion of the county. Long periods of drought can increase the potential for wildfires and invasive species that could damage these forested areas. Economic benefits through the provision of wood products would also be affected.

There are many hazards that can be considered cascading hazards related to drought events. Wildfire is the most severe cascading hazard effect associated with drought. Wildfires can devastate wooded and agricultural areas, threatening natural resources and farm production facilities. With drought events, water infiltration into the ground becomes more difficult. This lack of infiltration can result in flash flooding events in areas of steep slopes, canyons, and rolling hills. A loss of vegetation from a drought can also increase the occurrence of landslides in areas of steep slopes with loose packed soil profiles. A discussion on the county's vulnerability to wildfire, flash floods, and landslides can be found in Section 4.3.14.5, 4.3.4.5, and 4.3.8.5, respectively.

Droughts can have adverse effects on farms and other water-dependent industries resulting in local economic loss. Areas of extensive agriculture use are particularly vulnerable to drought; 5,781 acres of Forest County, or roughly 2.1% of the 275,392 total land acreage, make up farmland (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2022 Census). The total number of



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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farms in Forest County is forty-six, and the average acreage for farms in Forest County is 126 acres. Forest County ranks 63<sup>rd</sup> of sixty-seven counties in the commonwealth for agricultural production, totaling over \$3 million annually. Agricultural production from crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops, accounts for more than \$900,000.00 in commerce annually. Production from livestock, poultry, and their products accounts for \$2 million annually. The livestock that has the greatest potential to be impacted are the cattle and calves and the poultry layers. There are approximately 666 cattle and calves and 423 poultry layers. Acreage for farming has increased since the 2017 USDA Census when there was a reported total of 4,170 farming and drought vulnerable acres.

Forest County also has approximately forty-nine wells that would be adversely impacted by drought events. This impact would lead to lower water levels for households and potentially large farms. This well information was obtained by using the PA GEOCODE application to find well information from 2020 to 11/5/2024.

Additionally, emergency services can be adversely impacted by drought as a cascading hazard. Local fire departments often utilize ponds, creeks, and streams for water onboard fire apparatus. With low water levels in waterbodies, responders may be unable to draft enough water to efficiently respond to and extinguish a fire. Also, with an increased number of potential wildfires due to drought conditions, agencies may not have the personnel to efficiently respond to all fires in a timely manner.

A map of properties with tillable agricultural land use, forestry, and other land in the county vulnerable to drought is shown below in *Figure 10 – Drought-Vulnerable Land Use and Public Water Supply*.

Populations in Forest County, including the socially vulnerable, underserved, and unserved populations, are at different levels of vulnerability. The socially vulnerable have an increased risk due to the unsheltered or homeless not having access to reliable sources of water. Also, those individuals who are considered socially vulnerable because of location in rural areas are also at an increased risk because of agricultural and well status.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since the 2010 census and one municipality saw a net population increase from the 2010 census to the 2020 census according to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey estimates. Based on this information, it can be speculated that Jenks Township may have an increased risk to drought conditions, due to the increase in population.

### **Municipalities with high risk due to drought:**

- Jenks Township

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

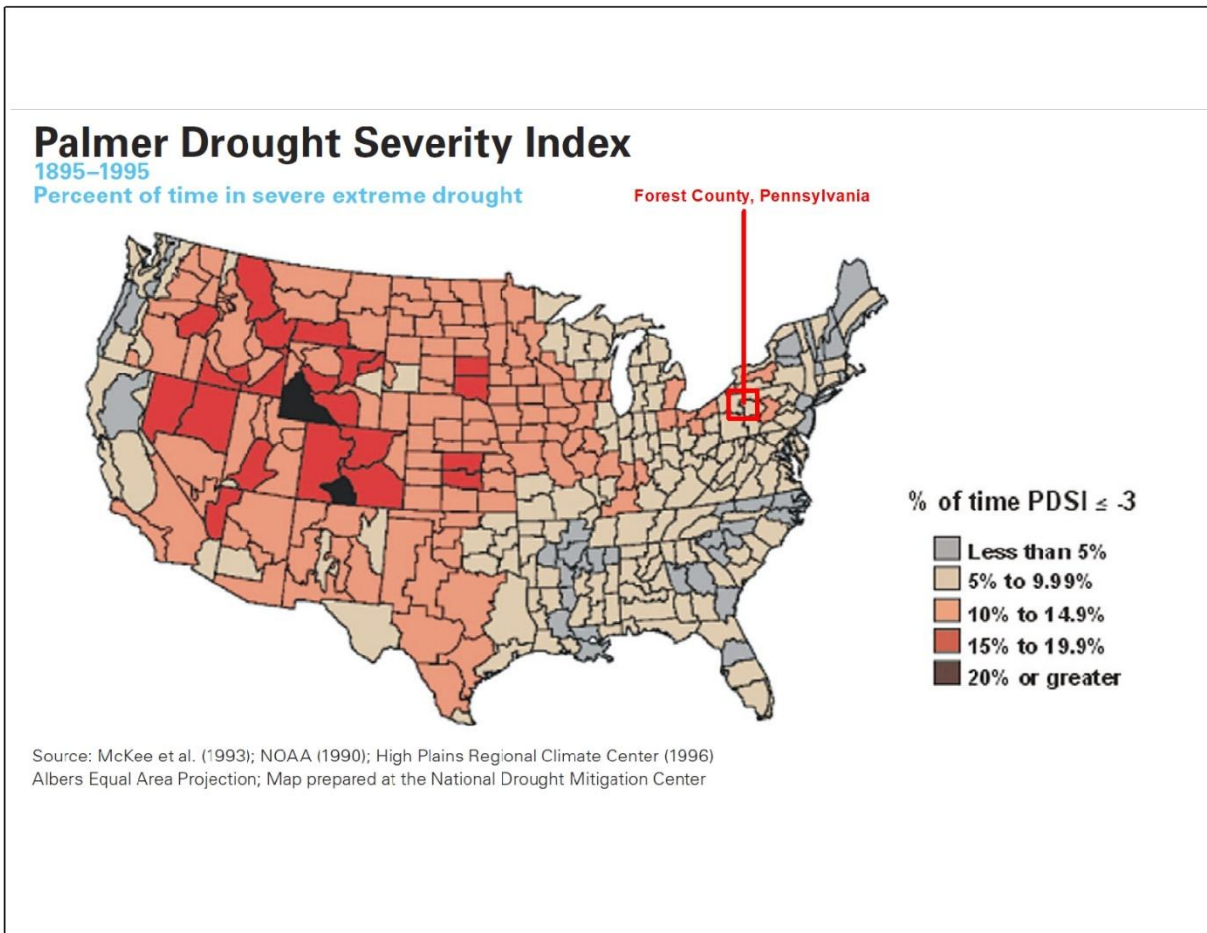
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Drought also has the potential to impact historic and cultural resources in Forest County. Forest County has no historic or cultural properties or buildings according to the National Register of Historic Places. There is no possibility of a drought impacting utility delivery to historic or cultural resources.

Drought events in Forest County can impact certain systems and community lifelines that are tied into the historic or cultural properties. Water utilities can be directly impacted by drought events when prolonged dry weather lowers the available water in reservoirs and water systems used by a county or a community. Drought could impact electric utilities if moving water is used in electric generation. When water is used for electric generation, drought events could cause lower utilization and efficiency. This is more common in the western United States, but it could occur if any counties in Pennsylvania utilize water for power generation. Currently, Forest County does not use waterpower for electric generation. Other systems that could potentially be impacted by a drought event are wastewater utilities and any nuclear power generation that uses water in its process.

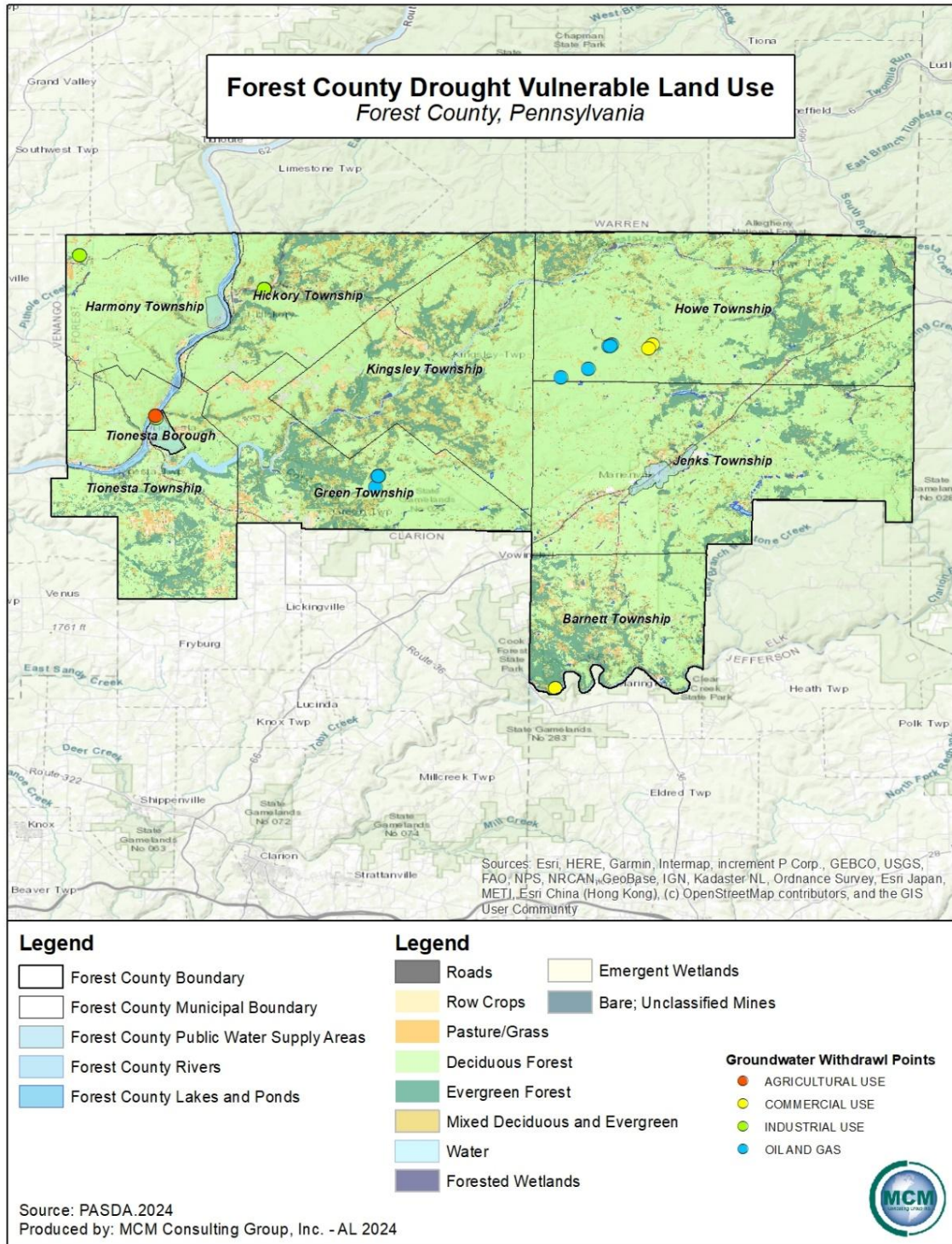
## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 9 - Palmer Drought Severity Index



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 10 - Drought- Vulnerable Land Use and Public Water Supply





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.2. Earthquake**

#### **4.3.2.1 Location and Extent**

An earthquake is sudden movement of the earth's surface caused by the release of stress accumulated within or along the edge of the earth's tectonic plates, a volcanic eruption, or by a human induced explosion (DCNR, 2007). Earthquake events in Pennsylvania, including Forest County, are usually mild events, impacting areas no greater than 100 miles in diameter from the epicenter. A majority of earthquakes occur along boundaries between tectonic plates, and some earthquakes occur at faults on the interior of plates. Today, Eastern North America, including Forest County, Pennsylvania, is far from the nearest plate boundary. That plate boundary is the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and is approximately 2,000 miles to the east, under the Atlantic Ocean. The Ramapo Fault System runs through New York, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania (See *Figure 11 – Ramapo Fault System*). This fault system is associated usually with small earthquakes, but in April 2024, a 4.8 earthquake occurred in Tewksbury, New Jersey along the Ramapo Fault.

*Figure 11 - Ramapo Fault System*



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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When the supercontinent of Pangaea broke apart about 200 million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean began to form. Since then, many faults have developed. Locating all the faults would be an ideal approach to identifying the region's earthquake hazard; however, many of the fault lines in this region have no seismicity associated with them. The best way to determine earthquake history for Forest County is to conduct a probabilistic earthquake-hazard analysis with the earthquakes that have already happened in and around the county. Nevertheless, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) indicates that Forest County has a low earthquake risk, and no historical earthquake events have occurred.

Natural gas extraction of the Marcellus/Utica Shale formation (see *Figure 13 – Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Geology*) has occurred in many regions of the commonwealth, but eastern and southeastern Pennsylvania are not among them. Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is used to extract the gas, and the process is thought to lead to an increase in seismic activity (Meyer, 2016).

However, fracking does not appear to be linked to the increased rate of magnitude three and larger earthquakes (USGS, 2014). In recent years, permits for extraction of the natural gas and oil in the commonwealth have been issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and 3,223 records of requested permits for gas extraction or injection wells were found for Forest County at the writing of this plan.

### **4.3.2.2 Range of Magnitude**

Earthquakes result in the propagation of seismic waves, which are detected using seismographs. These seismograph results are measured using the Richter Scale, an open-ended logarithmic scale that describes the energy release of an earthquake. Table 15 – Richter Scale summarizes Richter Scale magnitudes as they relate to the spatial extent of impacted areas. The Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale (Table 16 – Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale) is an alternative measure of earthquake intensity that is scaled by the impacts of the earthquake event. Earthquakes have many secondary impacts, including disrupting critical facilities, transportation routes, public water supplies, and other utilities.

*Table 15 - Richter Scale*

<b>Richter Scale</b>	
<b>Richter Magnitude</b>	<b>Earthquake Effects</b>
<b>Less than 3.5</b>	Not generally felt but recorded.
<b>3.5-5.4</b>	Often felt, but rarely causes damage.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

<b>Richter Scale</b>	
<b>Richter Magnitude</b>	<b>Earthquake Effects</b>
<b>Under 6.0</b>	At most, slight damage to well-designed buildings; can cause major damage to poorly constructed buildings over small regions.
<b>6.1-6.9</b>	Can be destructive in areas where people live up to about 100 kilometers across.
<b>7.0-7.9</b>	Major earthquake; can cause serious damage over large areas.
<b>8.0 or greater</b>	Great earthquake; can cause serious damage in areas several hundred kilometers across.

*Table 16 - Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale*

<b>Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale</b>			
<b>Scale</b>	<b>Intensity</b>	<b>Earthquake Effects</b>	<b>Richter Scale Magnitude</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>Instrumental</b>	Detected only on seismographs.	<4.2
<b>II</b>	<b>Feeble</b>	Some people feel it.	
<b>III</b>	<b>Slight</b>	Felt by people resting, like a truck rumbling by.	
<b>IV</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	Felt by people walking.	
<b>V</b>	<b>Slightly Strong</b>	Sleepers awake; church bells ring.	<4.8
<b>VI</b>	<b>Strong</b>	Trees sway; suspended objects swing; objects fall off shelves.	<5.4
<b>VII</b>	<b>Very Strong</b>	Mild alarm, walls crack, plaster falls.	<6.1
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Destructive</b>	Moving cars uncontrollable, masonry fractures, poorly constructed buildings damaged.	<6.9
<b>IX</b>	<b>Ruinous</b>	Some houses collapse, ground cracks, pipes break open.	
<b>X</b>	<b>Disastrous</b>	Ground cracks profusely, many buildings destroyed, liquefaction and landslides widespread.	<7.3

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale			
Scale	Intensity	Earthquake Effects	Richter Scale Magnitude
XI	Very Disastrous	Most buildings and bridges collapse, roads, railways, pipes, and cables destroyed, general triggering of other hazards.	<8.1
XII	Catastrophic	Total destruction, trees fall, ground rises and falls in waves.	>8.1

### 4.3.2.3 Past Occurrence

According to USGS, no known earthquakes have had an epicenter within Forest County since 1724, before which local seismology cannot be known. However, several seismic events that occurred outside the county boundary may have been felt in the region.

On August 23, 2011, a 5.9 earthquake occurred in Virginia, and a 2.2 earthquake shook Reading, Pennsylvania (Berks County), on July 19, 2019. Further, a 3.4 earthquake struck Mifflintown (Juniata County) on June 13, 2019, and Bolivar (Westmoreland County) experienced a 2.9 event on October 6, 2020. Parts of the county may have experienced some of the shock waves from these minor earthquakes and others that have occurred around the region, most notably New Jersey. The strongest recorded earthquake in Pennsylvania history (5.2) occurred on September 25, 1998, in northwestern Pennsylvania and is known as the Pymatuning Earthquake for its epicenter near Pymatuning Lake. The effects of the earthquake were felt across the commonwealth and were blamed for many wells in the region near the epicenter losing their water, while new springs appeared and old wells reemerged. A three-month data range revealed 120 dry household-supply wells on the ridge of Jamestown and Greenville, Pennsylvania. Declines of up to 100 feet were observed on a ridge where at least eighty of the wells resided. The degree of the damage varied. Some of the wells lost all power or could barely hold their yields and some of the water in wells turned black or began to smell of sulfur.

The most likely impetus of the wells drying was due to an increase in hydraulic conductivity of shale rock under this area caused by the earthquake. The quake affected the existing faults and created new faults in the shale. This created more permeability for the water to leak down from the hilltops on the ridge down to the valleys following the contours of the Meadville shale.

Because the effects of large earthquakes can be felt hundreds of miles away, the historical earthquake epicenters near Forest County are shown below at *Figure 14 – Pennsylvania Recorded Earthquake Events*. A wider depiction of earthquake occurrences in the northeastern

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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United States may be found here:

<https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/map/?extent=14.26438,-141.32813&extent=56.51102,-48.60352>

### **4.3.2.4 Future Occurrence**

Earthquake activity and intensities are difficult to predict, but a probabilistic analysis of prior earthquakes can assist in gauging the likelihood of future occurrences. 4.3.2.1 shows that Forest County is in a moderate hazard zone for earthquake activity according to the USGS (2014), suggesting a low probability of earthquake occurrence. However, according to the USGS, there has been a recent trend increasing the frequency of magnitude three and larger earthquakes in the central and eastern U.S. ( Table 17 – Recent Earthquake Trends in Northeastern United States) This uptick in seismicity may be due to hydraulic fracturing activities, and specifically occurs due to wastewater from the fracking process being injected into the earth (Meyer, 2016). Recent studies have moved towards being able to predict such induced seismicity by looking at uplift after injections, but more work needs to be done to confirm uplift as a reliable indicator of induced seismicity (Shirzaei et al., 2016). It is important to note that seismicity can occur even after wells become inactive and injection rates decline (Shirzaei et al., 2016).

Isostatic Rebound is a hypothesis for earthquake occurrence that has been conceptualized for many years, according to Charles Scharnberger, a retired professor of geology at Millersville University, who monitors the seismic station there. Scharnberger said Pennsylvania earthquakes are somewhat of a mystery, but they could have something to do with the westward shift of the North American tectonic plate. Though the plates meet in California, where most of the seismic activity occurs, that movement still causes stress, squeezing and pressure along the entire length of the plate, reverberating as far back as the East Coast. A 3.4 earthquake like the one in Mifflintown, Juniata County in 2019 is in the medium range for Pennsylvania and may occur every couple of years. According to the USGS, this was the strongest earthquake felt, or originating, in Pennsylvania that year. It was followed by a 1.3 aftershock.

The chances of a devastating earthquake are low, but do exist, according to Scharnberger, His calculations on the probability of a severe earthquake based on the historic record indicate it is about a one in 200 chance in any given year.

Climate change and its relationship with earthquakes is hard to identify. According to the U.S Geological Survey, climate change and earthquake correlation occurs when there is a large change in atmospheric pressure that can be caused by major storms which then could cause slow, small earthquakes. Over time, the release of energy from small earthquakes can lead to ground

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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shaking earthquakes which can cause severe damage. This theory is not yet proven and is still subject to change but can provide some context to the impact of climate change.

*Table 17 - Recent Earthquake Trends in Northeastern United States*

<b>Earthquake Trends in Northeastern U.S. (USGS, 2020)</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Magnitude 3+ Earthquakes</b>
2015	0
2016	3
2017	4
2018	0
2019	5
2020	3
2021	1
2022	5
2023	5
2024	2

### **4.3.2.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

According to the U.S. Geological Society Earthquake Hazards Program, an earthquake hazard is anything associated with an earthquake that may affect a resident's normal activities. For Forest County, this could include surface faulting, ground shaking, landslides, liquefaction, dried or rejuvenated water wells, tectonic deformation, and seiches (sloshing of a closed body of water from earthquake shaking).

Earthquakes usually occur without warning and can impact areas a great distance from their point of origin (epicenter). Ground shaking is the greatest risk to building damage within Forest County. The risk to public safety and loss of life from an earthquake is dependent upon the severity and proximity of the event. Injury or death to those inside buildings, or people walking below building ornamentation and chimneys is a higher risk to Forest County's general public during an earthquake. Infrastructure is more at risk on the east coast than the west coast because of aging buildings inventory.

There are ten bridges in poor condition and forty-seven bridges in fair condition publicly documented by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation that could be damaged and made unusable by a major earthquake event. These locations are unevenly distributed throughout the county and damage to any of them would be detrimental to transportation and emergency response in Forest County.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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The following municipalities have bridges that were categorized as poor in Forest County:

- Barnett Township (1)
- Greene Township (1)
- Hickory Township (2)
- Howe Township (3)
- Tionesta Township (3)

### **Impact of earthquakes on historic properties in Forest County**

Forest County has a small number of historic and cultural properties that could be adversely impacted by earthquakes. The vulnerability of each is related to the construction practices of the property at the time that it was constructed. One historic property in Forest County was constructed before 1900 and is a type of construction vulnerable to increased seismic events (brick and stone). There are two historic properties in Forest County that are registered with the National Register of Historic Places.

These locations are:

- Anthony Wayne Cook Mansion (Brick/Stone)

There are also two historic districts in Forest County. These areas are located in Barnett Township, and are called Cook Forest State park Indian Cabin District and Cook Forest State Park River Cabin District.

### **Municipalities with high risk due to earthquakes:**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

All of the socially vulnerable populations in Forest County are at an increased vulnerability to earthquakes. The homeless and the unsheltered populations are at risk if they are living in structurally unsound buildings and locations. Also, the economically vulnerable of Forest County

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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may not have the capability to fix or rebuild if their homes are damaged from an earthquake event.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since the 2010 decennial census. One municipality has seen a net population increase from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this one municipality may have an increased/equivalent vulnerability to earthquakes, since 2010, due to the increase in population and construction.

Land use is a factor that has the potential to impact earthquake severity. Land use, in the form of a built environment, such as residential expansion, can cause earthquake impact severity to increase. Impact severity increases because as the built environment expands and becomes more complex, the impact the event can have on that area may also increase due to an influx of people, infrastructure, and critical infrastructure in the hazard area. With one municipality seeing population increases between the 2010 decennial census and the 2020 decennial census, there has not been an increase in residential construction in Forest County.

The seismic forces associated with an earthquake pose an immediate threat to telecommunication infrastructure, or other critical infrastructure in a community. When an earthquake occurs, the resulting ground instability can lead to telephone pole collapse, disruption of fiber or copper cables systems, and in severe cases, cellular tower failure. The disruption to these networks, if the earthquake event is significant, can also result in a loss of communication capabilities, hindering response coordination, and leaving communities impacted by the earthquake vulnerable to other natural or human-caused hazards.

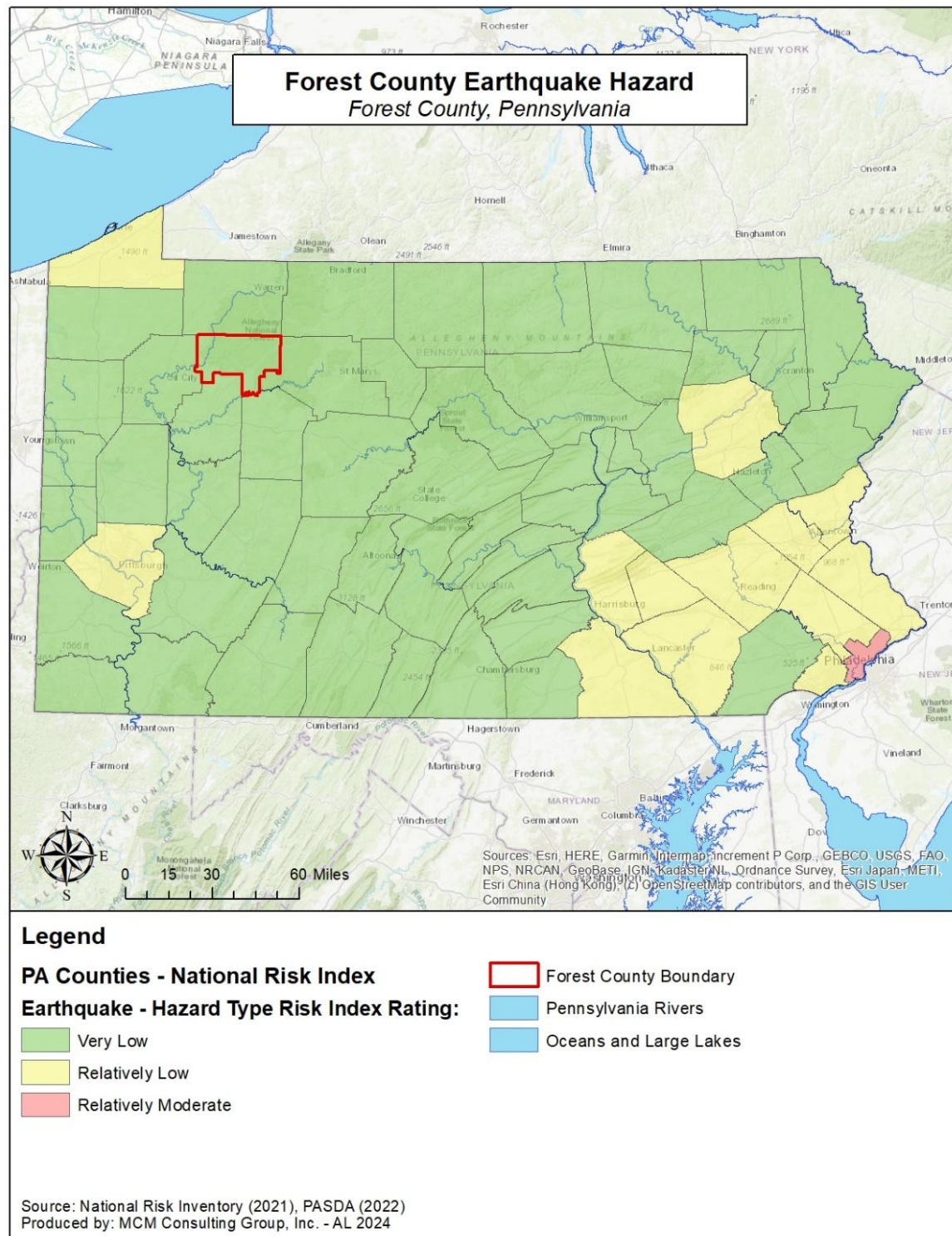
Earthquakes can also damage power distribution systems, leading to localized power outages or even widespread blackouts. Fallen power lines, damaged substations, and disrupted transformers may further contribute to the breakdown of the electrical grid surrounding the epicenter of the earthquake, and the consequences can include cascading pressure on essential services and other community lifelines, further impeding emergency operations and the capabilities within the impacted jurisdictions.

Earthquake events can also pose a threat to natural gas, water, and the numerous other materials and chemicals transported through underground water systems in Forest County. During significant earthquakes, underground pipelines may crack, causing the transported material to leak into the ground and contaminate water sources in the county. In severe cases, water line bursts can cause cascading hazards to subsidence and sinkholes, when left unchecked. However, even in more contained scenarios, a small leak can have profound impact if the transported material is toxic or hazardous in nature, leading to degradation of the natural resources in the impacted communities.



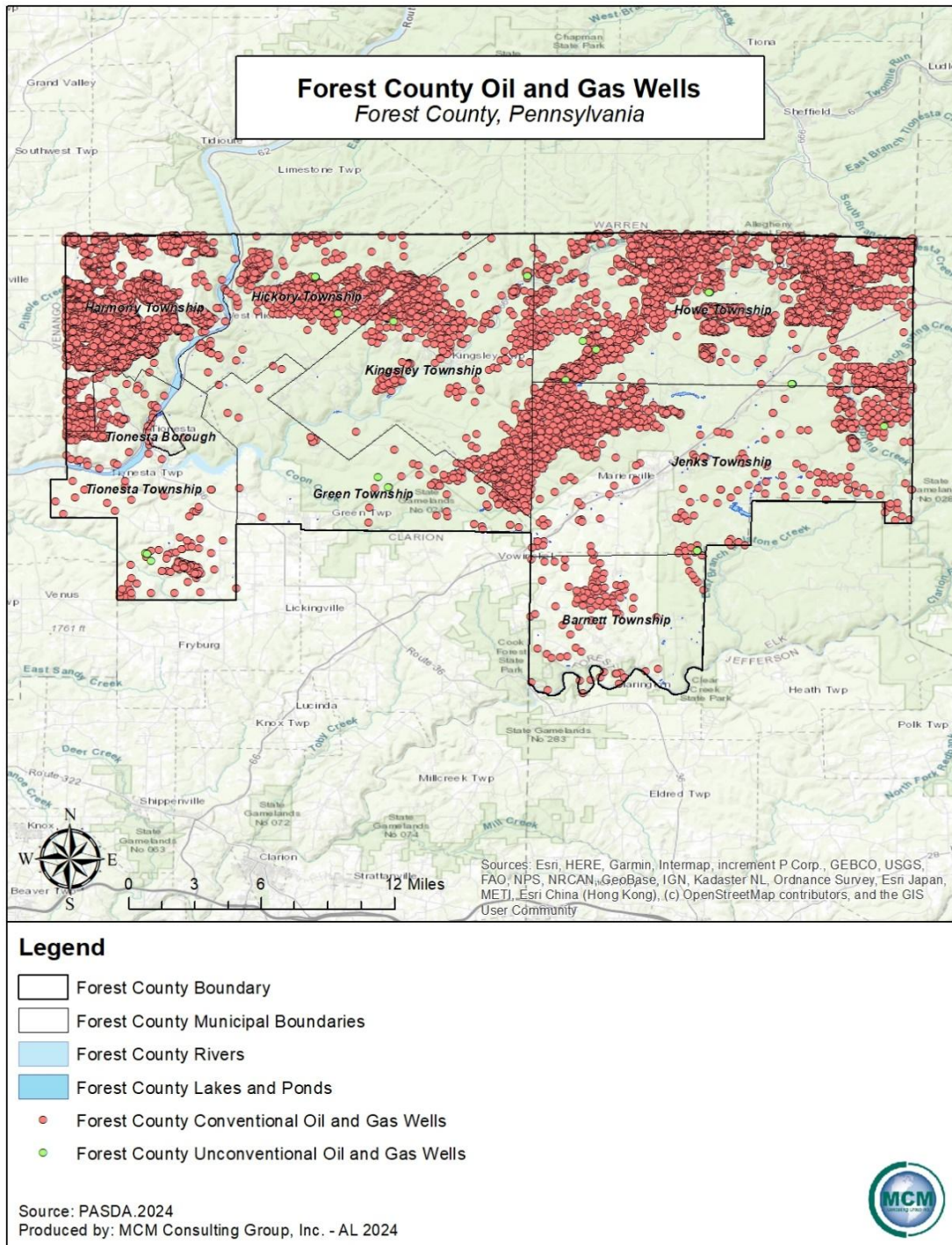
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 12 - Pennsylvania Earthquake Hazard Zones



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

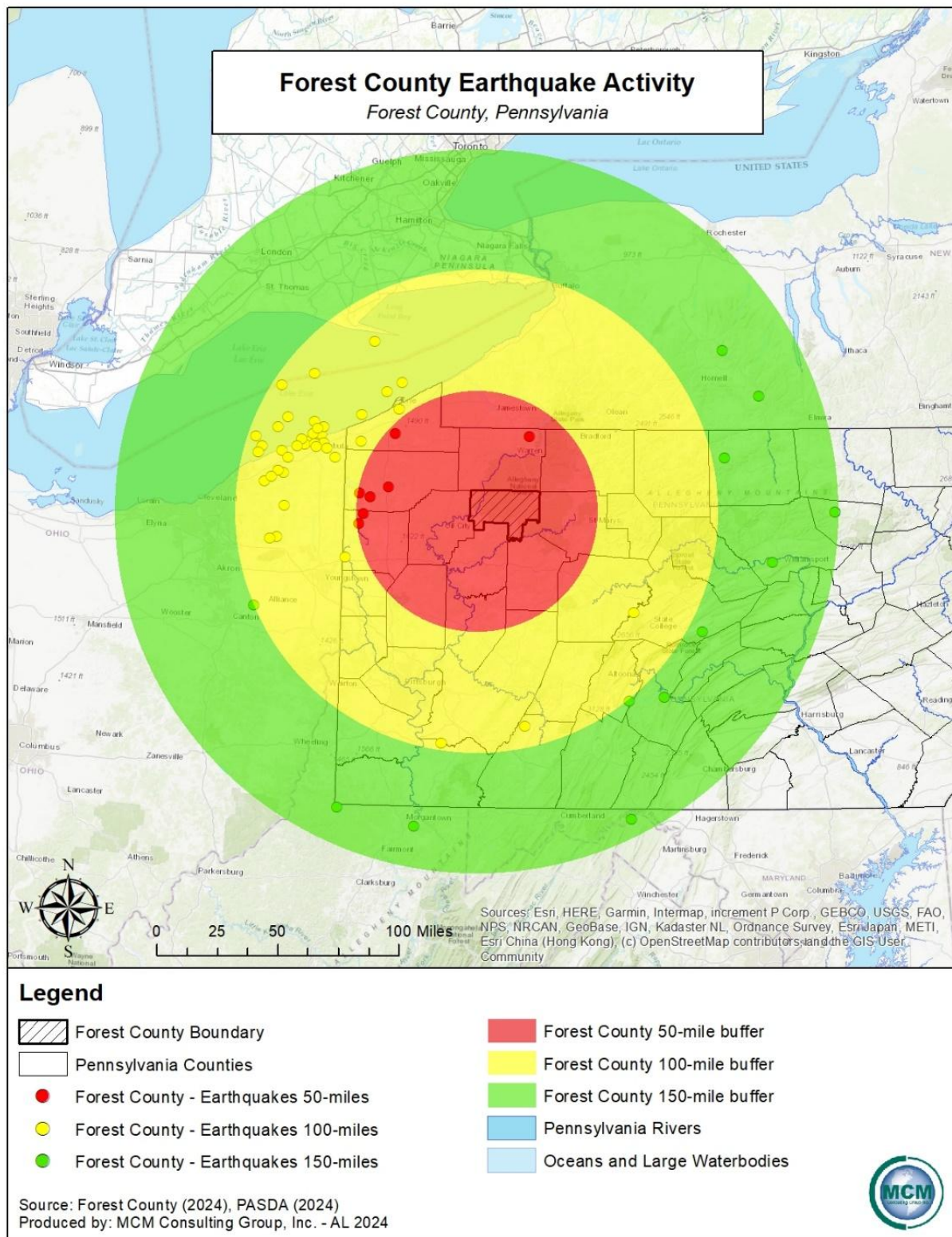
Figure 13 - Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Geology





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 14 - Pennsylvania Recorded Earthquake Events



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.3. Extreme Temperatures**

#### **4.3.3.1 Location and Extent**

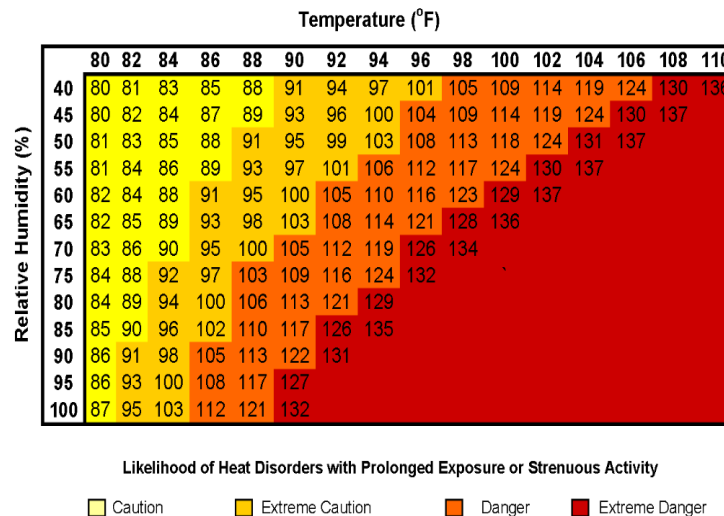
Pennsylvania, and more specifically, Forest County can experience many different temperature extremes. High temperatures occur about ten days per year at any location in Pennsylvania. However, southern parts of the state experience more than twice this number. Freezing temperatures occur on an average of 100 or more days per year with longest freeze-free period at near sea level locations such as northwest Pennsylvania (adjacent to Lake Erie). Extreme temperatures can be devastating – extreme heat can cause sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and dehydration, while extreme cold can cause hypothermia and frostbite. Both can potentially cause long-lasting disabilities. January is typically the coldest month for Forest County, with average temperatures of 26.0°F. *Figure 18 - Average Minimum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania* shows the average minimum temperatures in Pennsylvania with Forest County identified. July has typically been the warmest month for Forest County, with an average temperature of 71.0°F. *Figure 19 - Average Maximum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania* shows the average maximum temperatures in Pennsylvania with Forest County identified. Temperatures can vary across Forest County due to elevation changes in topography.

#### **4.3.3.2 Range of Magnitude**

When extreme temperature events occur, they typically impact the entirety of Forest County, including the surrounding region. Extreme heat is described as temperatures that hover at least 10°F above the average high temperature for a region during the summer months. Extreme heat is responsible for more deaths in Pennsylvania than all other natural disasters combined. Temperature advisories, watches, and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service relating impacts to the range of temperatures typically experienced in Pennsylvania. Heat advisories are issued when the heat index temperature is expected to be equal to 100°F, but less than 105°F. Excessive heat warnings are issued when heat indices are expected to reach or exceed 105°F and are issued within twelve hours of the onset. Excessive heat watches are issued when there is a possibility that excessive heat warning criteria may be experienced within twenty-four to seventy-two hours, but their occurrence and timing are still uncertain. A potential worst-case extreme temperature scenario would occur if widespread areas of the Commonwealth experienced 90°F or higher temperatures for an extended number of days. The heat could overwhelm the power grid and cause widespread blackouts, cutting off vital HVAC services for residents. It could create crisis management issues for senior citizens on fixed incomes, the homeless, and other vulnerable populations. The heat index is a measurement that takes into account both the temperature and relative humidity, and it is calculated as shown in *Figure 15 - National Weather Service's Heat Index Matrix*.

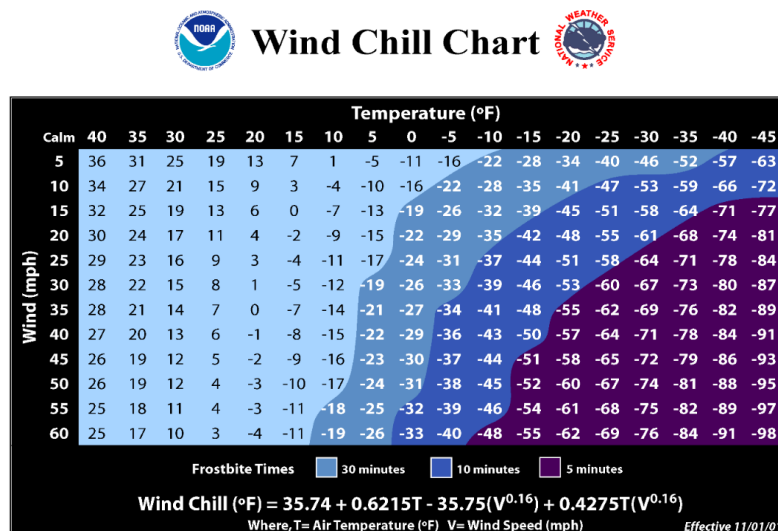
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 15 - National Weathers Service's Heat Index Matrix



Extreme cold temperatures drop well below typical temperatures and are often associated with winter storm events. Wind can make the apparent temperature drop further, and exposure to such extreme cold temperatures can cause hypothermia, frost bite, and death. Wind chill warnings are issued when wind chills drop to -25°F or lower. While this threshold applies to the entire state, the threshold for advisories varies based on regions. Wind chill advisories are issued in the south and western sections of Pennsylvania, when wind chill values drop to -10°F to -24°F. Wind chill advisories are issued in the southern-central to northern sections of the Commonwealth when wind chills drop to -15°F to -24°F. The National Weather Service created a wind chill chart which shows the time frostbite takes to set in depending on temperature and wind speed as shown in *Figure 16 - National Weather Service's Wind Chill Chart*.

Figure 16 - National Weather Service's Wind Chill Chart



Source: (NOAA NWS, 2001)

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.3.3 Past Occurrence**

Forest County has had more past occurrences of extreme cold incidents than extreme heat due to the geographic location of the county. *Table 18 - Past Extreme Temperature Occurrences for Forest County* shows the past occurrence events associated with extreme temperature (hot and cold) that have occurred in Forest County. The data in the table was reported from early 2000s to the year 2024. Due to the source used, no further events have been documented since 2019, however, events most likely have occurred without being documented. With a total of five different extreme temperature events that have occurred, all of those events were extreme cold related. There were no reports of death or injury related to the occurrences. However, numerous sources have provided information regarding past occurrences and losses associated with extreme temperature in Forest County and the Commonwealth as a whole. Due to the number of sources available with information, number of events and losses could vary slightly in number.

Data from the National Climatic Data Center reports that there have been 820 extreme temperature episodes in Pennsylvania from 2000 to 11/13/2024, resulting in a total of ninety-seven deaths and 103 injuries. Out of the 820 events, 525 of them were extreme cold related with four deaths. The other 295 events were extreme heat related with ninety-three deaths and 103 injuries across the state. The biggest event began on July 21, 2011, and ended on July 24, 2011. This event had no documented impact on Forest County itself. In the 2011 event, there were a total of twenty-two deaths and forty-eight injuries during the course of the event across the commonwealth. Record-breaking heat temperatures were experienced in over thirty different counties.

*Table 18 - Past Extreme Temperature Occurrences for Forest County*

<b>Past Extreme Temperature Occurrences for Forest County</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>
Forest County	01/05/2014	Extreme Cold/Wind Chill
Forest County	02/14/2015	Extreme Cold/Wind Chill
Forest County	02/19/2015	Extreme Cold/Wind Chill
Forest County	02/24/2015	Extreme Cold/Wind Chill
Forest County	01/30/2019	Extreme Cold/Wind Chill
Source: NOAA, 2024		

### **4.3.3.4 Future Occurrence**

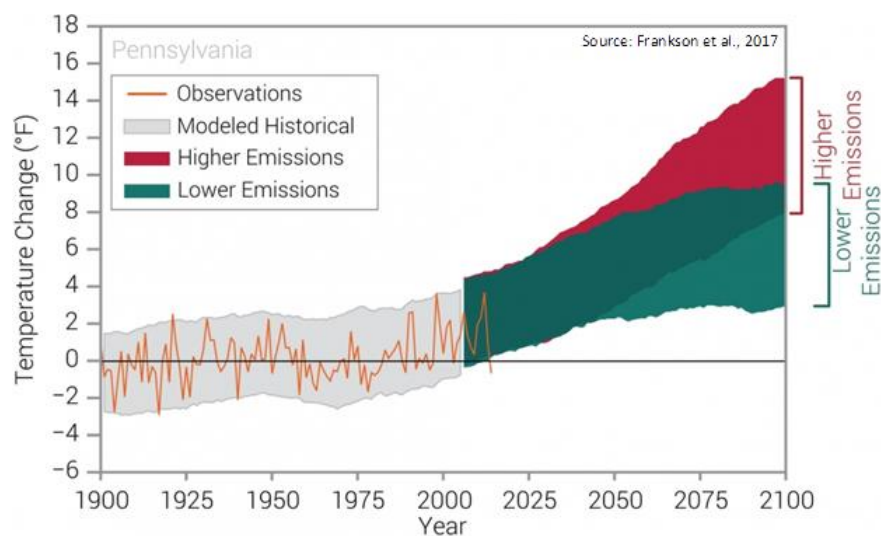
Extreme temperatures will continue to impact Forest County in the future. Anthropogenic climate change is causing extreme climatic events to occur more frequently, suggesting that extreme temperatures are becoming a more threatening hazard as the impacts of climate change intensify. The annual average temperature has increased by 1.2°F across the continental United States during the years 1986 to present compared to the time period 1901 to 1960, and



## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

temperatures are expected to continue rising. *Figure 17 - Observed and Projected Temperature Change for Pennsylvania* shows these projected changes in temperature for Pennsylvania based on climate models considering the possibilities of increased and decreased levels of greenhouse gas emissions. In recent years, record high temperatures have outnumbered record low temperatures 2:1, so it is expected that the risk of extreme heat will be amplified whereas the risk of extreme cold will be attenuated. The Northeastern United States is expected to experience twenty to thirty more days with temperatures above 90°F, and twenty to thirty fewer days below freezing by approximately 2050. While there may be fewer extreme cold events, those that do occur are expected to reach record-setting low temperatures more often. Historically, Forest County has had more extreme cold events than extreme heat events due to the geographic location of the county; however, this balance is expected to shift somewhat in the coming years to include a greater proportion of extreme heat events.

Figure 17 - Observed and Projected Temperature Change for Pennsylvania



Source: (Frankson et al., 2017)

### 4.3.3.5 Vulnerability Assessment

Extreme temperatures are usually a regional hazard when they occur. As seen in *Table 52- Population per municipality under 5 years or 65 years or older* The very old (sixty-five years or older, accounting for 22.9% of Forest County population) and the very young (five years or younger, accounting for 4.0% of Forest County population) are most vulnerable to extreme temperatures due to risk factors, mobility challenges, and disabilities. Extreme temperatures can increase the demand for utility services, often resulting in an increased cost which some consumers may be unable to afford. The increased demand for services may cause a decrease in availability of these services or failure of the system. A decrease or failure of the utility system during extreme temperature events would put a large population at great risk. Extreme

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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temperature events can also drastically increase the volume of emergency calls, potentially overwhelming the public safety communications center. Extreme heat events can also contribute to drought conditions, which in turn increase the risk of wildfire, as discussed in Section 4.3.14.

### **Municipalities with high risk due to extreme temperature:**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

Extreme temperatures can have a significant impact on land use within Forest County. Higher temperatures can affect the mountain snowpacks and vegetation land. It is important to note that higher land use and irrigation can cause more intense extreme temperatures. Based on this information it can be speculated that higher land use within the municipalities in Forest County will be impacted.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight of the nine municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since and one municipality saw a net population increase from the 2010 census to the 2020 census according to the United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey estimates. Based on this information, it can be speculated that Jenks Township may have an increased vulnerability to extreme temperatures, since 2010, due to the increase in population. Populations in Forest County, including the socially vulnerable and unserved populations, are at different levels of vulnerability. The socially vulnerable have an increased risk due to the unsheltered or homeless not having proper, and adequate, access to shelter and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) to protect them from extreme temperature events.

Extreme temperatures can have a significant impact on natural areas. Consecutive days of excessive heat or extreme cold can lead to the diminishment of natural habitats such as forests, rivers, and mountains as seen in Forest County. Excessive heat and extreme cold can cause these areas to lose the nourishment that is needed for these areas to survive and destroy the equilibrium within them. If trends continue there will be more days of excessive heat in the coming years that could impact the equilibrium in these natural areas and change their geographic features.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

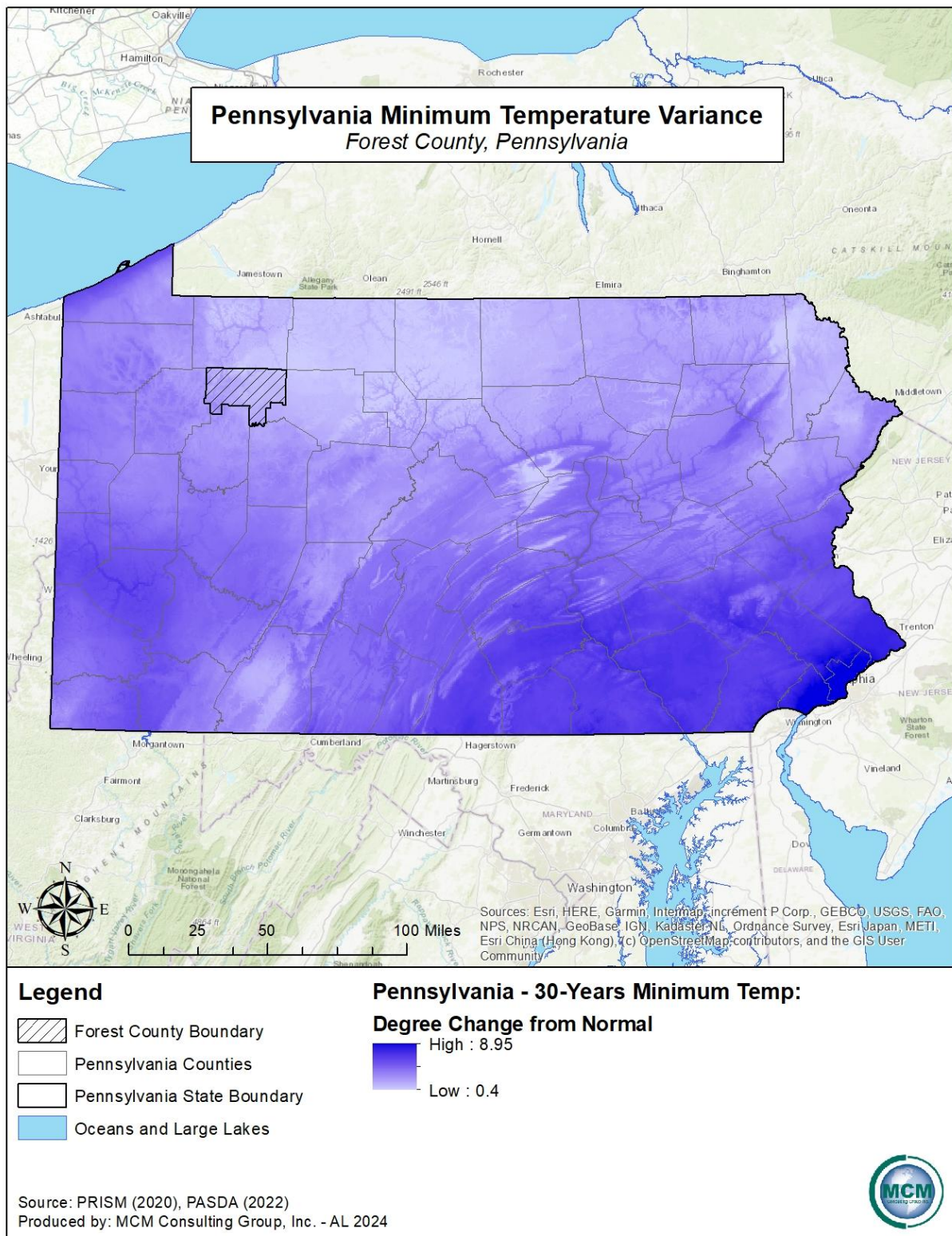
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Extreme temperatures and lack of rainfall can lead to drought and the diminishment of rivers and vegetation within the area.

Extreme temperatures can have significant impacts on systems and community lifelines that are essential for the operations of an area. The changing nature of extreme temperature events could account for different levels of impact for every system in an area. For example, excessive cold may disrupt water systems, potentially resulting in frozen or broken pipes due to water freezing in the system because of the lower temperatures. Extreme heat events may increase the demand for potable water for consumption and water for irrigation. This could result in lower reservoir levels and increased concern for water rationing. If extreme temperatures continue for an extended period, or if the extreme temperatures occur while a drought event is ongoing, the vulnerability of an area could be critical. Extreme temperatures could impact the power system by causing an increase for air conditioning in extreme heat events. When power demand is high for an already over-taxed power system, rolling power interruptions or brownouts can occur. This is more typical in the western United States but could occur in Pennsylvania if the conditions are met.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

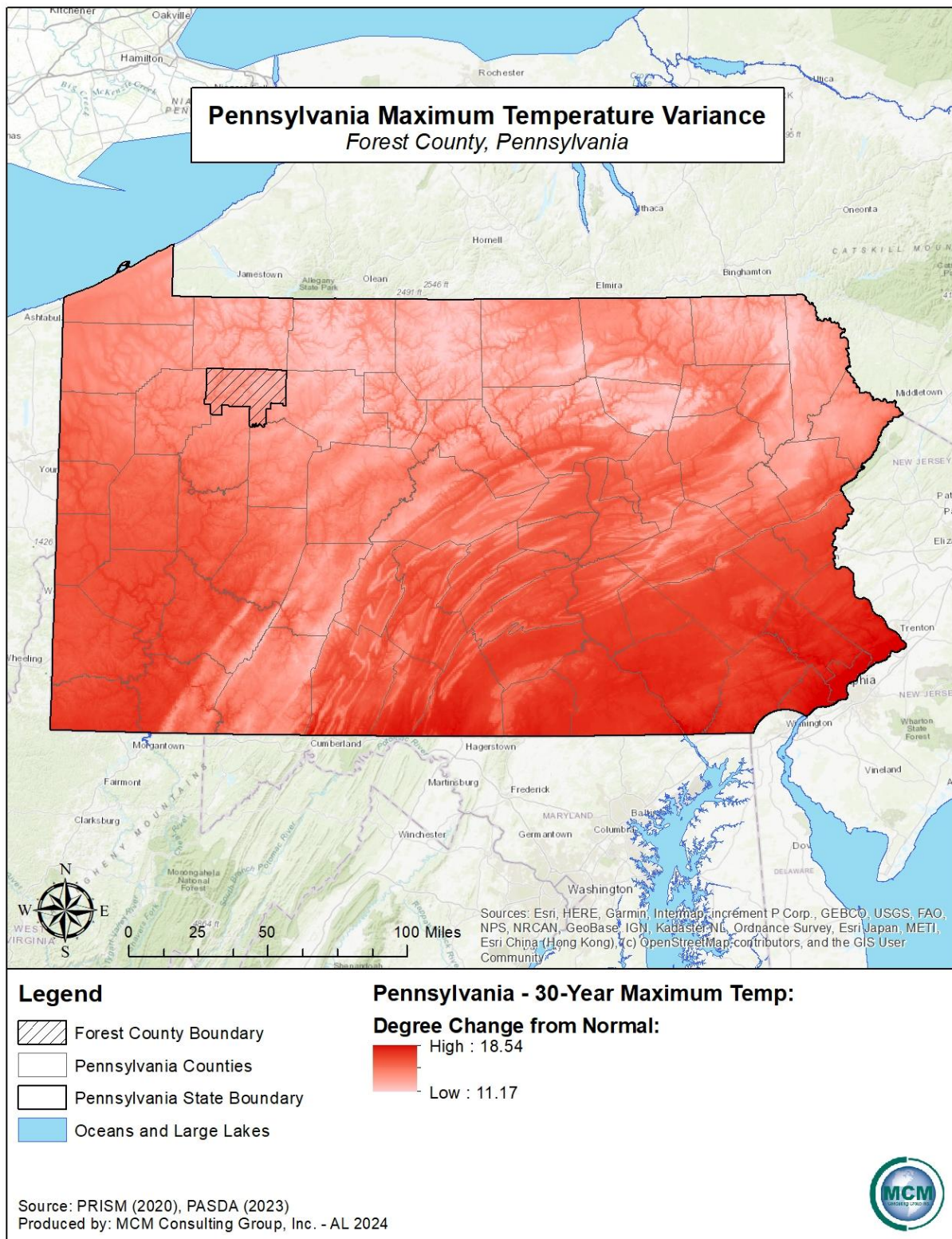
Figure 18 - Average Minimum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 19 - Average Maximum Temperature Trends for Pennsylvania



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.4. Flooding, Flash Flooding, and Ice Jam Flooding**

##### **4.3.4.1 Location and Extent**

Flooding is the temporary condition of partial or complete inundation on normally dry land and it is the most frequent and costly of all hazards in Pennsylvania. Flooding events are generally the result of excessive precipitation. General flooding is typically experienced when precipitation occurs over a given river basin for an extended period. Flash flooding is usually the result of heavy, localized precipitation falling in a short period of time over a given location, often in mountain streams and mountainous regions, and in urban areas where much of the ground is covered in impervious surfaces. Flash floods are relatively common in Forest County and the severity of those flood events is dependent upon a combination of creek, stream, and river basin topography and physiography, hydrology, precipitation, and weather patterns. Present soil conditions, the degree of vegetative clearing, and the presence of impervious cover must also be considered when determining the severity of a flood or flash flood event.

Winter flooding can include ice jams, which occur when warm temperatures and heavy rain cause snow to melt rapidly. Snow melt combined with heavy rains can cause frozen rivers to swell, which breaks the ice layer on top of a river. The ice layer often breaks into large chunks, which float downstream, piling up in narrow passages and near other obstructions such as bridges and dams. All forms of flooding can damage infrastructure.

Floodplains are lowlands adjacent to rivers, streams, and creeks that are subject to recurring floods. The size of the floodplain is described by the recurrence interval of a given flood event. Flood recurrence intervals are explained in more detail in section 4.3.4.4. However, in assessing the potential spatial extent of flooding, it is important to know that a floodplain associated with a flood that has a 10% chance of occurring in a given year is smaller than a floodplain associated with a flood that has a 0.2% chance of occurring.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) publishes digital flood insurance rate maps (DFIRMs). These maps identify the 1% annual chance flood area. The special flood hazard area (SFHA) and base flood elevations (BFE) are developed from the 1% annual chance flood event as seen in *Figure 20 – Flooding and Floodplain Diagram*. Structure located within the SFHA have a 26% chance of flooding in a thirty-year period. The SFHA serves as the primary regulatory boundary used by FEMA, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Forest County local government. Federal floodplain management regulations and mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements apply to the following high-risk special flood hazard areas in *Table 19 – Flood Hazard High Risk Zones*. Appendix D of this hazard mitigation plan includes a flooding vulnerability map for each municipality in Forest County with vulnerable structures and community lifeline facilities identified using the most current DFIRM data for Forest County.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Past flooding events have been primarily caused by heavy rains, which cause small creeks and streams to overflow their banks, often leading to road closures. Flooding poses a threat to community lifeline facilities, agricultural areas, and those who reside or conduct business in the floodplain. The most significant hazard exists for facilities in the floodplain that process, use, or store hazardous materials. A flood could potentially release and transport hazardous materials throughout the area. Most flood damage to a property and structure located in the floodplain is caused by water exposure to the interior, high velocity water, and debris flow.

Figure 20 - Flooding and Floodplain Diagram

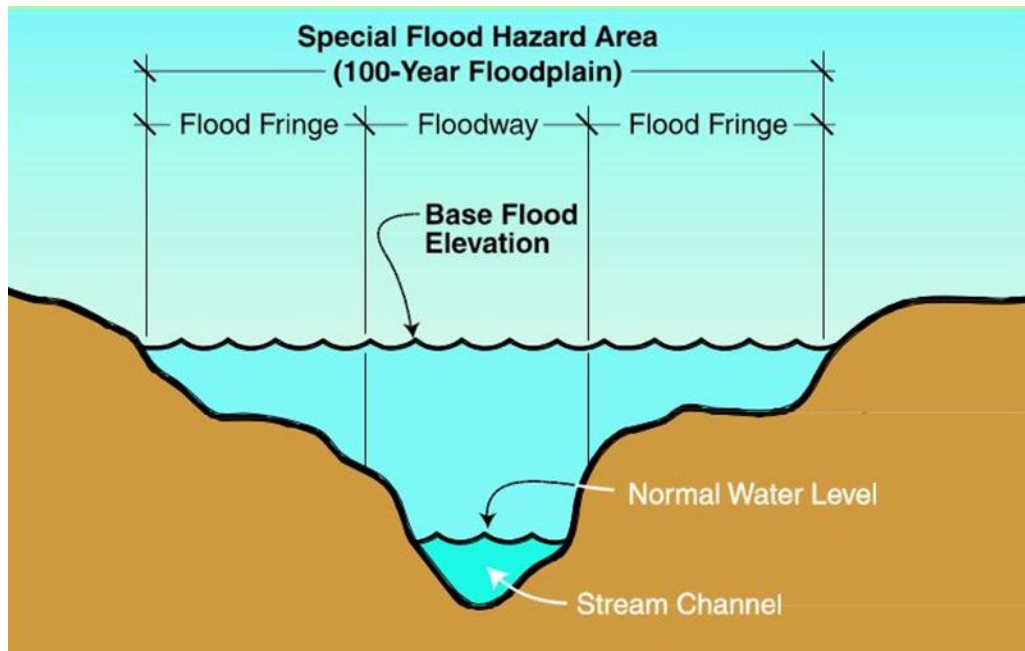


Table 19 - Flood Hazard High Risk Zones

Flood Hazard High Risk Zones	
Zone	Description
<b>A</b>	Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual chance flood event. Because detailed hydraulic analysis has not been performed, no base flood elevations or flood depths are shown.
<b>AE</b>	Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual chance flood event determined by detailed methods. BFEs are shown within these zones.
<b>AH</b>	Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual chance shallow flooding (usually areas of ponding) where average depths are 1 – 3 feet. BFEs derived from detailed hydraulic analysis are shown in this zone.
<b>AO</b>	Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual chance shallow flooding (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain) where average depths are 1 – 3 feet. Average flood depths derived from detailed hydraulic analysis are shown within this zone.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Flood Hazard High Risk Zones	
Zone	Description
AR	Areas that result from the decertification of a previously accredited flood protection system that is determined to be in the process of being restored to provide base flood protection.
Source: FEMA, 2017	

### **4.3.4.2 Range of Magnitude**

The Allegheny River basin and the Clarion River basin have caused significant flooding in Forest County, specifically on the following streams, creeks, and their tributaries:

- Allegheny River
  - Tionesta Creek
  - East Hickory Creek
  - Burdick Run
- Clarion River

Several factors determine the severity of floods, including rainfall intensity and duration, topography, ground cover, and the rate of snowmelt. Water runoff is greater in areas with steep slopes and little to no vegetative ground cover. The mountainous terrain of Forest County can cause more severe floods as runoff reaches receiving water bodies more rapidly over steep terrain. This is of particular concern for areas along steep slopes and on the edges of valleys throughout Forest County.

Urbanization typically results in the replacement of vegetative ground cover with impermeable surfaces like asphalt and concrete, increasing the volume of surface runoff and stormwater, particularly in areas with poorly planned stormwater drainage systems. A large amount of rainfall over a short time span can cause flash flood events. Flash floods can occur very quickly and with little warning. A flash flood can also be deadly because of the rapid rise in water levels and devastating flow velocities. The more developed areas in the county can easily be susceptible to flash floods because of the significant presence of impervious surfaces, such as streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and driveways. Additionally, small amounts of rain can cause floods in locations where the soil is still frozen, saturated from a previous wet period or if the area is largely covered in impermeable surfaces such as parking lots, paved roadways, and other developed areas. The county occasionally experiences intense rainfall from tropical storms in late summer and early fall, which can potentially cause flooding as well.

Severe flooding can cause injuries and deaths and can have long-term impacts on the health and safety of citizens. Severe flooding can also result in significant property damage, potentially disrupting the regular function of community lifeline facilities and can have widespread negative effects on local economies. Industrial, commercial, and public infrastructure facilities can

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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become inundated with flood waters, threatening the continuity of government and business. The vulnerable populations must be identified and located in flooding situations, as they are often homebound. Mobile homes and manufactured structures are especially vulnerable to high water levels. Flooding can have significant environmental impacts when the flood water release and/or transport hazardous materials.

Severe flooding also comes with secondary effects that could have long lasting impacts on the population, economy, and infrastructure within Forest County. Power failures are the most common secondary effect associated with flooding. Coupled with a shortage of critical services and supplies, power failures could cause a public health emergency. Community lifelines, such as sewage and water treatment facilities, could fail, causing sewage overflows and the contamination of groundwater and drinking water. Flooding also has the potential to trigger cascading hazards, such as landslides, hazardous material spills, and dam failures.

The maximum threat of flooding for Forest County is estimated by looking at the potential loss data and repetitive loss data, both analyzed in the risk assessment section of the hazard mitigation plan. In these cases, the severity and frequency of damage can result in permanent population displacement, and businesses may close if they are unable to recover from the disaster.

Estimation of potential loss is completed through FEMA's HAZUS software. A level two HAZUS scenario was performed for the entirety of Forest County. The FEMA Global Flood Risk Report and other reports generated by the software at the end of the scenario were utilized to estimate the amount of damage and loss from a flood. The total building loss for a 100-year flood based on a HAZUS level two scenario is displayed in *Table 20 – HAZUS Building Economic Loss Figures*. The total business interruption values occurring from a proposed 100-year flood based on FEMA HAZUS data is illustrated in *Table 21 – HAZUS Business Interruption Economic Loss Figures*. *Figure 21 – Loss by Occupancy Type* illustrates the breakdown of economic losses by either residential, commercial, industrial, or other use type.

*Table 20 - HAZUS Building Economic Loss Figures*

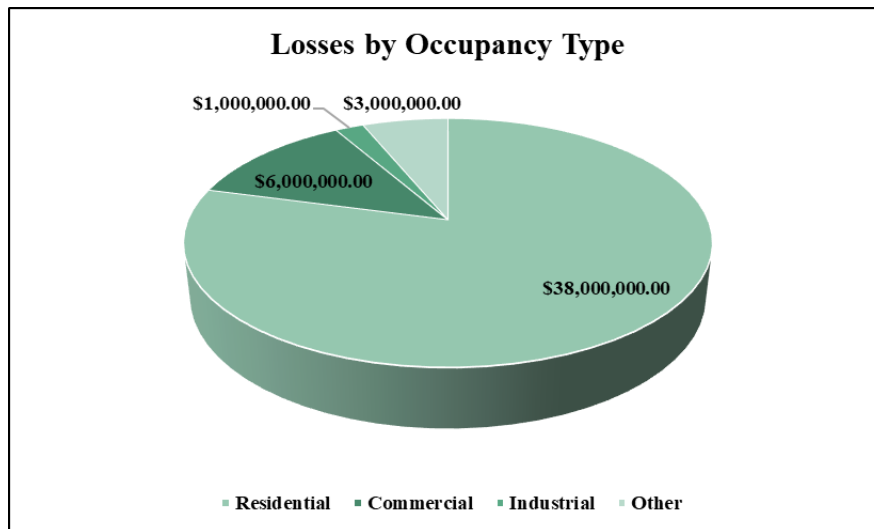
HAZUS Building Economic Loss Figures					
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Other	Total
<b>Building:</b>	\$19,160,000.00	\$690,000.00	\$280,000.00	\$90,000.00	<b>\$20,220,000.00</b>
<b>Content:</b>	\$8,860,000.00	\$1,620,000.00	\$590,000.00	\$200,000.00	<b>\$11,270,000.00</b>
<b>Inventory:</b>	\$0.00	\$20,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$20,000.00	<b>\$100,000.00</b>
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$28,020,000.00</b>	<b>\$2,330,000.00</b>	<b>\$930,000.00</b>	<b>\$310,000.00</b>	<b>\$31,590,000.00</b>
Source: HAZUS, 2024					

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Table 21 - HAZUS Business Interruption Economic Loss Figures

HAZUS Business Interruption Economic Loss Figures					
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Other	Total
<b>Income:</b>	\$500,000.00	\$1,650,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$70,000.00	<b>\$2,240,000.00</b>
<b>Relocation:</b>	\$6,150,000.00	\$180,000.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	<b>\$6,360,000.00</b>
<b>Rental Income:</b>	\$2,450,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<b>\$2,570,000.00</b>
<b>Wage:</b>	\$1,180,000.00	\$1,350,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$2,420,000.00	<b>\$4,970,000.00</b>
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$10,280,000.00</b>	<b>\$3,300,000.00</b>	<b>\$40,000.00</b>	<b>\$2,520,000.00</b>	<b>\$16,140,000.00</b>
Source: HAZUS, 2024					

Figure 21 - Loss by Occupancy Type



Although floods can cause deaths, injuries, and damage to property, they are naturally occurring events that benefit riparian systems which have not been disrupted by human actions. Such benefits include groundwater recharge and the introduction of nutrient rich sediments which improves soil fertility. However, human development often disrupts natural riparian buffers by changing land use and land cover, and the introduction of chemical or biological contaminants that often accompany human presence and can contaminate habitats after flood events.

### 4.3.4.3 Past Occurrence

Forest County has experienced numerous flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam events in the past. The flooding and flash flooding were caused by a variety of heavy storms, inclement weather, tropical storms, and other issues. A summary of recent flood event history for Forest County from January 1996 to March 2024 is found in *Table 22 – Past Flood and Flash Flood Events*.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Details of each event can be found in NOAA’s National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI) database.

*Table 22 - Past Flood and Flash Flood Events*

<b>Past Flood and Flash Flood Events</b>			
<b>Event Location</b>	<b>Event Date</b>	<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Property Damage Estimate</b>
Tionesta Township	01/19/1996	Flash Flood	\$20,000.00
Howe Township	05/11/1996	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Tionesta Township	09/17/1996	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Harmony Township	06/25/1997	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Harmony Township	01/08/1998	Flash Flood	\$5,000.00
Barnett Township	02/10/2001	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Tionesta Township	06/12/2003	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Harmony Township	06/13/2003	Flash Flood	\$10,000.00
Tionesta Township	11/19/2003	Flash Flood	\$0.00
Tionesta Township	05/20/2024	Flash Flood	\$10,000.00
Forest County (Entire County)	07/13/2004	Flood	\$0.00
Forest County (Entire County)	09/17/2004	Flood	\$50,000.00
Harmony Township	02/12/2009	Flood	\$25,000.00
Howe Township	03/06/2011	Flood	\$5,000.00
Tionesta Township	06/13/2014	Flood	\$2,000.00
Tionesta Township	07/04/2019	Flash Flood	\$5,000.00
<b>Total:</b>			<b>\$132,000.00</b>
Source: NCEI NOAA, 2024			
*Property Damage Values are estimated and are not exact figures. Data from NCEI			

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) identifies properties that frequently experience flooding. Repetitive loss properties are structures insured under the NFIP which have had at least two paid flood losses of more than \$1,000 over any ten-year period since 1978. The hazard mitigation assistance (HMA) definition of a repetitive loss property is a structure covered by a contract for flood insurance made available under the NFIP that has incurred flood-related damage on two occasions, in which the cost of repair, on average, equaled or exceeded 25% of the market value of the structure at the time of each such flood event; at the time of the second incidence of flood-related damage, the contract for flood insurance contains increased cost of compliance coverage. *Table 23 – Repetitive Loss Properties* illustrates the communities that have repetitive loss properties, the total building payments, the contents payments, and the number of losses and properties. There is one repetitive loss property in Forest County. *Table 24 – Summary of Type of Repetitive Loss Properties by Municipality* illustrates the breakdown of type of repetitive loss properties in Forest County.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

A property is considered a severe repetitive loss property either when there are at least four losses each exceeding \$5,000 or when there are two or more losses where the building payments exceed the property value. There are no severe repetitive loss properties in Forest County.

Most municipalities in Forest County participate in the NFIP. Information on each participating municipality can be found in *Table 25 – Municipal NFIP Policies & Vulnerability*.

*Table 23 - Repetitive Loss Properties*

Repetitive Loss Properties						
Community Name	Community Number	Cumulative Building Payment	Cumulative Contents Payment	Sum of Total Paid	Losses	Properties
Howe Township	421647	\$12,085.93	\$0.00	\$12,085.93	2	1
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$12,085.93</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$12,085.93</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Source: FEMA, 2024						

*Table 24 - Summary of Type of Repetitive Loss Properties by Municipality*

Summary of Type of Repetitive Loss Properties by Municipality					
Municipality	Type				
	Non-Residential	2-4 Family	Single Family	Condo	Other Residential
Howe Township	0	0	1	0	0
Source: FEMA, 2024					

*Table 25 - Municipal NFIP Policies & Vulnerability*

Municipal Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program			
Municipal Name	Community Number	Initial FHBM	Latest Mapping Dates
Barnett Township	421643	12/27/1974	11/26/2010
Green Township	421644	01/24/1975	11/26/2010
Harmony Township	421645	07/18/1975	11/26/2010
Hickory Township	421646	12/20/1974	11/26/2010
Howe Township	421647	12/20/1974	11/26/2010
Jenks Township	422422	01/17/1975	11/26/2010
Kingsley Township	422423	12/27/1974	11/26/2010
Tionesta Borough	421648	03/29/1974	11/26/2010
Tionesta Township	420648	11/29/1974	11/26/2010
Source: FEMA, 2024			
Note: FHBM: Flood Hazard Boundary Map			



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.4.4 Future Occurrence**

Flooding is a frequent problem throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Forest County will certainly be impacted by flooding events in the future, as Forest County experiences some degree of flooding annually. The threat of flooding is compounded in the late winter and early spring months, as melting snow can overflow streams, creeks, and tributaries, increasing the amount of groundwater, clogging stormwater culverts and bridge openings. The NFIP recognizes the 1% annual chance flood, also known as the base flood of a one-hundred-year flood, as the standard for identifying properties subject to federal flood insurance purchase requirements. A 1% annual chance flood is a flood which has a 1% chance of occurring in a given year or is likely once every one-hundred years. The digital flood insurance maps (DFIRMs) are used to identify areas subject to the 1% annual chance of flooding.

A property's vulnerability to a flood is dependent upon its location in the floodplain. Properties along the banks of a waterway are the most vulnerable. The property within the floodplain is broken into sections depending on its distance from the waterway. The ten-year flood zone has a 10% chance of being flooded every year. However, this label does not mean that this area cannot flood more than once every ten years. This label simply designates the probability of a flood of this magnitude every year. Further away from this area is the fifty-year floodplain. This area includes all of the ten-year floodplain plus additional property. The probability of a flood of this magnitude occurring during a one-year period is 2%. A summary of flood probability is shown in *Table 26 – Flood Probability Summary*.

*Table 26 - Flood Probability Summary*

<b>Flood Probability Summary</b>	
<b>Flood Recurrence Intervals</b>	<b>Annual Chance of Occurrence</b>
10-year	10.00%
50-year	2.00%
100-year	1.00%
500-year	0.20%
Source: FEMA, 2009	

The future occurrences of flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding in Forest County are expected to increase due to the rate of climate change in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the world. Climate change will include ocean temperature rise, which result in more intense hurricane and tropical storm seasons in the Atlantic Ocean. This intensity could result in an increase in the number of hurricanes and tropical storms that could impact Pennsylvania and Forest County. These hurricanes and tropical storms could result in a large volume of precipitation occurring over a short period of time, resulting in a flood or flash flood event. It is

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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important to note that these impacts are the secondary result of other hazards, increased by climate change, which could result in flooding events.

### **4.3.4.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Forest County is vulnerable to stream and river flooding on an annual basis. Flooding puts the entire population at some level of risk, whether through flooding of homes, businesses, places of employment, roadways, sewers, or water infrastructure. Flooding can cause significant power outages and poor road conditions that can lead to heightened transportation accident risk.

County community lifelines are the most vulnerable buildings and services when riverine and stream flooding is considered. Community lifeline facilities are facilities that, if damaged, would present an immediate threat to life, public health, and safety. Facilities that use and store hazardous materials pose a potential threat to the environment during flooding events if flooding causes a leak, inundation, or equipment failure. Appendix D of this hazard mitigation plan includes a flooding vulnerability map for each municipality in Forest County, with vulnerable structures and community lifeline facilities that are located within the special flood hazard area.

*Table 27 – Expected Damage to Essential Facilities (HAZUS)* illustrates the estimated damage levels to certain essential facilities based on classifications in the HAZUS General Building Stock. There are no facilities that are expected to be damaged from the HAZUS scenario.

*Table 27 - Expected Damage to Essential Facilities (HAZUS)*

<b>Expected Damage to Essential Facilities</b>				
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Number of Facilities</b>			
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>At Least Moderate:</b>	<b>At Least Substantial:</b>	<b>Loss of Use:</b>
Emergency Operations Center	1	0	0	0
Fire Stations	5	0	0	0
Hospitals	0	0	0	0
Police Stations	2	0	0	0
Schools	5	0	0	0

*Table 28 - County Structures Within Special Flood Hazard Area* shows the number of site structure address points within the Special Flood Hazard Area as well as the community lifeline facilities. This information was compiled using the Special Flood Hazard Area and GIS data provided by the Forest County GIS Department.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 28 - County Structures Within Special Flood Hazard Area*

<b>County Structures Within Special Flood Hazard Area</b>		
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Site Structure Address Points Within Flood Area</b>	<b>Community Lifelines within Flood Area</b>
Barnett Township	867	0
Green Township	1,160	0
Harmony Township	887	0
Hickory Township	1,058	0
Howe Township	738	0
Jenks Township	1,803	0
Kingsley Township	1,269	0
Tionesta Borough	320	0
Tionesta Township	1,003	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>9,105</b>	<b>0</b>

There are no community lifelines that are within the regulatory flood boundary for Forest County. Therefore, there is no additional information on planning for those locations.

In addition to the items listed above, there are no properties that are considered historic and cultural for Forest County that are registered with the National Register of Historic Place that are in the Special Flood Hazard Area.

### **Flash Flooding**

Flash flooding is a common occurrence in Forest County and can occur anywhere in the county. A large portion of flash flooding occurs in populated areas that have increased impervious ground cover. During the risk assessment process, numerous resources were utilized to determine flash flooding locations in Forest County. Municipalities were asked to identify locations within the municipality that were prone to frequent flash flooding. The National Climatic Data Center was also queried to determine flash flood vulnerable areas. This data is reflected in *Table 22 – Past Flood and Flash Flood Events* above.

Locations that are identified as vulnerable to flash flooding in Forest County are as follows:

- Barnett Township
- Harmony Township
- Howe Township
- Tionesta Township

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Although the above locations were identified as vulnerable areas in Forest County, they are not the only locations that are vulnerable to flash flooding. The Forest County Hazard Mitigation Team will continue to work with municipalities to identify vulnerable flash flooding locations and identify vulnerable populations and community lifelines.

### **Municipalities with an increased risk to flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding (due to the intersection with the Special Flood Hazard Area):**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

All of the population of Forest County, including the unserved and the underserved populations, are at an increased vulnerability to flooding hazards. All municipalities in Forest County directly interface with the regulatory flood boundaries in county. Unserved and underserved populations have the potential to be more vulnerable to flooding hazards in Forest County. Homeless, unsheltered, and displaced persons would not have housing or homes to use as a shelter in the event of a flooding hazard. Those populations also may not have easy access to warning systems or alerts for flash flooding hazards. All of the county could be at increased vulnerability, specifically any population located on the Allegheny River and Tionesta Creek.

Systems in Forest County are at an increased vulnerability to flooding hazards. All of the utilities in Forest County could be adversely impacted by very specific flooding and flash flooding events. Utilities may be damaged or destroyed from a flooding event, or from a cascading hazard from flooding events. Major flooding could cause an issue in the delivery of services, including electricity, to the citizens and residents of Forest County.

While flooding does not typically adversely affect natural areas, a comprehensive vulnerability assessment was completed for natural areas in Forest County, including public recreation areas, state parks, state game lands, and any other outdoor or natural area resources.

The following natural areas directly intersected with areas of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) for Forest County:

- State Game Land 24
- State Game Land 28

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Allegheny National Forest
- Clear Creek State Forest
- Cook Forest State Park
- Cornplanter State Forest
- Tionesta State Fish Hatchery

Not all of these locations will be impacted by every flooding event in Forest County, but at least some of the areas listed above will be impacted due to their close proximity to the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

Impacts of flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding can also be influenced by population change. As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, one municipality has experienced population growth between the 2010 decennial census and the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this municipality may have an increased vulnerability to flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding hazards, since 2010. This increased vulnerability is due to more potential development and that development encroaching on high vulnerability areas for Forest County, including areas near the Special Flood Hazard Area.

Land use is a factor that has the potential to impact the vulnerability to flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding in Forest County. Land use, in the form of a built environment, such as residential and commercial expansion, especially in the Special Flood Hazard Area or areas directly adjacent, could increase the severity impact of these hazards. The change of land use from areas of easy infiltration of groundwater to impervious surfaces can increase the severity and the frequency of flash floods, increasingly in areas where flash floods have occurred in the past. An influx of people, commercial enterprises, and infrastructure development also increases the vulnerability of areas to flooding, flash flooding, and ice jam flooding.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.5. Hailstorm**

#### **4.3.5.1 Location and Extent**

Hail is possible with most thunderstorms. It is produced by cumulonimbus (storm clouds) and within two nautical miles of the parent storm. In the form of solid precipitation, hail is produced when an ice crystal collects additional water in the lower part of the storm but is pushed upward by the storm's updraft. The liquid water freezes in the upper regions of the storm, making the ice crystal larger, this is also known as a hailstone. The hail will continue to grow in this manner until its weight exceeds the force of the updraft. Hailstones can take the shape of spheres or irregular lumps of ice.

Hailstorms are not limited to any particular geographic area of the county. Prediction of the duration of the storm, nor the extent of area affected by such an occurrence, can be predicted.

#### **4.3.5.2 Range of Magnitude**

Hailstones can measure between 0.2 inches to six inches in diameter. The METAR (a format for reporting weather information, predominately used by pilots) reporting code for hail 0.20 inches or greater is GR, while smaller hailstones are coded GS. Hail that is larger than 0.80 inches are usually considered large enough to cause notable damage. The US National Weather Service issues severe thunderstorm warnings when expected hail is 1 inch or greater in diameter.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Skywarn program requests trained Skywarn Spotters measure hail with a ruler, but if one is not available, related terms can be used. See *Table 29 - Size of hail in related terms*. Hail should only be measured when it is safe to do so.

*Table 29 - Size of Hail In Related Terms*

<b>Size of hail in related terms</b>	
<b>Related item</b>	<b>Size of hail</b>
BB	Less than 1/4"
Pea	1/4"
Dime	7/10"
Penny	3/4"
Nickel	7/8"
Quarter	1"
Half Dollar	1 1/4"
Walnut or ping-pong ball	1 1/2"
Golf ball	1 3/4"
Lime	2"
Tennis ball	2 1/2"
Baseball	2 3/4"



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Size of hail in related terms	
Related item	Size of hail
Large apple	3"
Softball	4"
Grapefruit	4 1/2"

Environmental and other impacts from hailstorms ranges from:

- Crop production damage;
- Flooding caused by accumulation of hail that blocks drains;
- Loss of electric power;
- Trees brought down;
- Flash flooding; and,
- Mudslides.

### **4.3.5.3 Past Occurrence**

In the 1960's the National Weather Service (NWS) developed the Skywarn® program. Skywarn® has trained weather spotters who provide reports of severe weather to NWS. These reports assist meteorologists to make life-saving warning decisions. Concerned citizens, amateur radio operators, truck drivers, emergency management personnel and others volunteer their time and energy to report hazardous weather impacting their communities.

Even with data from Doppler radar, satellite, and surface weather stations, NWS technology cannot detect every instance of weather such as hail. So, reports from Skywarn® volunteers is a vital service for making warnings to those in the storm's path.

NOAA's National Weather Service storm prediction center reports on hail events for Forest County are detailed in *Table 30 – National Weather Service Hail Reports*.

*Table 30 - National Weather Service Hail Reports*

National Weather Service Hail Reports			
Date	Time	Location	Size (inches)
04/09/2001	13:00	West Hickory	.75
07/11/2001	01:30	Marienville	1.00
08/19/2001	15:00	Duhring	1.75
07/26/2002	18:00	Tionesta	1.25

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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National Weather Service Hail Reports			
Date	Time	Location	Size (inches)
05/25/2004	17:40	Tionesta	1.00
08/01/2011	14:36	East Hickory	1.00
06/29/2012	03:21	West Hickory	0.88
07/18/2013	15:57	Marienville	2.00
05/01/2017	14:42	Marienville	1.50
10/02/2018	16:10	Byromtown	1.75

It should be noted that all occurrences of hail in Forest County may not have been recorded in the table above. This is due to lack of reports to the NWS, either because the hail happened at uninhabited locations, during overnight hours, or residents that observed the hail were not Skywarn® spotters.

#### **4.3.5.4 Future Occurrence**

Hailstorms are associated with thunderstorms and should be considered highly likely for Forest County. While death and severe injury are rarely attributed to hailstorms, they still pose a threat to unsheltered peoples, vehicles, livestock, crops, and even structures, so vulnerability to the hazard should continue to be monitored. Forest County should expect to see moderate hailstorm weather events, and the hazards which they entail perpetuate.

Climate change can influence hailstorms through several methods. Rising global temperatures can lead to increased atmospheric moisture, providing more fuel for severe thunderstorms that spawn hail. Changes in atmospheric circulation patterns may also contribute, altering the conditions to favor hail formation. Warmer temperatures can elevate the freezing level in the atmosphere, allowing hailstones to grow larger before reaching the ground. Additionally, shifts in wind patterns may affect the distribution and intensity of storms, influencing hailstorm frequency and severity. Climate change-induced changes in precipitation patterns may also impact the availability of supercooled water needed for hailstone formation. Overall, the complex interplay of atmospheric factors influenced by climate change contributes to the alteration of hailstorm characteristics, potentially leading to more intense and frequent hail events with broader implications for agriculture, infrastructure, and communities.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.5.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Automobiles, aircraft, skylights, livestock, and farmers' crops can all be seriously damaged by hail. That National Weather Service estimates that large hailstorms events cause over one-billion USD in damages to agriculture every year.

Hail can damage vehicles in Forest County. There are estimated to be 2,620 passenger vehicles, 1,569 trucks, and 30 buses in Forest County in 2023 according to vehicle registrations from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Roofs can also be damaged by hail, although it often goes undetected until structural damage is seen, such as leaks and cracks. Although it is rare, hail has been known to cause concussions or fatal head traumas to humans. To alleviate damage from hail, automobiles could be placed in garages, grounded aircraft could be placed in hangars, and livestock and people could be moved inside structures during the storm. Unfortunately crops, skylights, roofs, and flying aircraft are unable to be protected from hail.

As seen in *Table 9 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight of the nine total municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since the previous decennial census in 2010. However, one municipality saw minor, total population growth over the same period. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this one municipality may have a slight increased vulnerability of impacts from hailstorms, since 2010, due to the increase in population.

Hailstorms may, at times, disproportionately impact underserved, unserved, and socially vulnerable populations, exacerbating existing disparities. Vulnerable communities often lack resources to fortify homes or vehicles against hail damage, resulting in severe property losses.

Land use changes, such as urbanization and deforestation, can indirectly impact hailstorms. Urban heat islands, created by increased impervious surfaces, may alter local temperature patterns. Changes in surface roughness due to urban development can influence wind dynamics. Additionally, variations in land cover affect local atmospheric moisture levels, potentially influencing the intensity and dynamics of thunderstorms conducive to hail formation.

Hailstorms impact both natural and cultural areas through physical damage and economic consequences. In natural ecosystems, hail can harm crops, disrupt ecological balance, and damage vegetation. Forests may suffer tree loss and habitat disruption. In cultural areas, agriculture faces significant economic losses, affecting livelihoods and food supply. Infrastructure, such as buildings and vehicles, can incur damage, leading to financial burdens for communities.

Hailstorms can directly impact historic and cultural properties in Forest County. There are four Historic and Cultural Properties in Forest County that could be damaged by hail and hail events. Hail can damage older building materials, delicate building materials and finishes, specifically glass. All of the historic and cultural properties in Forest County are vulnerable, but it is unlikely

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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that all of the properties would be impacted by the same hail event. Localized vulnerability is of paramount concern.

Systems and community lifelines can be significantly vulnerable to hailstorm events in Forest County. Power lines and power utilities can be damaged and made inoperable by hail events if that hail is of sufficient diameter to bring down power transmission lines or damage electric substations. Water and wastewater utilities can be damaged by hail, as tanks and basins can be damaged by the impact of hail. Transmission lines for these utilities are not a primary concern, because those are typically located underground and are not usually impacted by hail. Roads and transportation systems could be moderately impacted by hail, but those impacts are primarily related to vehicle impacts.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.6. Hurricane, Tropical Storm**

#### **4.3.6.1 Location and Extent**

Forest County does not have any open-ocean coastline areas. However, the impacts from coastal storms such as tropical storms and hurricanes can expand inland. Tropical depressions are cyclones with maximum sustained winds of less than 39 miles per hour (mph). The system becomes a tropical storm when the maximum sustained winds reach between 39 and 74 miles per hour. When wind speeds exceed 74 mph, the system is considered a hurricane. Tropical storms impacting Forest County develop in tropical or sub-tropical waters found in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, or Gulf of America. Another type of tropical storms is the nor'easter, which is a large cyclone that rotates clockwise and is typically associated with the Atlantic Ocean and the East Coast of the United States between North Carolina and Massachusetts. The name nor'easter comes from the direction that the strongest winds typically blow from the cyclone.

While Forest County is located about 270 miles inland of the East Coast of the United States, tropical storms can track inland and cause heavy rainfall and strong winds. Forest County is located inland of the East Coast region, designated by FEMA, as being Hurricane-Susceptible (see *Figure 23 – Pennsylvania Wind Zones*). Forest County falls within wind zones 3 and 4 as shown in *Figure 23 – Pennsylvania Wind Zones*. Zones 3 and 4 suggest that shelters and critical facilities should be able to withstand winds that range up to 160 MPH. Tropical storms and hurricanes are regional and seasonal events that can impact very large areas that are hundreds to thousands of miles across over the life of the storm. Hurricane and tropical storm seasons are typically from June to November. All communities within Forest County are equally subject to the impacts of hurricanes and tropical storms that track near the county. Areas in Forest County which are subject to flooding, wind, and winter storm damage are particularly vulnerable.

#### **4.3.6.2 Range of Magnitude**

The impact tropical storms or hurricane events have on an area is typically measured in terms of wind speed. Flood damage results from intense precipitation and wind, typically from coastal storms, which impact Forest County. Expected damage from hurricane force winds is measured using the Saffir-Simpson Scale (*Table 31 – Saffir-Simpson Scale*). The Saffir-Simpson Scale categorizes hurricane intensity linearly based upon maximum sustained winds, barometric pressure, and storm surge potential. Categories three, four, and five are classified as “major” hurricanes, but category one and two storms can contain potential significant storm surge. Category one storms result in very dangerous winds with some damage, while category two storms result in extremely dangerous winds with extensive damage. Category three storms result in devastating damage and category four/five storms result in catastrophic damage. Although major hurricanes comprise only 20% of all tropical cyclones making landfall, they account for over 70% of the damage in the United States. While hurricanes can cause high winds and

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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associated impacts, it is also important to recognize the potential for flooding events during hurricanes, tropical storms, and nor'easters. In Forest County wind impacts from tropical events include downed trees and utility poles to cause utility interruptions. Mobile homes, because they may not be well-anchored, have a greater potential to be impacted by high winds. Additionally, these storms can produce high volumes of rainfall that cause flash flooding which can be followed by stream and riverine flooding. The risk assessment and associated impact for flooding events is included in Section 4.3.4

*Table 31 - Saffir- Simpson Scale*

<b>Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Wind Speed</b>	
	<b>mph</b>	<b>knots</b>
5	≥156	≥135
4	131-155	114-134
3	111-130	96-113
2	96-110	84-95
1	74-95	65-83
<b>Non-Hurricane Classifications</b>		
Tropical Storm	39-73	34-64
Tropical Depression	0-38	0-33

### **4.3.6.3 Past Occurrence**

*Table 32 - History of Coastal Storms Impacting Forest County* lists all coastal storms that have impacted Forest County from 1901 to 2024. *Figure 22 – Historic Tropical Storms/Hurricanes in Pennsylvania* identifies some past hurricanes that had an inland path through Pennsylvania. Hurricane Agnes was a severe coastal storm event in June 1972 that impacted several counties in Pennsylvania, after making first landfall as a hurricane near Florida, Agnes weakened and exited back into the Atlantic off the North Carolina coast. The storm moved along the coast and made a second landfall near New York City as a tropical storm and merged with an extra-tropical low-pressure system over Pennsylvania. This brought extremely heavy rains to Pennsylvania that



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

caused major flooding. Pennsylvania incurred \$2.8 billion in damages. There were fifty storm related deaths statewide. However, in Forest County, the most significant effects of Hurricane Agnes were due to heavy rain and flooding. Agnes was only a category one hurricane but dropped more than fifteen inches of rain in the northeastern United States. Pennsylvania received the greatest amount of flood damage.

*Table 32 - History of Coastal Storms Impacting Forest County*

History of Coastal Storms Impacting Forest County			
Year	Name	Speed (in knots) at time of county impact	Category at time of county impact
1901	Tropical Storm Unnamed	45	Extratropical
1902	Hurricane Unnamed	35	Extratropical
1928	Hurricane Unnamed	35	Extratropical
1955	Hurricane Connie	45	Tropical Storm
2004	Hurricane Frances	30	Extratropical
Source: NOAA, 2024			

#### **4.3.6.4 Future Occurrence**

Although hurricanes and tropical storms can cause flood events consistent with 100 and 500-year flood levels, the probability of occurrence of hurricanes and tropical storms is measured relative to wind speed. *Table 33 – Annual Probability of Wind Speeds* shows the annual probability of winds that reach the strength of tropical storms and hurricanes in Forest County and the surrounding areas based on a sample period of forty-six years. According to FEMA, there is a very low probability each year that Forest County will experience winds from coastal storms that could cause minimal to moderate damages (*Table 33 – Annual Probability of Wind Speeds*). The potential future impacts from a tropical storm or hurricane will be moderate. The probability of winds exceeding 118 mph is less than 0.0766% annually.

*Table 33 - Annual Probability of Wind Speeds*

Annual Probability of Wind Speeds (FEMA, 2000)		
Wind Speed (mph)	Saffir-Simpson Scale	Annual Probability of Occurrence (%)
45 - 77	Tropical Storms/Category 1 Hurricane	91.59
78 - 118	Category 1 to 2 Hurricanes	8.32
119 - 138	Category 3 to 4 Hurricanes	.0766
139 - 163	Category 4 to 5 Hurricanes	.0086

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Annual Probability of Wind Speeds (FEMA, 2000)		
Wind Speed (mph)	Saffir-Simpson Scale	Annual Probability of Occurrence (%)
164 - 194	Category 5 Hurricanes	.00054
195 +	Category 5 Hurricanes	.00001
Source: FEMA, 2000		

There has been an increase in North Atlantic hurricane activity since the 1970s with locations of peak intensity tropical cyclones migrating poleward coinciding with tropics expansion. An index potential hurricane destructiveness suggests an increase over the past thirty years. Variability in tropical cyclone activity in the Atlantic is due to natural variability in ocean circulation, volcanic eruptions, and Saharan dust, as well as climate change resulting from greenhouse gases and sulfate aerosols.

Climate change is causing atmospheric temperatures to rise, which corresponds to a rise in ocean surface temperatures, resulting in warmer and moister conditions where tropical storms develop. However, the relationship between climate change and hurricanes can be complex due to the many other factors that are associated with hurricane development which include wind shear and air pollution. Warmer oceans store more energy and are capable of fueling stronger storms and it is projected that Atlantic hurricanes will become more intense and produce more precipitation as ocean surface temperatures rise. The storms associated with tropical storms/hurricanes can also linger around for a longer period of time in a given place due to the climate change which enhances destructive impacts in the future. Other possible connections of hurricanes in the near future related to climate change are the length of hurricane season and seeing more hurricanes earlier or later than usual hurricane season. There are expected to be more category four and five hurricanes in the Atlantic and the hurricane season may be elongated, all which impact the future of Forest County.

#### **4.3.6.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

The impacts of climate change are tangible and hazardous realities. Tropical storms tracking nearby Forest County can not only cause high winds, but also heavy rains to occur. A vulnerability assessment for hurricanes and tropical storms focusses on the impacts of flooding and severe winds. Flooding from hurricanes/tropical storms can occur in areas throughout Forest County which can cause damage to buildings and infrastructure. The assessment for flood-related vulnerability is addressed in Section 4.3.4 and a discussion of wind related vulnerability is addressed in Section 4.3.13. Due to the impact of hurricanes and tropical storms, the vulnerability for Forest County is high. Potential economic losses could include direct building loss and business interruption. Direct building loss is direct damage to any building or structure.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Business interruption includes relocation, employee wage loss, expenses, income loss, etc. Forest County vulnerability level is high for direct building loss. The total direct building loss amount for Forest County equates to \$31,580,000.00. The total business interruption value for Forest County equates to \$16,130,000.00. Therefore, the vulnerability of direct building loss and business interruption is high.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight of the nine municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since the previous decennial census in 2010. However, one municipality saw minor, total population growth over the same period. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this one municipality may have an increased vulnerability of hurricane and tropical storm conditions, since 2010, due to the increase in population.

Hurricanes and tropical storms may disproportionately affect underserved, unserved, and socially vulnerable populations, amplifying existing hardships. Fragile infrastructure in these areas is more prone to damage, which can hinder evacuation and rescue efforts. Limited access to resources exacerbates challenges during and after the storms, from securing safe shelter to obtaining essential supplies. Vulnerable communities often lack financial resilience, facing prolonged economic setbacks as local businesses may suffer.

### **Municipalities with increased risk to hurricane and tropical storm:**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

Land use is a factor that has the potential to impact hurricane and tropical storm severity. Land use, in the form of a built environment, such as residential expansion, can cause hurricane impact severity to increase. This impact severity increases because as the built environment expands and becomes more complex, the impact the event will have on that area also increases. This is due to an influx of people, infrastructure, and critical infrastructure and community lifelines in harm's way.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Hurricanes and tropical storms exert profound impacts on both natural and cultural areas. Ecologically, these intense weather events can result in habitat destruction, altering landscapes, and threatening biodiversity. Erosion and flooding may harm delicate ecosystems. Culturally, these storms endanger heritage sites, historic structures, and artifacts, eroding tangible, and intangible cultural elements. Sustainable recovery efforts must embrace an integrated approach, recognizing the interconnected vulnerability of natural, historical, and cultural landscapes to the formidable forces of hurricanes and tropical storm.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 22 - Historic Tropical Storms/Hurricanes in Pennsylvania

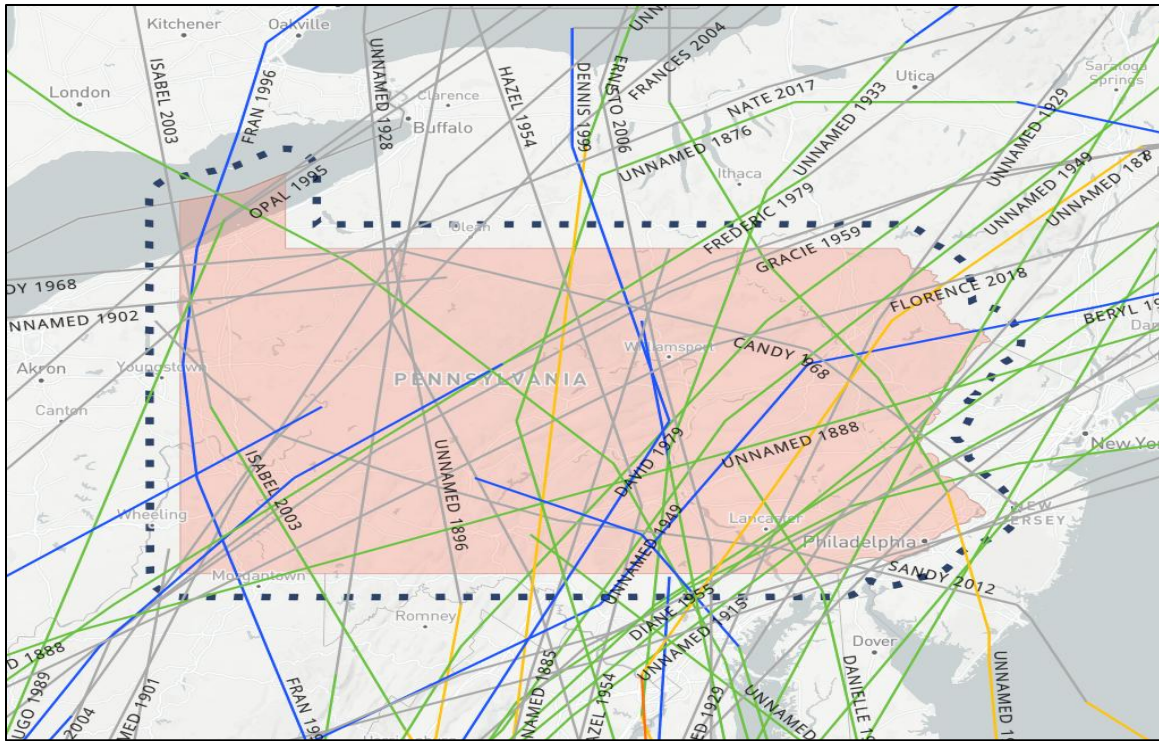
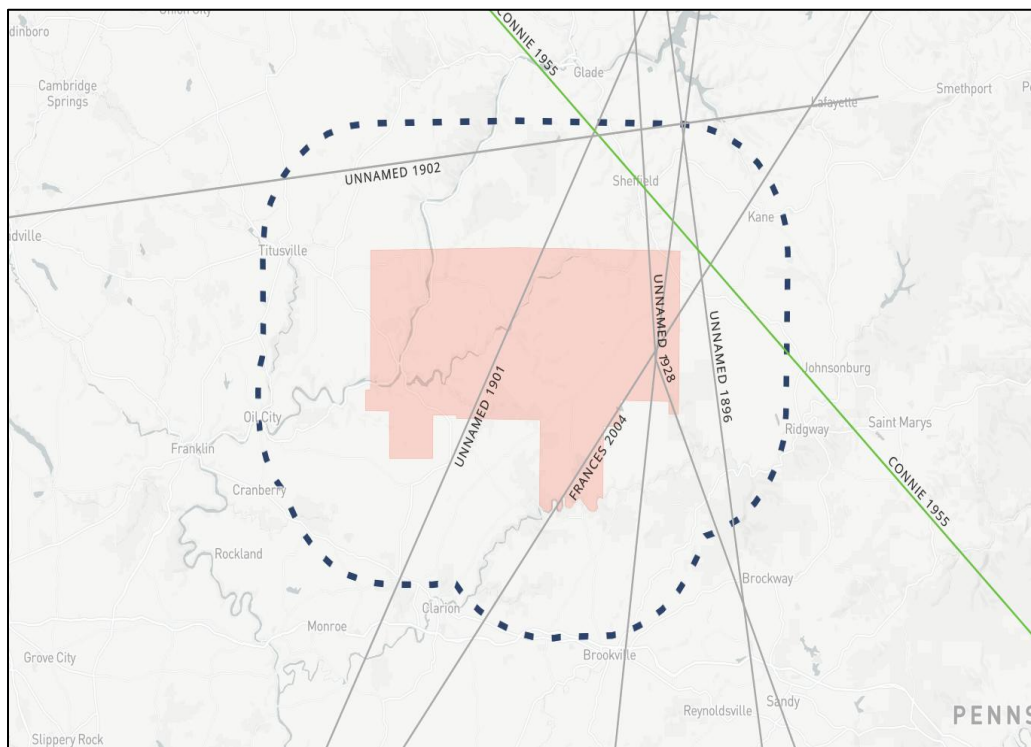


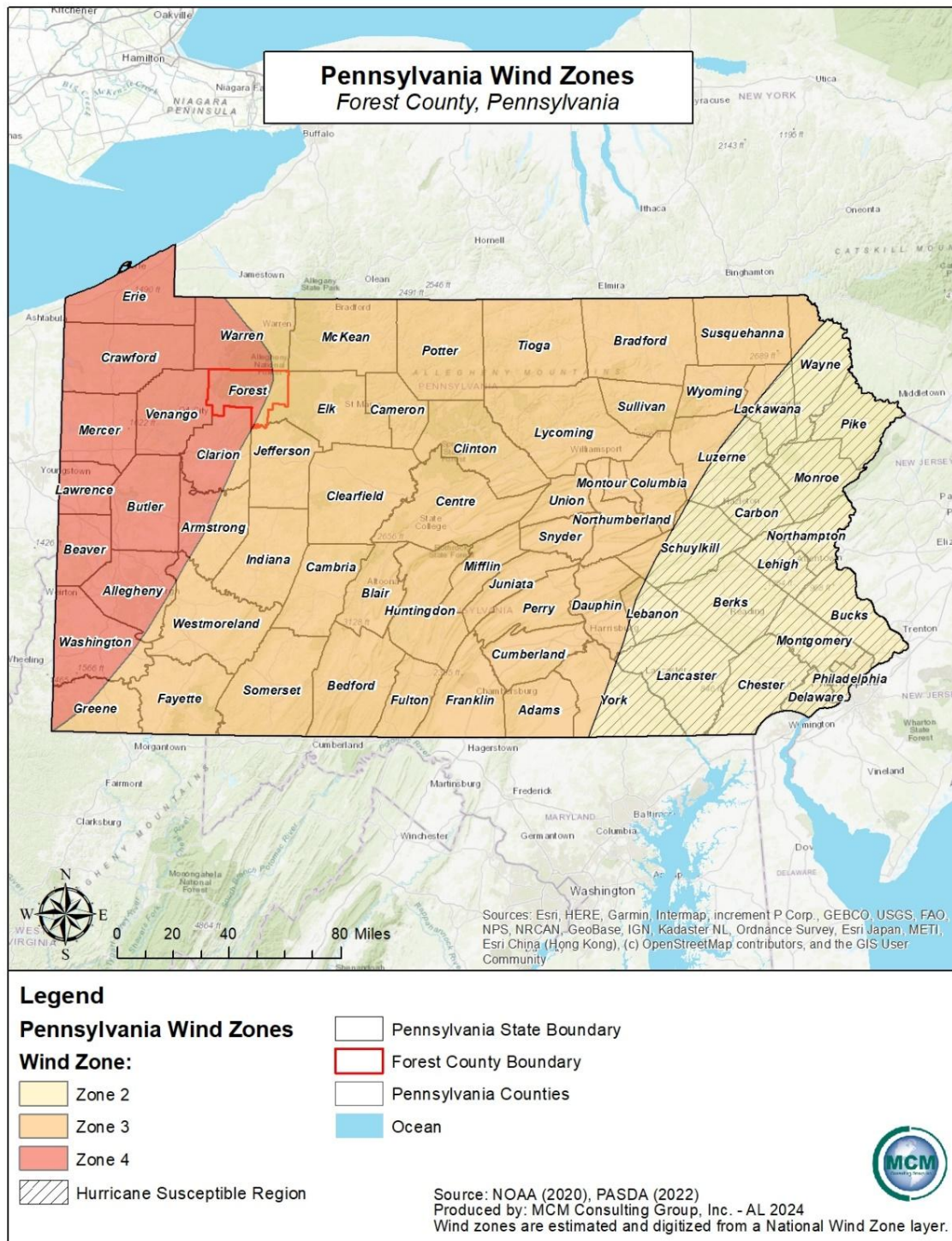
Figure 23 - Historic Tropical Storms/Hurricanes in Forest County





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 24 - Pennsylvania Wind Zones





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.7. Invasive Species**

#### **4.3.7.1 Location and Extent**

An invasive species is a species that is not indigenous to a given ecosystem and that, when introduced to a non-native environment, tends to thrive. The spread of an invasive species often alters ecosystems, which can cause environmental and economic harm and pose a threat to human health. Often, an invasive species spreads and reproduces quickly. Invasive species are not limited to organisms that come from a foreign country. Invasive species can come from a different region in the United States. The main instigator of invasive species is human activity. Either intentionally or unintentionally, other species may accompany people when they travel, introducing the stowaway species to a novel ecosystem. In a foreign ecosystem, a transported species may thrive, potentially restructuring the ecosystem and threatening its health. Common pathways for invasive species introduction to Pennsylvania include but are not limited to:

- Contamination of internationally traded products
- Hull fouling
- Ship ballast water release
- Discarded live fish bait
- Intentional release
- Escape from cultivation
- Movement of soil, compost, wood, vehicles or other materials and equipment
- Unregulated sale of organisms
- Smuggling activities
- Hobby trading or specimen trading

The Governor's Invasive Species Council of Pennsylvania (PISC), the lead organization for invasive species threats, recognizes two types of invasive species: Aquatic and Terrestrial.

**Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)** are nonnative invertebrates, fishes, aquatic plants, and microbes that threaten the diversity or abundance of native species, the ecological stability of the infested waters, human health, and safety, or commercial, agriculture, or recreational activities dependent on such waters.

**Terrestrial Invasive Species (TIS)** are nonnative plants, vertebrates, arthropods, or pathogens that complete their lifecycle on land instead of in an aquatic environment and whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic/environmental damage or harm to human health.

The location and extent of invasive threats is dependent on the preferred habitat of the species, as well as the species' ease of movement and establishment. For example, kudzu vine is an aggressive vascular plant. With wide ecological parameters and ease of spread, the vine is a more widespread invasive species threat. Other species' spread, such as the spotted lantern fly, has

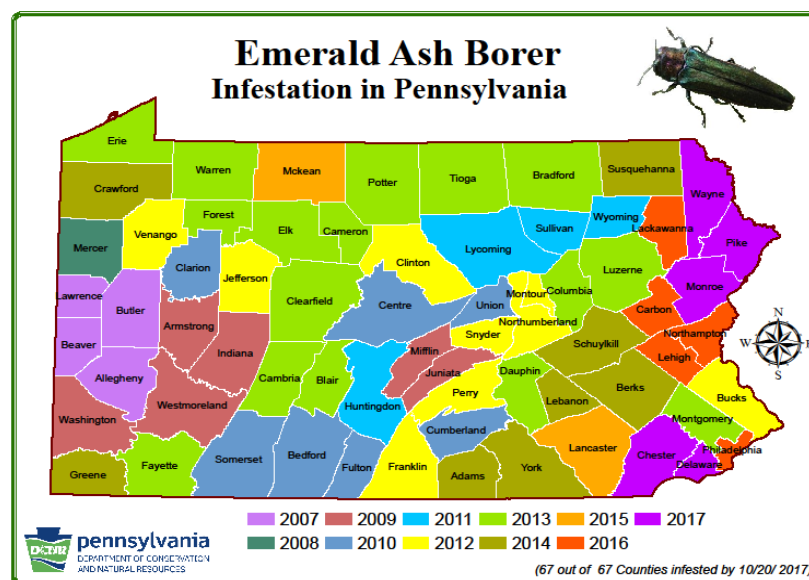
## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

been limited by state agency activity. First discovered in Berks County in 2014, the spotted lantern fly was placed under a quarantine by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in thirteen counties. *Table 34 - Prevalent Invasive Species* lists invasive species that have been found in Forest County.

### 4.3.7.2 Range of Magnitude

The magnitude of invasive species threats ranges from nuisance to widespread killer. Some invasive species are not considered agricultural pests, and do not harm humans or cause significant ecological problems. For example, Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs are not considered to be an agricultural pest and do not harm humans. Other invasive species can have many negative impacts and cause significant changes in the composition of ecosystems. For example, the Emerald Ash Borer creates a 99% mortality rate in any ash tree it infects. The aggressive nature of many invasive species can cause significant reductions in biodiversity by crowding out native species. This can affect the health of individual host organisms as well as the overall well-being of the affected ecosystem. An example of a worst-case scenario for invasive species in Pennsylvania is the Emerald Ash Borer in Forest County and the surrounding region (see *Figure 25 - Emerald Ash Borer Infestation in Pennsylvania*).

Figure 25 - Emerald Ash Borer Infestation in Pennsylvania

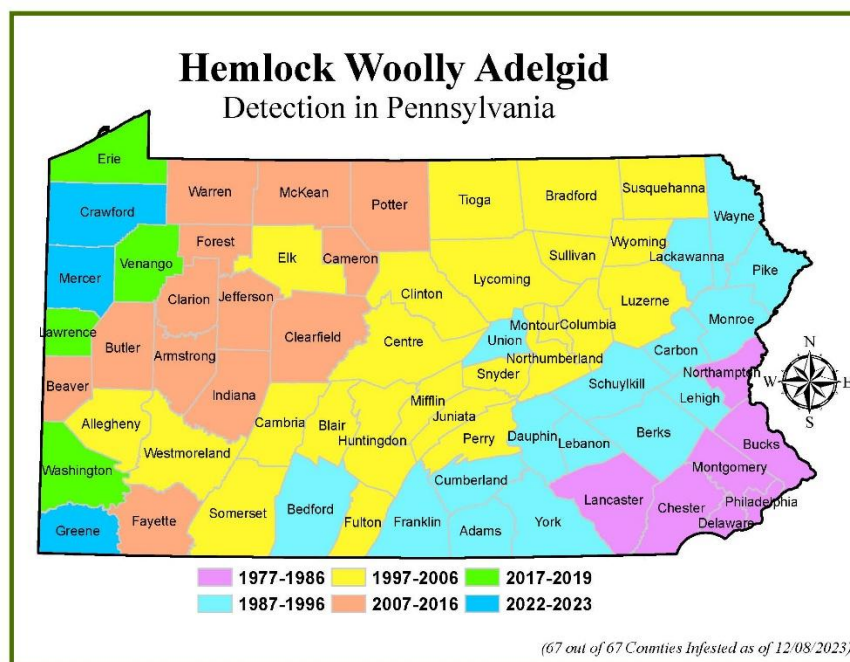


Another example of an invasive pest is the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is a fluid-feeding insect that feeds on hemlock trees throughout eastern North America, including Pennsylvania. The egg sacs of these insects look like the tips of cotton swabs clinging to the undersides of hemlock branches. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid was introduced from Asia into the

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Pacific Northwest in 1924. It is likely to have been introduced into the northeastern United States in the 1950s, and it was first discovered in Pennsylvania in 1967. To date, all sixty-seven counties in Pennsylvania, including Forest County, have been infested with this insect. See *Figure 26 - Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Infestation in Pennsylvania*. Eastern hemlock (Pennsylvania's state tree) and Carolina hemlocks (found further south in the Smoky Mountain sections of the Appalachians) are more susceptible to Hemlock Woolly Adelgid damage than Asian and western hemlock trees due to feeding tolerance and predators that protect the latter species. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid sucks fluid from the base of hemlock needles. It may also inject toxins into the tree as it feeds, accelerating needle drop and branch dieback. Although some trees die within four years, trees often persist in a weakened state for many years. Hemlocks that have been affected by hemlock woolly adelgid often have a grayish-green appearance (hemlocks naturally have a shiny, dark green color).

*Figure 26 - Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Infestation in Pennsylvania*



A final example of an invasive species is the Spotted Lanternfly. The Spotted Lanternfly is a harmful invasive species which feeds on plants, damaging or destroying them. This can negatively impact the areas of Pennsylvania known for outdoor scenery and activities. According to the Penn State Extension, the Spotted Lanternfly is a significant threat to Pennsylvania agriculture, landscapes, and natural ecosystems, including grape, tree-fruit, hardwood, and nursery industries, which collectively are worth nearly \$18 billion to the state's economy, outdoor recreation, and biodiversity. As of the writing of this plan, a Spotted Lanternfly

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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infestation has not yet been confirmed in Forest County. The State Department of Agriculture gives the total number of infected counties as fifty-two, as of 2024. *Figure 27 – Pennsylvania Spotted Lanternfly Infestation* illustrates the counties in Pennsylvania that are considered to be in the quarantine zone for this pest.

The magnitude of an invasive species threat is generally amplified when the ecosystem or host species is already stressed, such as in times of drought. The already weakened state of the native ecosystem causes it to succumb to an infestation more easily. A worst-case example could be the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid causing reduced biodiversity, increased wildfire potential, and thermal harm to small stream cold water fisheries and habitats.

### **4.3.7.3 Past Occurrence**

Invasive species have been entering Pennsylvania since the arrival of European settlers, but not all occurrences required government action. Forest County is known for its great number of geographic features. There are various state game lands within the area which include state game lands 24 and 28. There are also other forests and recreation areas in the county that have significant amounts of forest land and water features which species may invade. Due to the vast area of forests, there are many invasive terrestrial species that have been widespread in Forest County that are common problems throughout the Commonwealth.

Many of the extreme problematic species have been around for many years. However, the most recent problematic species are the Emerald Ash Borer, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and the Spotted Lanternfly. In 2007, both the Emerald Ash Borer and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid were both newly spotted species that caused extreme damage. Even more recently than 2007, the Spotted Lanternfly appeared in Forest County. In 2014, the spotted lanternfly was found in the commonwealth; however, Forest County has not yet entered the quarantine zone for the Spotted Lanternfly infestation.

*Table 34 - Prevalent Invasive Species* lists problematic non-native species that are established in Forest County.

*Table 34 - Prevalent Invasive Species*

<b>Prevalent Invasive Species (EDDMaps, 2021; iMapInvasives, 2021; PA DCNR, 2019)</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Type</b>
Lonicera maackii	Amur Honeysuckle	Plant
Elaeagnus umbellata	Autumn Olive	Plant
Aegopodium podagraria	Bishop's Goutweed	Plant
Reynoutria x bohemica	Bohemian Knotweed	Plant
Cirsium arvense	Canada Thistle	Plant
Wisteria sinensis	Chinese Wisteria	Plant

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Prevalent Invasive Species (EDDMaps, 2021; iMapInvasives, 2021; PA DCNR, 2019)</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Type</b>
Tussilago farfara	Colt's-foot	Plant
Cyprinus carpio	Common Carp	Animal
Hydrocharis morsus-ranae	Common Frogbit	Plant
Phragmites australis ssp. australis	Common Reed	Plant
Lysimachia nummularia	Creeping Jenny	Plant
Potamogeton crispus	Curly-leaf Pondweed	Plant
Hesperis matronalis	Dame's Rocket	Plant
Myriophyllum spicatum	Eurasian Water-milfoil	Plant
Alnus glutinosa	European Alder	Plant
Craspedacusta sowerbyi	Freshwater Jellyfish	Animal
Lysimachia vulgaris	Garden Loosestrife	Plant
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard	Plant
Frangula alnus	Glossy False Buckthorn	Plant
Galega officinalis	Goatsrue	Plant
Lonicera spp.	Honeysuckle	Plant
Berberis thunbergii	Japanese Barberry	Plant
Reynoutria japonica var. japonica	Japanese Knotweed	Plant
Microstegium vimineum	Japanese Stiltgrass	Plant
Reynoutria spp.	Knotweed	Plant
Ficaria verna	Lesser Celandine	Plant
Persicaria hydropiper	Marshpepper Knotweed	Plant
Albizia julibrissin	Mimosa	Plant
Rosa multiflora	Multiflora Rose	Plant
Ligustrum spp.	Privet	Plant
Lythrum salicaria	Purple Loosestrife	Plant
Daucus carota	Queen Anne's Lace	Plant
Phalaris arundinacea	Reed Canary Grass	Plant
Celastrus orbiculatus	Roundleaf Bittersweet	Plant
Hypochaeris radicata	Spotted Cat's-ear	Plant
Procambarus acutus	White River Crayfish	Animal
Melilotus albus	White Sweet-clover	Plant
Iris pseudacorus	Yellow Iris	Plant

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.7.4 Future Occurrence**

According to the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council (PISC), the probability of future occurrence for invasive species threats is growing due to the increasing volume of transported goods, increasing efficiency and speed of transportation, and expanding international trade agreements. Expanded global trade has created opportunities for many organisms to be transported to and establish themselves in new counties and regions. In 2017, Pennsylvania alone imported over \$83 billion in goods from abroad, including agricultural, forestry, and fishery goods that commonly carry unknown pests. Climate change is contributing to the introduction of new invasive species. As maximum and minimum seasonal temperatures change, pests can establish themselves in previously inhospitable climates. This also gives introduced species an earlier start and increases the magnitude of their growth, possibly shifting the dominance of ecosystems in the favor of non-native species. In order to combat the increase in future occurrences, the PISC released the Invasive Species Management Plan in April 2010 and updated the plan in 2017. The plan outlines the Commonwealth's goals for managing the spread of nonnative invasive species and creates a framework for responding to threats through research, action, and public outreach and communication. More information can be found here: [https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants\\_Land\\_Water/PlantIndustry/GISC/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/GISC/Pages/default.aspx).

There are several invasive species that are found near Forest County but have not yet been detected inside the county (see *Table 35 – Future Vulnerable Species*). Especially in cases like this, control efforts, heightened awareness, and public outreach and education can help prevent an invasive species from becoming established in the future. Once a species is established, it is more difficult to eradicate it from an ecosystem, so prevention is very important. Therefore, the Emerald Ash Borer, Spotted Lantern Fly and the Spongy Moth are all widespread and highly problematic in nearby counties but have not been reported in Forest County (as shown in red in *Table 35 – Future Vulnerable Species*). The development of appropriate plans will assist the county in reducing the possibility of a future encounter with any of these species. Working toward keeping these species from entering the area would be beneficial to the forests of Forest County.

Climate change and its relationship with invasive species has a major correlation. According to the U.S Geological Survey, climate change has been creating a new pathway for invasive species to be introduced into the environment. As an example, the rise in temperature allows existing invasive species to expand their geographic area. Also, climate change hinders the tools for eliminating invasive species.

*Table 35 - Future Vulnerable Species*



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Future Vulnerable Species (EDDMaps, 2021; PA DCNR, 2019; iMapInvasives, 2021)</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Type</b>
Corbicula fluminea	Asiatic Clam	Animal
Litylenchus crenatae mccannii	Beech Leaf Disease Nematode	Animal
Lotus corniculatus	Bird's Foot Trefoil	Plant
Fallopia convolvulus	Black Bindweed	Plant
Robinia pseudoacacia	Black Locust	Animal
Brassica nigra	Black Mustard	Plant
Typha x glauca	Blue Cattail	Plant
Saponaria officinalis	Bouncing-bet	Plant
Najas minor	Brittle Naiad	Plant
Centaurea jacea	Brown Starthistle	Plant
Rhamnus cathartica	Buckthorn	Plant
Cirsium vulgare	Bull Thistle	Plant
Linaria vulgaris	Butter-and-eggs	Plant
Pyrus calleryana	Callery Pear	Plant
Cipangopaludina chinensis	Chinese Mysterysnail	Animal
Solanum dulcamara	Climbing Nightshade	Plant
Coronilla varia	Common Crown-vetch	Plant
Hypericum perforatum	Common St. John's-wort	Plant
Holcus lanatus	Common Velvetgrass	Plant
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bentgrass	Plant
Polygonum caespitosum var. longisetum	Creeping Smartweed	Plant
Rorippa sylvestris	Creeping Yellowcress	Plant
Coronilla varia	Crown Vetch	Plant
Epipactis helleborine	Eastern Helleborine	Plant
Agrilus planipennis	Emerald Ash Borer	Animal
Plantago lanceolata	English Plantain	Plant
Berberis vulgaris	European Barberry	Plant
Akebia quinata	Five-leaf Akebia	Plant
Ludwigia peploides ssp. glabrescens	Floating Seedbox	Plant
Butomus umbellatus	Flowering-rush	Plant
Lotus corniculatus	Garden Bird's-foot-trefoil	Plant
Agrostis gigantea	Giant Bentgrass	Plant
Heracleum mantegazzianum	Giant Hogweed	Plant
Lepomis cyanellus	Green Sunfish	Animal
Etheostoma blennioides	Greenside Darter	Animal

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Future Vulnerable Species (EDDMaps, 2021; PA DCNR, 2019; iMapInvasives, 2021)</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Type</b>
Glechoma hederacea	Ground-ivy	Plant
Adelges tsugae	Hemlock Woolly Adelgid	Animal
Hydrilla verticillata	Hydrilla	Plant
Syringa reticulata	Japanese Tree Lilac	Plant
Clematis terniflora	Japanese Virgin's-bower	Plant
Datura stramonium	Jimsonweed	Plant
Amyntas-Metaphire spp.	Jumping Worms	Animal
Centaurea spp.	Knapweed	Plant
Persicaria maculosa	Lady's Thumb	Plant
Arctium minus	Lesser Burdock	Plant
Ficaria verna	Lesser Celandine	Plant
Vinca minor	Lesser Periwinkle	Plant
Phleum pratense	Meadow Timothy	Plant
Persicaria perfoliata	Mile-a-minute vine	Plant
Lonicera morrowii	Morrow's Honeysuckle	Plant
Bithynia tentaculata	Mud Bithynia	Plant
Artemisia vulgaris	Mugwort	Plant
Cygnus olor	Mute Swan	Animal
Cipangopaludina spp.	Mysterysnail spp.	Animal
Typha angustifolia	Narrowleaf Cattail	Plant
Catalpa speciosa	Northern Catalpa	Plant
Acer platanoides	Norway Maple	Plant
Hemerocallis fulva	Orange Daylily	Plant
Hieracium aurantiacum	Orange Hawkweed	Plant
Dactylis glomerata	Orchard Grass	Plant
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye Daisy	Plant
Mentha x piperita	Peppermint	Plant
Lathyrus latifolius	Perennial Pea	Plant
Conium maculatum	Poison-hemlock	Plant
Trachemys scripta elegans	Red-eared Slider	Animal
Scardinius erythrophthalmus	Rudd	Plant
Poa trivialis	Scribner's Bluegrass	Plant
Rumex acetosella	Sheep Sorrel	Plant
Trachemys scripta	Slider	Animal
Bromus inermis	Smooth Brome	Plant
Lymantria dispar	Spongy Moth	Animal

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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<b>Future Vulnerable Species (EDDMaps, 2021; PA DCNR, 2019; iMapInvasives, 2021)</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Type</b>
Hypochaeris radicata	Spotted Cat's-ear	Plant
Centaurea stoebe ssp. micranthos	Spotted Starthistle	Plant
Anthoxanthum odoratum	Sweet Vernal Grass	Plant
Melilotus officinalis	Sweetclover	Plant
Acorus calamus	Sweetflag, Calamus	Plant
Ranunculus acris var. acris	Tall Buttercup	Plant
Cardamine impatiens	Touch-me-not Bittercress	Plant
Ailanthus altissima	Tree-of-Heaven	Plant
Myosotis scorpioides	True Forget-me-not	Plant
Trapa natans	Water Chestnut	Plant
Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum	Watercress	Plant
Salix alba	White Willow	Plant
Anthriscus sylvestris	Wild Chervil	Plant
Pastinaca sativa	Wild Parsnip	Plant
Dipsacus fullonum	Wild Teasel	Plant
Dreissena polymorpha	Zebra Mussel	Animal

### **4.3.7.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Forest County's vulnerability to invasion depends on the species in question. Human activity and mobility are ever increasing, and combined with the prospects of climate change, invasive species are becoming increasingly threatening. Invasive species can have adverse economic effects by impacting agriculture and logging activities. Natural forest ecosystems provide clean water, recreational opportunities, habitat for native wildlife, and places to enjoy the tranquility and transcendence of nature. The balance of forest ecosystems and forest health are vulnerable to invasive species threats. While there is significant acreage of wetlands, waterways, state parks, and game lands in Forest County where forest managers can impact invasive species, private lands can provide refuge for invasive species if landowners are unaware of or apathetic towards the threat.

Since there are large swatches of public land in Forest County, there is a risk of future damage from invasive species that are present in the area. With about 427 square miles of total land, and 3.3 square miles of water, in Forest County, there is vulnerability to various land sites and waterways. If an invasive species were to invade the popular terrestrial areas or waterways in Forest County, a negative impact could occur. The invasion from an invasive species could cause damage to the scenic and natural resources needed in the county. Additionally, tourism for the county is vulnerable to the invasive species as well and would be affected if the parks were

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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destroyed. Therefore, a great amount of land and native wildlife within Forest County are at risk with the presence of invasive species.

An interesting facet of the invasive species problem in Pennsylvania is that deer do not eat many invasive plants, giving invasive species a competitive advantage over the native species that deer prefer. As such, the management of deer populations in Forest County has a significant impact on the vulnerability of an ecosystem to invasive species, where overpopulation of deer favors invasive species.

The Governor's Invasive Species Council of Pennsylvania (PISC) has identified over 100 species threats that are or could potentially become significant in Pennsylvania. Of these threats, county and municipal leaders believe that the most significant are invasive forest pests like the Emerald Ash Borer, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, plants like the Tree-of-Heaven which have all been identified in red in *Table 34- Prevalent Invasive Species for priority species in Forest County*.

Due to the past experiences with invasive plants in the county, there are five primary components which help with managing invasive plants to lower vulnerability:

**Prioritize:** Public use areas such as state parks and other healthy forest ecosystems should be prioritized over developed and private areas. Locations with lower densities of invasive plants are often easier to control and should be given quick attention. Locations where humans are disturbing the landscape opens up niche space, and often times the aggressive invasive species move in faster than native species. Such locations include areas around road work, ditch/culvert work, logging activities, stream improvement/stabilization and bridge work. Some species pose a higher risk than others - invasive species are easiest to control before they become widespread and established in an area, and for that reason, species that are less widespread should be prioritized for management.

**Locate:** Detailed locations should be recorded for invasive plants so sites can be easily relocated, treated, and monitored.

**Delineate:** The scale and extent of the infestation should be recorded and mapped so that the progress of the infestation can be monitored.

**Control:** Methods of control depend on the specific infestation, but the most common approaches are mechanical (cutting and hand-pulling) and chemical (herbicide treatments).

**Monitor:** Identified sites should be monitored and revisited as often as several times in a growing season (depending on the location/species). Monitoring can allow for early detection of spreading infestations. Most importantly, it prevents a relapse towards full-blown infestation.

It is best to act before a species can become established in the county, so forest management such as park rangers should be aware of invasive species found nearby Forest County, but not yet

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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present in the county (priority species in *Table 35 – Future Vulnerable Species*). Public outreach and education are important to increase knowledge of these species to improve identification and prevention of invasion. Without action, due to the instances and extent of the current infestations, it is reasonable to project that the county's vulnerability will increase.

All of the socially vulnerable populations in Forest County are at an increased vulnerability to invasive species. The homeless and the unsheltered populations are at risk due to not having a structure to reside in. Also, the economically vulnerable of Forest County may not have the capability to fix or hire pest control if their homes are damaged or overrun by invasive species.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, Jenks Township has seen a net population increase from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that Jenks Township may have an increased risk to invasive species, since 2010, due to the increase in population and construction.

The historic properties in Forest County are at different levels of vulnerability to invasive species. Some of the historic properties in Forest County are made of brick and masonry construction and are at a lower risk of vulnerability from invasive species. However, most of the culturally significant covered bridges in Forest County are made of wood and could be damaged by invasive species making them more vulnerable.

Land use changes in Forest County could be a factor in the potential impact invasive species have on native species. Land use is a major factor with the severity of invasive species. Land use, in the form of a built environment, such as residential expansion, can cause invasive species impact severity to increase. Impact severity increases because as the built environment expands and becomes more complex, the impact the event will have on that area also increases because there is an influx of people, infrastructure, and critical infrastructure in the hazard area. According to Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, invasive species thrive on major land use disturbances, as an example the logging of a forest or flooding to a wetland can create conditions that invasive species thrive on to move into a specific area.

Invasive species in Forest County pose a significant threat to infrastructure systems through various mechanisms. Invasive plants like kudzu or Japanese knotweed can damage infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and buildings by infiltrating cracks and causing structural damage. Their aggressive growth can also obstruct drainage systems, leading to flooding and erosion, thus compromising the integrity of roads and bridges.

Invasive animals, such as feral hogs or zebra mussels, can disrupt infrastructure by burrowing into embankments, weakening them and increasing the risk of collapse. Additionally, animals like rodents or insects may gnaw on electrical wiring and utility cables, leading to malfunctions or even fires, posing risks to both infrastructure and public safety.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

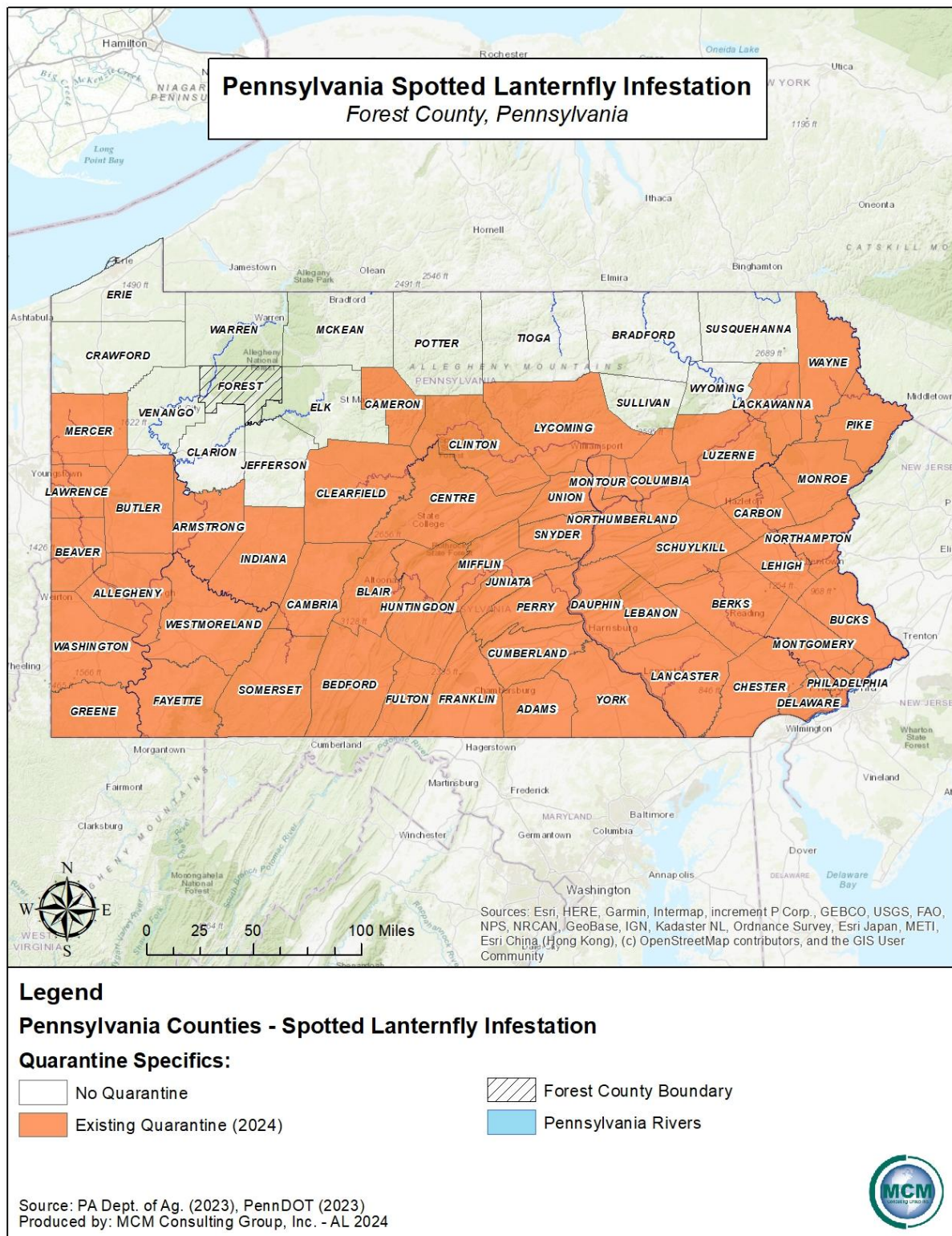
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Furthermore, invasive species can interfere with transportation systems by clogging waterways. For example, invasive aquatic plants can impede navigation channels, necessitating costly scouring operations. Invasive insects like the emerald ash borer can devastate tree populations, including those lining roads or railways, posing hazards from falling trees and impacting transportation routes.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 27 - Pennsylvania Spotted Lanternfly Infestation



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.8. Landslides**

##### **4.3.8.1 Location and Extent**

Rock falls and other slope failures can occur in areas of Forest County with moderate to steep slopes. Many slope failures are associated with precipitation events – periods of sustained above-average precipitation, specific rainstorms, or snowmelt events. Rockfalls, rockslides, rock topples, block slides, debris flows, mud flows, and mud slides are all forms of landslides. Areas experiencing erosion, decline in vegetation cover and earthquakes are also susceptible to landslides. Human activities that contribute to slope failure include altering the natural slope gradient, increasing soil and water content, and removing vegetation cover. Areas where this type of human activity is common are areas that were excavated along highways and other roadways.

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) describes landslide susceptibility in Forest County as generally low, but includes local areas of high to moderate. *Figure 28 – Landslide Hazard Areas* shows areas of landslide susceptibility in Forest County. Forest County lies within two physiographic provinces of Pennsylvania—the Appalachian Plateau Province and the High Plateau Section, which is known for low to moderate vulnerability to all forms of landslide. Steep slopes are evenly spread throughout the county and there are locations that can be prone to landslides in almost every municipality.

##### **4.3.8.2 Range of Magnitude**

Landslides cause damage to transportation routes, utilities, and buildings. They can also create travel delays and other side effects for transportation of people and material. Fortunately, death and injuries due to landslides are relatively rare in Pennsylvania. Almost all of the known deaths due to landslides have occurred when rocks fall or other slides along highways involve vehicles. Storm-induced debris flows are the only other type of landslide likely to cause injuries. As residential and recreational development increase on and near steep mountain slopes, the hazard from these rapid events will also increase. Most Pennsylvania landslides are moderate to slow moving and damage objects and buildings, rather than people.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and large municipalities incur substantial costs due to landslide damage and to additional construction costs for new roads in known landslide-prone areas. A 1991 estimate showed an average of \$10 million per year is spent on landslide repair contracts across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a similar amount is spent on mitigation costs for grading projects (DCNR, 2009). A number of highway sites in Pennsylvania need temporary or permanent repair at an estimated cost of between \$300,000.00 and \$2 million each. Similar landslide events that effect traffic and roadways throughout the commonwealth occur intermittently throughout the year. A 7,500-ton rockslide closed down parts of Pennsylvania State Route 11 in Montour County, Pennsylvania in

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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November of 2020 for a number of weeks. Events of similar magnitude can and have occurred in and around Forest County.

The 2023 Pennsylvania Hazard Mitigation Plan lists Forest County as having a low incidence of landslides but high susceptibility. Forest County landowners and real estate developers must know the magnitude of susceptibility within the county prior to the start of development.

### **4.3.8.3 Past Occurrence**

No comprehensive list of landslide incidents in Forest County is available, and there is no formal reporting system in place. PennDOT and municipal departments are responsible for slides that inhibit the flow of traffic or damage roads and bridges, but they generally only repair the road and the adjacent right-of-way areas.

### **4.3.8.4 Future Occurrence**

Mismanaged development in steeply sloped areas could increase the frequency of occurrence. Road cuts are the most common development that puts an area at an increased probability of a slide. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) has an Erosion and Sediment (E & S) program that sets requirements intended to mitigate erosion associated with development projects of a certain scale. The guidelines offered in this program are similar to landslides prevention practices.

Climate change has the potential to increase the frequency of landslides in Forest County. Climate change could result in more intense rainfall from more frequent hurricanes and tropical storms. This increase in rainfall could cause an increase in soil runoff, therefore weakening slopes that are steep and considered to be a hazard. More frequent landslides could occur from this weakening of the slopes because soil movement will likely increase with a higher volume of precipitation.

### **4.3.8.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Landslides are often precipitated by other natural hazards such as earthquakes or floods. A significant landslide can cause millions of dollars in damage. Continued enforcement of floodplain management and proper road and building construction can mitigate the vulnerability to landslides. Floodplain management is important where mining has occurred within proximity to watercourses and associated flat-lying areas. Surface water may permeate into areas that still have open fractures and the build-up of surface water in those fractures could lead to unexpected flood events and landslide events.

Land use and development has the potential to increase the vulnerability of Forest County to landslides. Development of major infrastructure and commercial or residential areas near areas of steep slope, or areas where slopes are over 23° could create conditions in the future where

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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landslides are more likely to occur. Also, the development of roadways, and the grading of roadway berms could also increase the potential for landslides. This is common in steeply sloped areas or areas where roads are built below a slope or embankment. The removal of forested areas or trees could cause landslides along slopes and embankments. Trees and tree root systems create hill stability, and the removal of those root systems could result in weakened slopes. This practice can be remediated and fixed with protection netting and gabion baskets or gabion walls.

A comprehensive database of land highly prone to erosion and landslides is difficult to produce. The potential for erosion and landslides should be considered when planning construction projects in Forest County. There are several general factors that can be indicators of landslide prone areas including:

- Locations on or close to steep hills.
- Areas of steep road cuts or excavations.
- Steep areas where surface run-off is channeled.
- Fan shaped areas of sediment and rock accumulations.
- Evidence of past sliding such as tilted utility line, tilted trees, cracks in the ground and irregularly, surfaced ground.

All the municipalities in Forest County are vulnerable to landslides. *Table 36 – Structure Vulnerability Data* illustrates the number of site structure address points per municipality and the number of structures in high slope areas. Landslide events are most likely to occur in steeply sloped areas and in places where landforms have been altered for purposes of highway construction or other development. This is especially true if development is located at the base or crest of cliffs or near large highway cut-outs. These areas should be considered vulnerable to landslides, particularly if mitigation measures have not been implemented.

*Table 36 - Structure Vulnerability Data*

<b>Structure Vulnerability Data</b>		
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of Addressable Structures Per Municipality</b>	<b>Number of Structures in Slope Area</b>
Barnett Township	867	1
Green Township	1,160	0
Harmony Township	887	0
Hickory Township	1,058	2
Howe Township	738	1
Jenks Township	1,803	0
Kingsley Township	1,269	0



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Structure Vulnerability Data		
Municipality	Number of Addressable Structures Per Municipality	Number of Structures in Slope Area
Tionesta Borough	320	0
Tionesta Township	1,003	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>9,105</b>	<b>5</b>

There are no historic or cultural properties in Forest County that are registered with the National Register of Historic Places and within a slope area of greater than 25°. No other cultural or historic properties are at an increased risk of landslides due to their location and area of construction.

**Municipalities with an increased risk to landslide (slope areas over 25°):**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

The socially vulnerable populations and communities in Forest County, including the homeless and unsheltered populations, are at an increased vulnerability to landslides. Those socially vulnerable populations can be found in the higher population density areas of the county. As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, Jenks Township has seen a net population increase from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this municipality may have an increased/equivalent risk to landslides.

When a landslide occurs, the resulting ground instability can lead to telephone pole collapse, disruption of fiber or copper cables systems, and in severe cases, cellular tower failure. The disruption to these networks, if the landslide event is significant, can also result in a loss of communication capabilities, hindering response coordination, and leaving communities impacted by the landslide vulnerable to other natural or human-caused hazards. Landslide events can also cause above ground localized transportation issues if an event were to occur along a

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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transportation route through Forest County. This can cause a delay in daily transportation and may require alternate transportation routes to be established for an extended period of time.

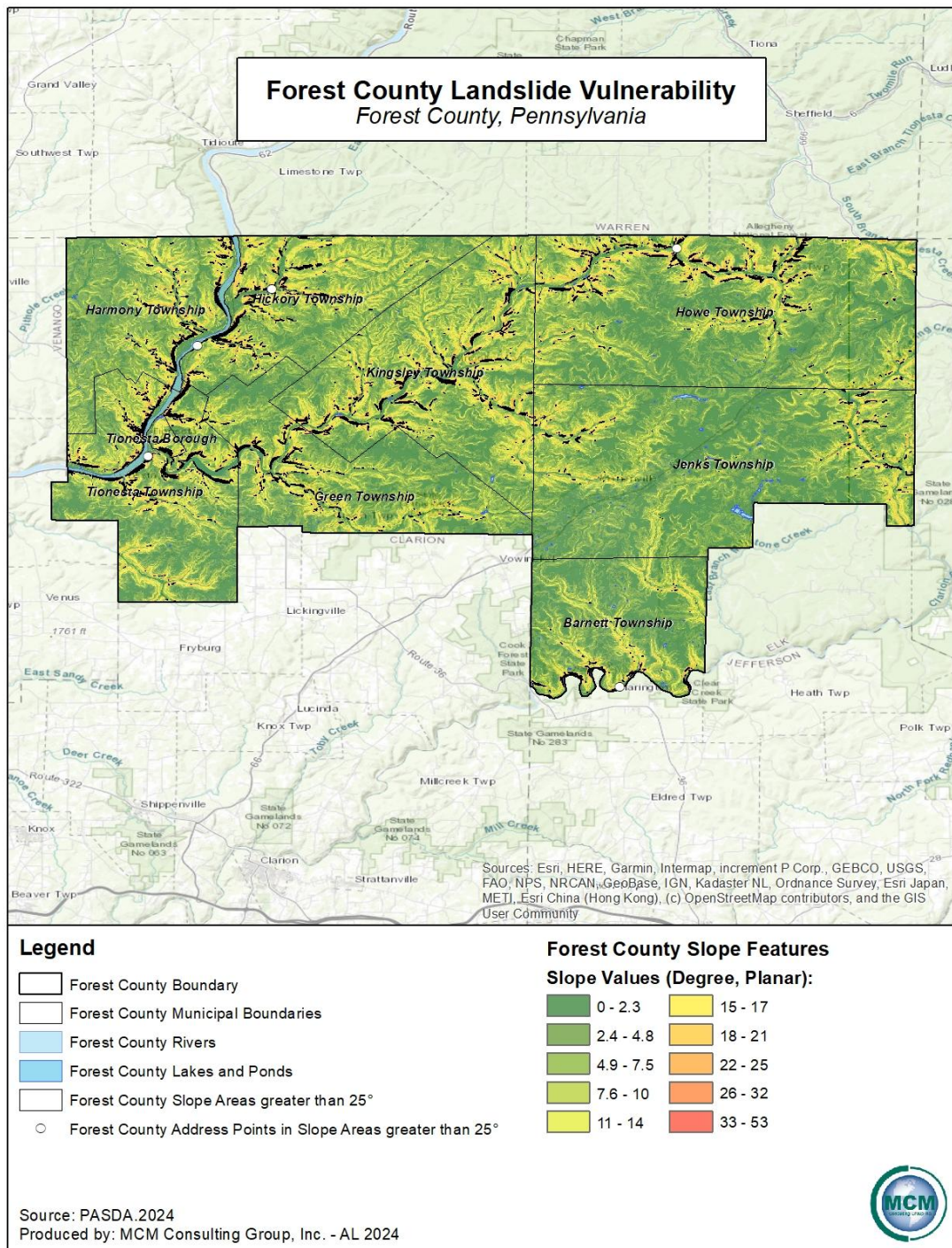
Natural areas and resources in Forest County could be adversely impacted by landslides.

Landslides typically occur in areas of steep slope, or areas of slope instability. Specific natural areas or parks that have the potential for landslides due to steep slopes include locations in Barnett Township, Green Township, Harmony Township, Hickory Township, Howe Township, Jenks Township, Kingsley Township, Tionesta Borough, and Tionesta Township. Landslides occur in natural areas on a regular basis and are often only reported substantially after occurrence. Natural resources that are utilized by the residents and businesses of Forest County could be damaged by landslides. This could include any farming, land cultivation, lumbering, or development of natural products.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 28 - Landslide Hazard Areas



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.9. Lightning Strike**

##### **4.3.9.1 Location and Extent**

Lightning is a massive electrostatic discharge between electrically charged regions within clouds, or between a cloud and the Earth's surface. The charged regions within the atmosphere temporarily equalize themselves through a lightning flash, commonly referred to as a strike if it hits an object on the ground.

There are three primary types:

- A lightning strike from a cloud to itself (intra-cloud or IC)
- A lightning strike from one cloud to another cloud (cloud to cloud or CC)
- A lightning strike between the cloud and the ground (cloud to ground or CG)

Lightning is always accompanied by the sound of thunder, although distant lightning may be seen but be too far away for the thunder to be heard. Thunder is *caused* by lightning. The bright light of the lightning flash caused by the expansion of electrons (called the “return stroke”) represents a great deal of energy. This energy heats the air in the channel to above 50,000°F in only a few millionths of a second. The air that is now heated to such a high temperature had no time to expand, so the air has a high pressure. The high-pressure air then expands outward into the surrounding air, compressing it and causing a disturbance that propagates in all directions away from the stroke. The disturbance is a shock wave for the first ten yards, after which it becomes an ordinary sound wave, commonly referred to as thunder.

Forest County is subject to lightning strikes and thunderstorm activity throughout the year. Overall, the most active time for lightning strikes is from early spring to early fall seasons. While the impact of flash events is highly localized, strong storms can result in numerous widespread events over a broad area. In addition, the impacts of an event can be serious or widespread if lightning strikes a particularly significant location such as a power station, a campground or large public venue.

##### **4.3.9.2 Range of Magnitude**

Severe thunderstorms have lightning risks and can cause significant damage and be life threatening, though only a small percentage of thunderstorms become severe. Northeastern Pennsylvania sits in a moderate risk area susceptible to lightning strikes, western Pennsylvania sits clearly in a region of the country susceptible to lightning strikes but high-risk areas for lightning strikes are the southeast or the central portions of the United States. This information can be seen in *Figure 29 – United States Lightning Risk Rating*. The 2023 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania All Hazards Mitigation Plan states that Pennsylvania ranks ninth among the fifty states in the country’s number of lightning deaths between 1959 and 2022. Lightning flashes

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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occur in Forest County during the summer months. Lightning can cause severe injuries and, in some cases, can be fatal. Most fatal strikes are not direct strikes to people but the result of ground current. Most individuals survive ground current strikes. Other impacts of ground current include death and injuries to livestock, forest and brush fires, and damages to buildings, communication systems, power lines, and utility systems across the country. *Figure 30 – U.S. Lightning Strike Fatalities 2018 to 2022* shows the number of lightning fatalities from direct strikes for the United States. Pennsylvania registered five fatalities for that five-year time period.

### **4.3.9.3 Past Occurrence**

Thunderstorms and lightning occur many times each year in Pennsylvania. Lightning has been responsible for 140 deaths in Pennsylvania between the years 1959-2023. Pennsylvania ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the United States in lightning strike deaths in terms of population density in the 2023 Pennsylvania State Hazard Mitigation Plan. As of the writing of this plan update, no fatalities from lightning has occurred in Pennsylvania in 2024. There were no lightning strike fatalities in Forest County between 2006 and 2024, as reported by the National Weather Service.

### **4.3.9.4 Future Occurrence**

Lightning strikes and thunderstorms are expected during and around the spring and summer months. These events have occurred in Forest County in the past and will continue to occur in the future, although multiple casualties or deaths are highly unlikely. Climate change will result in a greater frequency of storms and an increase in the strength of thunderstorms. The rising temperature will result in warmer air with more moisture which will increase the likelihood of thunderstorms. This increase in thunderstorms is likely to result in more occurrences of lightning strikes.

### **4.3.9.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

The odds of being struck by lightning in a person's lifetime are one in 15,300 people, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Severe Storms Laboratory. Nine out of ten people in the United States who are struck by lightning survive, according to a 2016 study presented at the International Lightning Detection Conference and International Lightning Meteorology Conference. However, lightning strikes can leave an individual with many long-term health problems, including muscle soreness, headaches, cognitive issues, and nausea.

The potential for lightning strikes and thunderstorms exists in all municipalities in Forest County. Events being held outdoors during the summer months are particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes. Due to the recreational and rural characteristics, including waterways, there is the potential in Forest County for death and injuries to occur from lightning strikes. Natural areas are at an increased vulnerability to damage from lightning, including damage from strikes and cascading impacts like wildfires and brush fires. All of the natural areas and resources in Forest

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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County are at an increased vulnerability, but not all natural areas would be impacted by any one single event.

Utility interruptions will continue to be a vulnerability when lightning strikes are examined. Forest County has reported to WebEOC one power utility interruptions in 2021, which was caused by a lightning strikes to power poles and a utility transformer. Additional discussion on utility interruptions, and utility interruptions as a cascading hazard of lightning strikes can be found in Section 4.3.26 of this hazard mitigation plan.

Land use changes and population may also affect the likelihood of lightning strikes. While this is of high debate, some research suggests that land use changes in the form of urbanization may increase the frequency of lightning strikes. Research suggests that urbanization increases local climate and therefore increases the amount of lightning strikes in that area. These urban areas typically have a higher population density compared to more rural areas, therefore increasing the built environment, and heightening the areas vulnerability to lightning strikes.

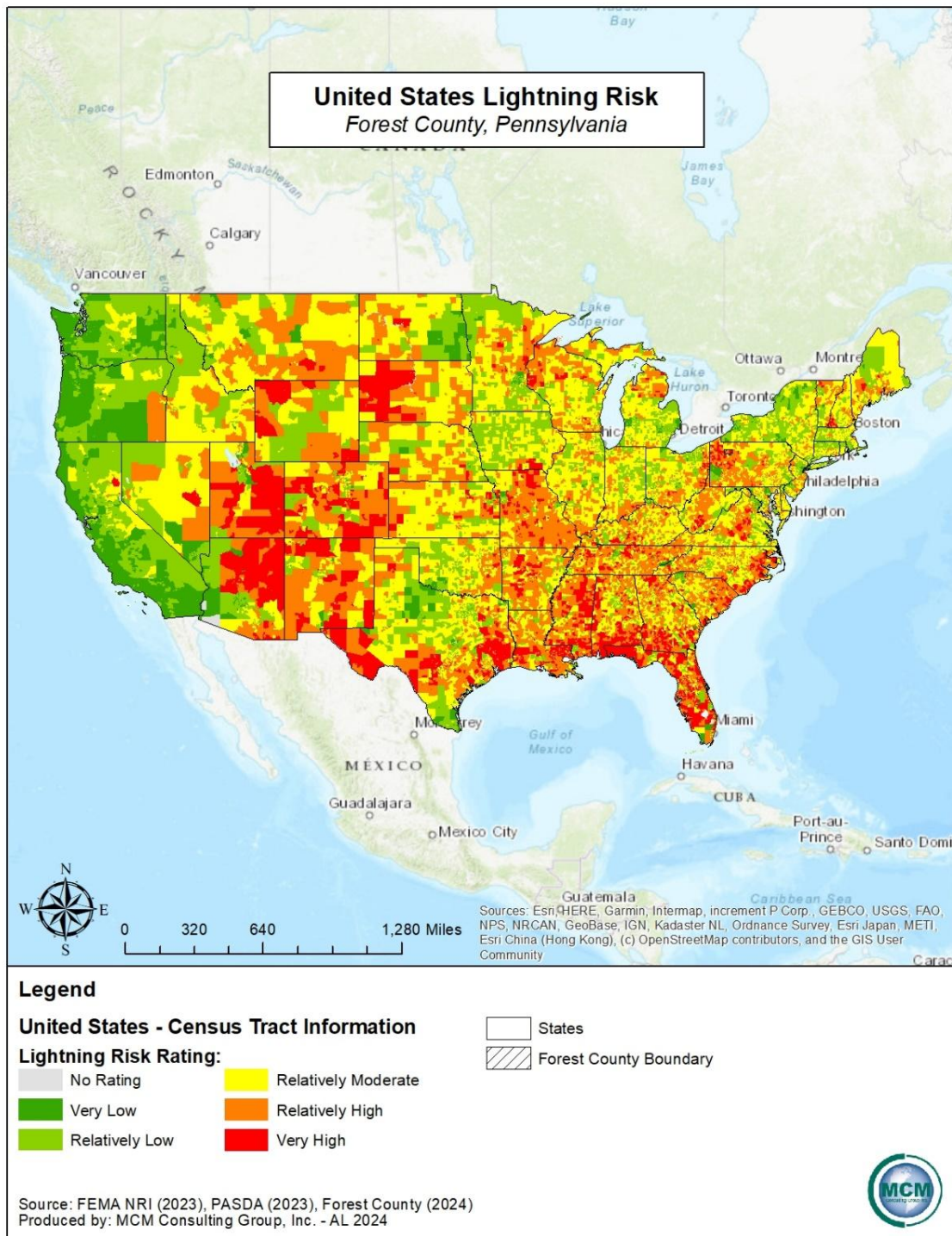
As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, eight of the nine total municipalities in Forest County have experienced a population loss since the 2010 decennial census. One municipality has seen a net population increase from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that Jenks Township may have an increased vulnerability to lightning strikes, since 2010, due to the increase in population and the corresponding built environment. Populations in Forest County, including the socially vulnerable underserved, and unserved populations, may be disproportionately impacted. Inadequate infrastructure and unsafe housing leave these communities more susceptible to lightning strikes.

The historic and cultural resources in Forest County could be at an increased risk of damage from lightning strikes if proper mitigation techniques and procedures are not implemented or in place. The Cook Forest State Park Indian Cabin District, Cook Forest State Park River Cabin District and Anthony Wayne Mansion are the historic buildings that could be damaged if mitigation measures for lightning are not implemented. This vulnerability of these buildings is low.



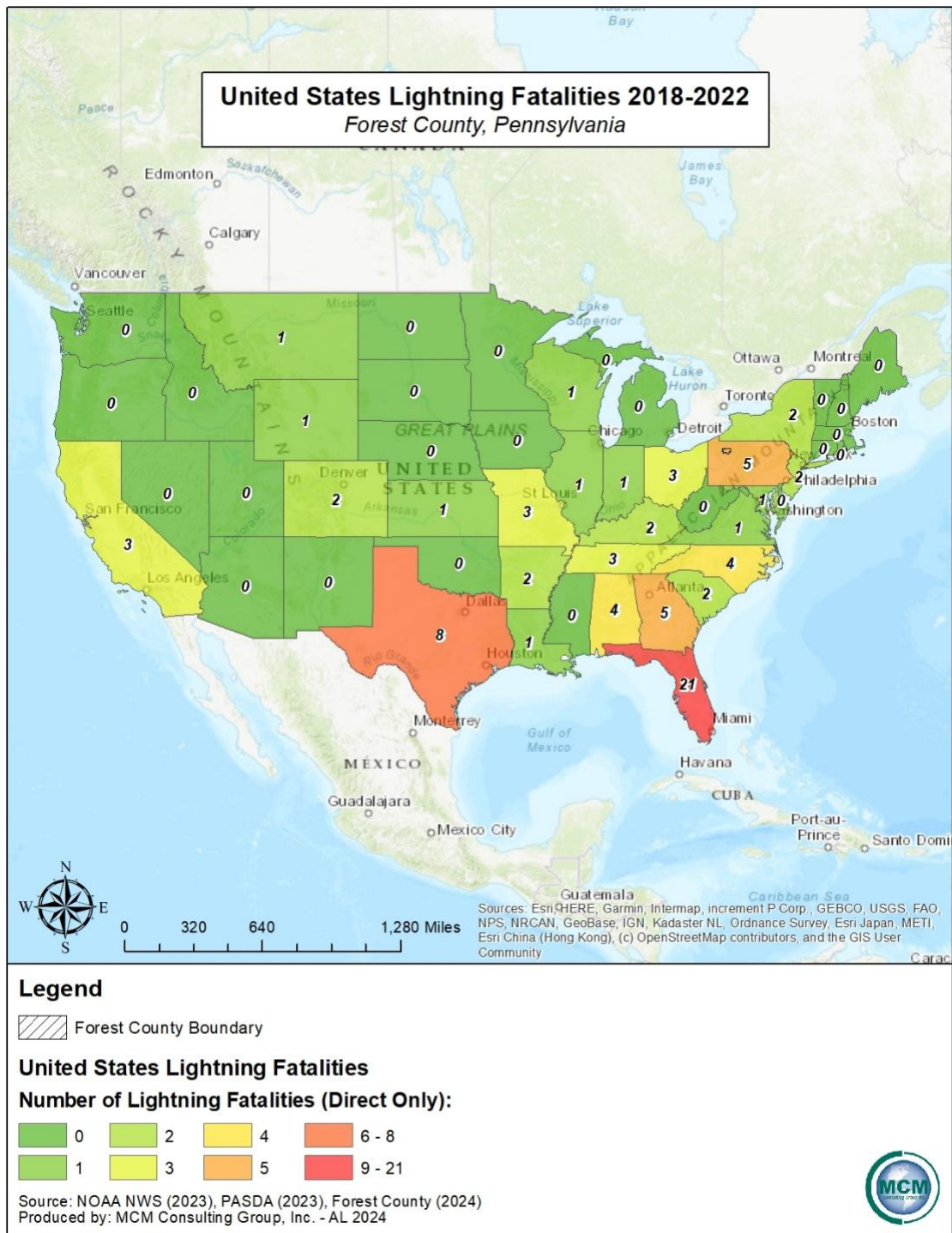
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 29 - United States Lightning Risk Rating



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 30 - U.S. Lightning Strike Fatalities 2018 to 2022





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.10. Pandemic, Epidemic, Endemic, and Infectious Disease**

#### **4.3.10.1 Location and Extent**

##### **Epidemic**

An epidemic occurs when an infectious disease spreads more quickly than expected by medical and healthcare authorities. It is characterized by widespread growth or extent that spreads quickly and incurs a greater rate of novel or endemic cases than baseline estimates would initially project. When an epidemic occurs, it typically impacts a larger area than a localized outbreak. Epidemics often include multiple countries, although they do not always spread to different continents. In short, epidemics are regional.

##### **Pandemic**

A pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents, which affects the population of a vast area. When a pandemic occurs, the event usually affects more people and takes more lives than an epidemic. Pandemics are described as an extensive epidemic. Generally, pandemic diseases cause sudden illness in all age groups on a global scale. Pandemics are continuous events in third-world countries but do not frequently affect the United States. A pandemic is measured and defined by the spreading of a disease rather than the fatalities with which it is associated. The characteristics of a pandemic outbreak include large and rapid scale spread, overload of healthcare systems, inadequate medical supplies, disruption of economy/society, and medical supply shortages. While a pandemic may be characterized as a type of epidemic, an epidemic is not a type of pandemic. Additionally, pandemics travel more efficiently than epidemics. In the event that a pandemic occurs in the eastern United States, the entirety of Forest County would likely be impacted.

##### **Endemic**

An endemic is described as a disease that is present in a community at all times but occurs in a relatively low frequency and is not spreading at a rapid rate. An endemic can be a previous pandemic such as influenza, or coronavirus (COVID-19), or a more regionalized virus such as Ebola virus in Africa. An endemic can become a pandemic if the disease mutates into a more virulent strain.

##### **Infectious Disease**

Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by pathogenic organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. Organisms become harmful and cause disease under certain conditions. The sources of infectious disease may originate from contaminated food or waterways, infected animals/livestock, or infection from biological vectors such as mosquitoes, etc. Infectious diseases include influenza, rabies, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), West Nile virus, Lyme Disease, Zika virus, and Ebola virus.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Pandemic and infectious disease events cover a wide geographical area and can affect large populations, potentially including the entire population of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The exact size and extent of an infected population is dependent upon how easily the illness is spread, the mode of transmission, and the amount of contact between infected and uninfected individuals. The transmission rates of pandemic illnesses are often higher in more populated and urban areas where there are large concentrations of people. The transmission rate of infectious disease will depend on the mode of transmission of a given illness. Pandemic events can also occur after other natural disasters, particularly floods, when there is the potential for bacteria to grow in, and contaminate, standing water.

### **4.3.10.2 Range of Magnitude**

Public health emergencies typically occur on a regional basis. The magnitude of pandemic or infectious disease threat in the Commonwealth will range significantly depending on the aggressiveness of the virus in question, factors within the community that are impacted (medical care access, population density, etc.), and the ease of transmission. For example, the West Nile virus produces clinically asymptomatic cases less than 80% of the time. Therefore, approximately 20% of the cases result in mild infection, also known as West Nile fever. However, there is a small percentage of cases that could result in severe neurological disease and even death.

Pandemic influenza has a higher transmission rate from person-to-person compared to the West Nile virus. Advances in medical technologies have greatly reduced the number of deaths caused by influenza over time. In the early 1900s, flu pandemics historically caused tens of millions of deaths, while the 2009 Novel H1N1, known as swine flu, caused fewer than 20,000 deaths world-wide. Many people infected with swine flu in 2009 recovered without needing medical treatment. Without recent medical inventions and technologies, modern influenza would be associated with higher morbidity rates. About 70% of those who were hospitalized during the 2009 H1N1 flu virus in the United States belonged to a high-risk group. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the transmission rates were much higher than any previous outbreaks related to other members of the coronavirus family such as SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV.

In the past 100 years, humanity did not face a microbial pandemic similar in scale to the COVID-19 pandemic. The worldwide transmission rate of COVID-19 from human to human rapidly advanced in 2020 and 2021. Of the six global outbreaks of viral infections, three were caused by coronaviruses (SARS, MERS, and COVID-19).

While there are limited secondary hazards related to public health emergencies, an outbreak can cause a variety of cascading hazards. Civil disorder due to supply shortages is the most common cascading hazard to result from pandemic, epidemic, or infectious disease. Additional potential effects could include: a shortage of medical supplies and personnel, hoarding of household paper and cleaning supplies, school and business disruption, government closings, government

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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restrictions on travel, low attendance at places of employment, slowed productivity, and widespread economic instability.

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed an alert system to help inform the world about the seriousness of a pandemic. The alert system has six phases, with Phase 1 being the lowest risk and Phase 6 being the greatest risk of pandemic. The phases were developed in 1999, but then revised in 2005 and 2009 to provide a global framework and aid countries in pandemic preparedness and response planning. These phases of alert systems were used during the COVID-19 pandemic. These phases are listed below in *Table 37- Pandemic Influenza Phases*.

*Table 37 - Pandemic Influenza Phases*

<b>Pandemic Influenza Phases</b>	
<b>Phase</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	No animal influenza virus circulating among animals has been reported to cause infection in humans.
<b>Phase 2</b>	An animal influenza virus circulating in domesticated or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans and is therefore considered a specific potential pandemic threat.
<b>Phase 3</b>	An animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Human-to-human transmission (H2H) of an animal or human-animal influenza virus able to sustain community-level outbreaks has been verified.
<b>Phase 5</b>	The same identified virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in two or more countries in one WHO region.
<b>Phase 6</b>	The pandemic phase is characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way.
<b>Post-Peak Period</b>	Levels of pandemic influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance have dropped below peak levels.
<b>Possible New Wave</b>	Level of pandemic influenza activity in most countries with adequate surveillance rising again.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Pandemic Influenza Phases	
Phase	Characteristics
Post-Pandemic Period	Levels of influenza activity have returned to the levels seen for seasonal influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance.
Source: WHO, 2009	

### **4.3.10.3 Past Occurrence**

#### **Pandemic & Epidemic**

Several pandemic influenza outbreaks have occurred over the past 100 years that not only affected Forest County but the United States as a whole. *Table 38- Past Pandemic Events in the United States* illustrates the various past pandemic events that have occurred since the late 1800's. Prior to COVID-19, the worst recorded pandemic was the Spanish Flu, due to the amount of infection spread that was present in the world. The two most recent pandemics that have occurred in Forest County and the United States are the swine flu/Novel H1N1 and COVID-19 pandemics, with COVID-19 being the most current and having the highest transmission rates.

#### **Spanish Flu**

An estimated 1/3 of the world's population was infected and had clinically apparent illnesses during the 1918 - 1919 influenza pandemic. Pennsylvania experienced severe effects from the Spanish Flu. It claimed 500,000 lives in the United States, which included individuals in Forest County. There is a lack of data which provides exact numbers of deaths that occurred in Forest County from the Spanish Flu, however there were a total of 60,000 deaths in Pennsylvania. Deaths occurring in Forest County are included in this number. There were approximately 47,000 reported cases and 12,000 deaths in Philadelphia in just over four weeks. In the first six months, there were about half a million cases and 16,000 deaths of the Spanish Flu in Philadelphia. The factors of high population density including crowded and unhygienic conditions contributed to higher numbers of cases and death rates across Pennsylvania.

#### **Swine Flu/Avian Flu/H1N1**

Each year, different strains of influenza are labeled as potential pandemic threats. Strains of influenza, or the flu, are highly contagious as they commonly attack the respiratory tract in humans. Influenza pandemic planning began in response to the H5N1 (avian) flu outbreak in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Pacific, and the Near East in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Avian flu did not reach pandemic proportions in the United States, but the country began planning for flu outbreaks.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Forest County was impacted by the H1N1 virus during 2009. The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) set up clinics throughout the county to administer vaccines to at-risk populations. A total of 10,940 cases and seventy-eight deaths occurred in Pennsylvania from this pandemic but there is insufficient data to determine the exact number of cases and deaths from swine flu in Forest County.

### **COVID-19**

Forest County was directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 2023, Pennsylvania had an estimated 3,565,278 million total cases and 51,344 deaths related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first cases in Pennsylvania were reported on March 6, 2020, in Delaware and Wayne counties. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Forest County was in January 2020. Beginning in December of 2020, there was a large-scale vaccination effort to combat COVID-19. Municipalities in Forest County indicated a decrease in the pandemic and infectious disease section of the risk factor assessment municipal comparison.

*Table 38 - Past Pandemic Events in the United States*

Past Pandemic Events in the United States	
Year(s)	Common Name
1889	Russian Flu
1918	Spanish Flu/H1N1
1957	Asian Flu/H2N2
1968	Hong Kong Flu/H3N2
2009	Swine flu/Novel H1NI
2020	COVID-19
Sources: WHO & CDC, 2020	

### **Infectious Disease**

Not only has Forest County experienced pandemic events, but the county has also experienced infectious disease events. The two major infectious disease events experienced across Forest County and Pennsylvania as a whole are the West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease. Due to the climatic traits of Pennsylvania these infectious diseases thrive in Forest County. Both diseases are transmitted by the biological vector of an insect which is found throughout the county.

### **West Nile Virus**

West Nile virus reached the United States in 1999 and a year later was detected in Pennsylvania when mosquito pools, dead birds, and/or horses in nineteen counties tested positive for the virus. By 2003, all counties in the Commonwealth had confirmed cases. A comprehensive network has been developed in Pennsylvania that includes trapping mosquitoes, collecting dead birds, and monitoring horses, people and, in past years, sentinel chickens. Although West Nile Virus positive cases are few in Forest County, 2018 had the most positive cases in Forest. Over the past

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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five years, no human has tested positive for West Nile Virus in Forest County. *Table 39 - West Nile Virus Control Program in Forest County since 2018* outlines the West Nile Virus within Forest County from 2018 to 2024.

*Table 39 - West Nile Virus Control Program in Forest County since 2018*

West Nile Virus Control Program in Forest County Since 2018				
Year	Total Positives	Human Positives	Mosquito Positives	Bird Positives
2018	10	0	10	0
2019	0	0	0	0
2020	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0
2023	0	0	0	0
2024	0	0	0	0
Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection, 2024				

### **Lyme Disease**

Lyme Disease has been present in the United States and Forest County for many years. More wooded areas have higher cases due to ticks being the main biological vector. Lyme disease is found in all sixty-seven counties within Pennsylvania. Forest County has an overall approximately 149 confirmed cases of Lyme disease from 2000 until 2020, although actual totals may be significantly higher due to under reporting. Forest County as a whole has a moderately high positive total for Lyme Disease in the county, especially over the past several years. It is possible that numbers have risen dramatically due to lack of testing in previous years. Forest County experienced the highest number of positive cases in 2017 and 2019. Lyme disease case counts have been consistently rising over the past several years. It should be noted that information represented for each county may vary due to reporting practices. Hence these figures represent a rough estimate of the Lyme disease burden in Forest County. *Table 40 - Lyme Disease Data for Forest County* outlines the total positive cases of Lyme Disease within Forest County since 2000 to 2020. Data after 2020 was not available for this report.

*Table 40 - Lyme Disease Data for Forest County*

Lyme Disease Data for Forest County	
Year	Total Positives
2000	0
2001	0
2002	0
2003	1



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Lyme Disease Data for Forest County	
Year	Total Positives
2004	0
2005	1
2006	1
2007	0
2008	0
2009	1
2010	1
2011	5
2012	8
2013	10
2014	12
2015	10
2016	19
2017	30
2018	16
2019	26
2020	8
Source: PA Tick Check, 2024	

### **Zika Virus**

The Zika virus is another infectious disease that is spread by mosquito bites, and it is related to West Nile virus. Zika virus can also be spread through sexual intercourse, blood transfusion, or passed from mother to child in the womb. The virus was first identified in 1947, but largely came to the attention of the United States in 2015 when there was an outbreak of Zika in Brazil. The direct illness caused by Zika can include fever, red eyes, joint pain, headache, and a rash, or sometimes no symptoms at all. Zika is problematic for pregnant mothers as the virus can result in microcephaly or cause other problems for brain development. For adults, the virus can be linked to increased incidence of Guillain-Barré syndrome.

#### **4.3.10.4 Future Occurrence**

##### **Pandemic & Epidemic**

The probability of a widespread public health emergency affecting Forest County is approximately once every ten years. Minor outbreaks of less serious communicable disease, such as influenza, will occur much more frequently. The occurrence of pandemic influenza outbreaks is unpredictable, and complete avoidance of the events is unlikely. Therefore, future occurrences

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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of pandemics and infectious disease events are very likely. Pandemics may also emerge from other diseases, especially invasive pathogens for which Forest County and Pennsylvania as a whole lack natural immunity.

### Influenza

It is estimated that 5% to 25% of Pennsylvanians get the flu each year, and 120 to 2,000 individuals die from complications of influenza. The CDC recommends that everyone six months and older get a flu vaccine every season to prevent future cases from rising. People who are at a high risk of serious flu illness should take flu antiviral drugs as soon as they get sick.

### **Infectious Disease**

Infectious diseases such as West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease have been present in Forest County for many years and are expected to perpetuate. The best way to prevent infectious disease outbreaks, including West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease, is to actively address the causes of the diseases. West Nile Virus occurrence can be reduced by removing mosquito breeding locations in stagnant water sources and Lyme Disease occurrence can be reduced by utilizing insect repellent, removing ticks promptly, applying pesticides, and reducing tick habitats. Occurrence of Zika Virus can also be reduced by removing mosquito breeding areas and areas of stagnant water. Both West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease are expected to continue occurring in Forest County in the future.

Climate change can result in a wider range of pandemic, epidemics, and infectious diseases that can impact larger areas of the globe. As climate change continues, more populations have the potential to come into contact with vectors for diseases. The migration of animals could also increase vulnerability to this hazard for populations in Forest County. Climate change is discussed below in Section 4.3.10.5.

#### **4.3.10.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Forest County is considered to be a moderately vulnerable county in regard to the pandemic events. It is extremely difficult to predict the occurrence and the magnitude of a pandemic or epidemic event. The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected populations over the age of sixty-five, especially those in nursing homes. It has had disparate effect on socially vulnerable populations, including unsheltered and homeless individuals.

Elderly individuals, children and immune deficient individuals are the most vulnerable to disease. Nursing facilities, personal care facilities, daycares, schools, and hospitals are considered more vulnerable since there are often groups of these socially vulnerable individuals present at these community lifelines. Congregate living facilities, including correctional institutions and dormitories would also be at an increased risk due to the difficulties in adhering to the social distancing required to help stop the spread of a pandemic. During the COVID-19

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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pandemic, nursing homes and personal care homes in Pennsylvania reported high numbers of cases and deaths, and several county jails and state correctional institutions reported wide community spread.

Health-care workers and those working in direct-care (such as correctional institutions or those who cannot social distance due to their jobs) are more likely to be exposed to a pandemic disease. Those who work outdoors for extended periods of time in warm months may be more vulnerable to West Nile Virus, Lyme Disease, or the Zika virus.

The number of hospitals within the county, and availability of beds within the hospitals, determine the amount of care vulnerable and sick patients will receive. It is important for hospitals to review and exercise emergency response plans and continuity of operations plans (COOP) to ensure that there is an effective public health response.

All critical infrastructure facilities and community lifeline facilities are vulnerable to pandemic, epidemic, and infectious disease. The people working and operating these facilities are at an increased vulnerability based on location and dispersion of disease vectors. This includes all of the critical infrastructure in the county and the community lifelines, a total of seventeen locations. This includes but is not limited to one EMS or ambulance station, two police stations, and three fire stations. These locations are spaced evenly throughout the county but are clustered primarily in the boroughs of the county.

A pandemic can vastly impact historic resources by disrupting routine maintenance, leading to physical deterioration of structures and artifacts. The closure of cultural institutions, including museums and archives, hinders public access and educational activities. Economic downturns may reduce funding for preservation efforts, while a decline in tourism threatens the financial sustainability of historic sites. Community engagement may suffer if events and traditional practices are disrupted, affecting the transmission of cultural knowledge.

### **Municipalities with high risk due to pandemic, epidemic, and infectious diseases:**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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During a public health emergency, the PA DOH may open emergency medicine centers called points of dispensing (PODs) to ensure that medicine, supplies, vaccines, and information reach Pennsylvania residents during a public health emergency. An open POD is where the general public goes to receive free emergency medicine and supplies from public health officials, while a closed POD provides free emergency medicine and supplies to a specific community, like a university, including faculty, staff, and students. Dispensing of medications/vaccines is a core function of the Strategic National Stockpile's Mass Dispensing of Medical Countermeasures Plan.

PODs are coordinated with county emergency managers by the PA DOH with the six regional healthcare districts (see *Figure 31- Pennsylvania Department of Health Districts*). Forest County is in the northwest region.

Land use and land development could directly impact the vulnerability of Forest County to pandemic, epidemic, and infectious disease. Development of forested and rural areas could result in populations coming into direct contact with vectors for infectious disease including, most prominently, Lyme Disease and West Nile Virus. When areas that are rural and natural habitats for wildlife are developed, those vectors that live along and with wildlife have the potential to come into contact with the individuals developing the properties and the populations that will occupy or live in those areas. An increase in development could also lead to an increase in the number of individuals living in Forest County, increasing the county's vulnerability to pandemic events, like COVID-19.

Climate change can significantly impact the dynamics of pandemics, epidemics, and infectious diseases. Rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns can expand the geographic range of disease vectors, such as mosquitoes carrying diseases like malaria and dengue fever. Changes in climate can also affect the behavior and distribution of animal hosts, potentially facilitating the transmission of zoonotic diseases to humans. Extreme weather events, intensified by climate change, can also disrupt healthcare systems and infrastructure, hindering the response to outbreaks. Additionally, shifts in temperature and humidity can influence the survival and spread of pathogens, potentially leading to the emergence of new infectious diseases. Overall, climate change exacerbates the complexity and challenges of managing and preventing pandemics and epidemics, making it crucial to address both environmental and public health concerns in a coordinated manner to mitigate the impact on global health.

Population changes can directly impact the vulnerability of Forest County to pandemic events, like COVID-19. With increased populations there is a greater risk of the spread of communicable diseases, especially in areas where the population density is high. There is one municipality in Forest County that has seen an increase in population between 2010 and 2020. This information is shown in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, Forest County should monitor population growth in the boroughs and cities of the county. The socially vulnerable populations

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

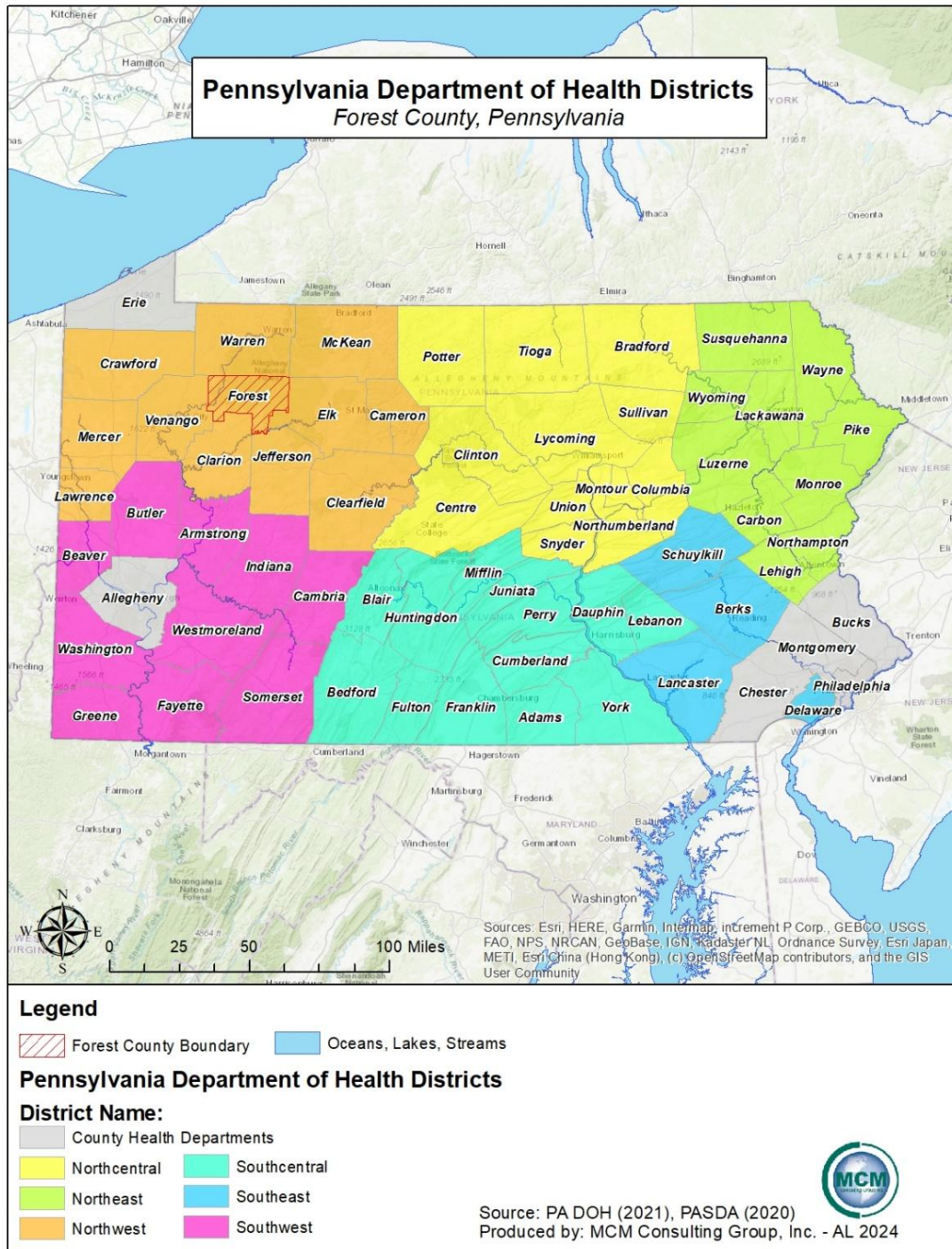
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in Forest County are at a higher vulnerability of pandemic, epidemic, and infectious diseases than lesser vulnerable populations. This is due to lack of health care services for homeless, unsheltered, and transient populations in Forest County and the difficulty in receiving treatment for health issues stemming from pandemics, epidemics, and infectious diseases. The national social vulnerability index for Forest County from CDC/ATSDR (Center for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) is 0.697 which represents a medium to high level of vulnerability.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 31 - Pennsylvania Department of Health Districts





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.11. Radon Exposure**

##### **4.3.11.1 Location and Extent**

Airborne radon gas is radioactive and is a step in the radioactive decay of uranium to radium. Radon is a noble gas, cannot be seen, and has no odor. Like other noble gasses, radon gas is very stable, so it does not easily combine with other chemicals. Two isotopes of radon are commonly found:  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and  $^{220}\text{Rn}$ . The  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  isotope has a very short half-life, so it often only exists for fifty-five seconds, not long enough to pose a hazard to humans. The  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  isotope has a half-life of 3.8 days which is long enough to pose a threat to humans. Still, due to the relatively short half-life of  $^{222}\text{Rn}$ , it only exists in relative proximity to its radioactive parent, usually within tens of feet away. Radon is a carcinogen and when inhaled, it can lead to the development of lung cancer.

Radioactivity, caused by airborne radon, has been recognized for many years as an important component in the natural background radioactivity exposure of humans, but it was not until the 1980s that the wide geographic distribution of elevated values in houses and the possibility of extremely high radon values in houses were recognized. Radon was discovered as a significant source of natural radiation for humans in 1984 in the Reading Prong geologic province in Eastern Pennsylvania, when routine monitoring of employees leaving the not yet active Limerick nuclear power plant showed readings that a construction worker working on the plant frequently exceeded expected radiation levels despite the fact that the plant was not active. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines state that mitigation actions should be taken if levels exceed 4 pCi/L in a home, and most uranium miners have a maximum exposure of 67 pCi/L. Subsequent testing of the Limerick power plant worker's home showed high radon levels of 2,500 pCi/L (pico Curies per Liter), triggering the Reading Prong to become the focus of the first large-scale radon scare.

Radon gas is considered ubiquitous and can be found in indoor and outdoor environments. There is no known safe level of exposure to radon. For most people in Pennsylvania, the greatest risk of radon exposure is from within their home in rooms that are below, directly in contact with, or immediately above the ground. Sources of radon include radon in the air from soil and rock beneath homes, radon dissolved in water from private wells and exsolved during water use (rare in Pennsylvania), and radon emanating from uranium-rich building materials such as concrete blocks or gypsum wallboard (also rare in Pennsylvania). Key factors in radon concentration in homes are the rates of air flow into and out of the house, the location of air inflow, and the radon content of air in the surrounding soil. Because of the flow dynamics of air inside of most houses, even a small rate of soil radon gas inflow can lead to elevated radon concentrations.

There are several factors that contribute to higher radon levels in soil gas:

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Proximity to elevated uranium rich deposits (>50ppm). Areas within a few hundred feet of such deposits are most at risk. Such deposits are rare in Pennsylvania.
- Some more common rocks have higher than average uranium content (5 to 50 ppm), and proximity to such rocks also increases the risk of radon exposure. These rock types include black shales as well as granitic and felsic alkali igneous rocks. This is the most common source of high radon levels in Pennsylvania. The Reading Prong elevated radon levels come from Precambrian granitic gneisses.
- Other soil and bedrock properties that facilitate radon mobility. The amount of pore space in the soil and its permeability – more porous soils will allow radon to travel more easily. Limestone-dolomite soils can also be predisposed to collect radon from radium resultant from weathering of iron oxide or clay surfaces. In some cases (like State College in Centre County, PA) even with underlying bedrock having normal uranium concentrations (.5 to 5 ppm), the vast majority of locations built on limestone-dolomite soils exceed radon concentrations of 4pCi/L, and many exceeded 20 pCi/L.

The following three sources of radon in houses are now recognized (see *Figure 32 - Sketch of Radon Entry Points into a House* below):

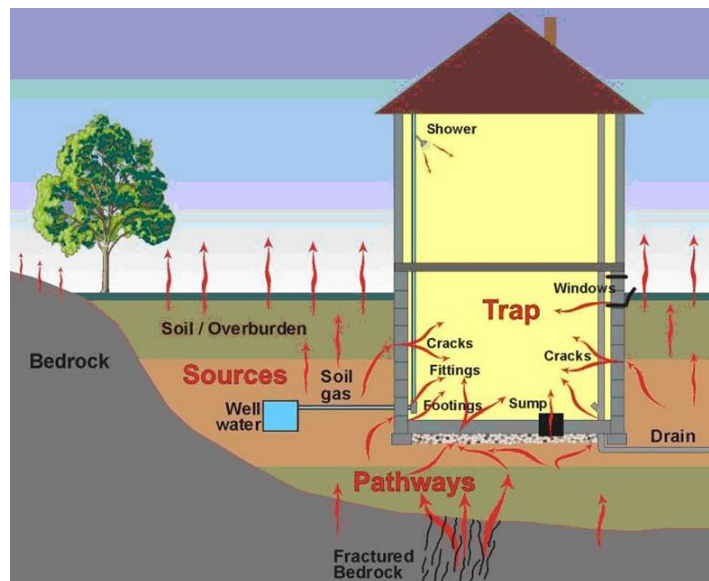
- Radon in soil air that flows into the house.
- Radon dissolved in water from private wells and exsolved during water usage; this is rarely a problem in Pennsylvania.
- Radon emanating from uranium-rich building materials (e.g., concrete blocks or gypsum wallboard); this is not known to be a problem in Pennsylvania.

High radon levels were initially thought to be exacerbated in houses that are tightly sealed, but it is now recognized that rates of airflow into and out of houses, plus the location of air inflow and the radon content of air in the surrounding soil, are key factors in radon concentrations. Outflows of air from a house, caused by a furnace, fan, thermal “chimney” effect, or wind effects, require that air be drawn into the house to compensate. If the upper part of the house is tight enough to impede influx of outdoor air (where radon concentration is generally <0.1 pCi/L), then an appreciable fraction of the air may be drawn in from the soil or fractured bedrock through the foundation and slab beneath the house, or through cracks and openings for pipes, sumps, and similar features. Soil gas typically contains from a few hundred to a few thousand pCi/L of radon; therefore, even a small rate of soil gas inflow can lead to elevated radon concentrations in a house.

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

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Figure 32 - Sketch of Radon Entry Points into a House



The radon concentration of soil gas depends upon a number of soil properties, the importance of which is still being evaluated. In general, 10% to 50% of newly formed radon atoms escape the host mineral of their parent radium and gain access to the air-filled pore space. The radon content of soil gas clearly tends to be higher in soils containing higher levels of radium and uranium, especially if the radium occupies a site on or near the surface of a grain from which the radon can easily escape. The amount of pore space in the soil and its permeability for airflow, including cracks and channels, are important factors determining radon concentration in soil gas and its rate of flow into a house. Soil depth and moisture content, mineral host and form for radium, and other soil properties may also be important. For houses built on bedrock, fractured zones may supply air having radon concentrations similar to those in deep soil.

The second factor listed above is most likely the cause of high radon levels in Forest County. The data show that most reported zip codes in the county have moderate basement radon level test results. The areas and test results are shown in more detail in the past occurrence section.

### 4.3.11.2 Range of Magnitude

According to the EPA, about 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S. are related to radon. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking and the number one cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. Radon causes lung cancer by continuing radioactive decay after being inhaled, and turning into a daughter product ( $^{218}\text{Po}$ ,  $^{214}\text{Pb}$ ,  $^{214}\text{Bi}$ ) which may become attached to lung tissue and induce lung cancer due to the continued radioactive decay.

The EPA reports that the national average radon concentration of indoor air of homes is about 1.3 pCi/L, and they recommend that homes be fixed if the radon level is 4pCi/L or more. There

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

is, however, no safe level of radon exposure, so the EPA also recommends considering fixing a home if the radon level is between 2 pCi/L and 4 pCi/L.

*Table 41 - Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers* shows the relationship between various radon levels, probability of lung cancer, comparable risks from other hazards, and action thresholds. As seen in *Table 41 - Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers* below, a smoker exposed to radon has a much higher risk of lung cancer.

*Table 41 - Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers*

Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers			
Radon Level (pCi/L)	If 1,000 People Were Exposed to this level over a lifetime...*	Risk of cancer from radon exposure compares to...***	Action Threshold
SMOKERS			
20	About 260 people could get lung cancer	250 times the risk of drowning	Fix Structure
10	About 150 people could get lung cancer	200 times the risk of dying in a home fire	
8	About 120 people could get lung cancer	30 times the risk of dying in a fall	
4	About 62 people could get lung cancer	5 times the risk of dying in a car crash	
2	About 32 people could get lung cancer	6 times the risk of dying from poison	Consider fixing structure between 2 and 4 pCi/L
1.3	About 20 people could get lung cancer	(Average indoor radon level)	Reducing radon levels below 2pCi/L is difficult
0.4	About 3 people could get lung cancer	(Average outdoor radon level)	
NON-SMOKERS			
20	About 36 people could get lung cancer	35 times the risk of drowning	Fix Structure
10	About 18 people could get lung cancer	20 times the risk of dying in a home fire	
8	About 15 people could get lung cancer	4 times the risk of dying in a fall	

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Radon Risk for Smokers and Nonsmokers			
Radon Level (pCi/L)	If 1,000 People Were Exposed to this level over a lifetime...*	Risk of cancer from radon exposure compares to...***	Action Threshold
4	About 7 people could get lung cancer	The risk of dying in a car crash	
2	About 4 people could get lung cancer	The risk of dying from poison	Consider fixing structure between 2 and 4 pCi/L
1.3	About 2 people could get lung cancer	(Average indoor radon level)	Reducing radon levels below 2pCi/L is difficult
0.4	-	(Average outdoor radon level)	
Note: Risk may be lower for former smokers			
* Lifetime risk of lung cancer deaths from EPA Assessment of Risks from Radon in Homes (EPA 402-R-03-003).			
** Comparison data calculated using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1999-2001 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Reports.			

### **4.3.11.3 Past Occurrence**

In 1984, the Pennsylvania Radon Bureau responded to the newly detected high radon levels with a massive radon monitoring, educational, and remediation effort. In the start of November 1986, over 18,000 homes had been screened for radon and approximately 59% were found to have radon daughter levels in excess of the 0.020 Working Level (WL) guideline. Radon daughter levels ranged up to 13 WL or 2600 pCi/L or radon gas.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) provides information for homeowners about how to test for radon in their homes, and when they receive a test result over 4 pCi/L, the PA DEP Bureau of Radiation Protection works to help homeowners repair the home and mitigate the hazard. The DEP has estimated that the national average indoor radon concentration is 1.3 pCi/L and the level for action is 4.0 pCi/L; however, they have estimated that the average indoor concentration in Pennsylvania basements is about 7.1 pCi/L and 3.6 pCi/L on the first floor. The PA DEP records all the tests they receive and categorize them in a searchable database by zip code. There are currently 2,174 zip codes in Pennsylvania, but the zip code radon test data only covers 986 zip codes. The missing zip codes that report in the database as “N/A” for insufficient data either had fewer than thirty test results or no test results at all.

*Table 42 – Radon Test Results in Forest County* shows a total of five zip codes in Forest County where tests were reported to the PA DEP to report their findings; those with no available data were not included in the table. The highest average radon level was reported from the 16353-zip

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

code, which is in the Tionesta area of the county, with an average reading of 15.6 pCi/L within location of the basement. Most reporting zip codes in Forest County have average basement Radon levels significantly above the suggested EPA action level of 4 pCi/L. The average basement reading for reporting zip codes in the county is 9.96 pCi/L, and there is insufficient data for the average first floor reading.

*Table 42 - Radon Test Results in Forest County*

Radon Level Test Results (PA DEP, 2020)					
Zip Code	Postal Community	Location	Number of Tests	Max Result pCi/L	Average Result pCi/L
16239	Marienville	Basement	55	152.3	11.7
		First Floor	32	24.9	3.5
16341	Pleasantville	Basement	51	99.9	8.6
		First Floor	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
16347	Sheffield	Basement	42	84.2	5.3
		First Floor	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
16353	Tionesta	Basement	90	206.9	15.6
		First Floor	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
16364	Venus	Basement	164	65.4	8.6
		First Floor	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data
Source: PA DEP, 2024					

### **4.3.11.4 Future Occurrence**

Radon exposure is likely given the geologic and geomorphic conditions in Forest County. The EPA and USGS have mapped radon potential in the US to help target resources and assist local governments in determining if radon-resistant features are applicable for new construction. The designations are broken down in three zones and are assigned by county, as shown in *Figure 33 – Pennsylvania Radon Levels*. Each zone reflects the average short-term measurement of radon that can be expected in a building without radon controls. Forest County is located within Zone Two with counties of moderate potential for radon which indicate an intermediate likelihood of occurrence in the future.

1. Zone 1 has the highest potential and readings can be expected to exceed the 4 pCi/L recommended limit.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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2. Zone 2 has a moderate potential for radon with levels expected to be between 2 and 4 pCi/L and
3. Zone 3 has a low potential with levels expected to be less than 2 pCi/L.

Due to the moderate likelihood of future occurrence, the level of radon daughters should be monitored. Radon daughters are the concentration of decay products of radon in the uranium chain. Fortunately, the presence of radon daughters can be monitored through the means as radon gas. *Table 43 - Suggested Actions and Time Frame for Exposure to Radon Daughters* provides suggested actions and time frames for varying levels of exposure to radon daughters.

*Table 43 - Suggested Actions and Time Frame for Exposures to Radon Daughters*

<b>Suggested Actions and Timeframe for Exposure to Radon Daughters</b>		
<b>Exposure Level*</b>	<b>Suggested Action**</b>	<b>Timeframe For Plan</b>
more than 5.0 WL***	Residents should either promptly relocate or undertake temporary remedial action to lower levels as far below 5.0 WL as possible. Smoking in high areas discouraged.	Within 2-3 days
1.0 to 5.0 WL	Residents should undertake temporary remedial action to lower levels as far below 1.0 WL as possible. Smoking in high areas discouraged.	Within 1 week
0.5 to 1.0 WL	Residents should undertake temporary remedial action to lower levels as far below 0.5 WL as possible.	Within 2 weeks
0.1 to 0.5 WL	Residents should undertake temporary remedial action to lower levels as far below 0.1 WL as possible. Higher exposure levels require action to be taken in a shorter	3 weeks to 3 months
0.02 to 0.1 WL	Residents should undertake temporary and/or permanent remedial action to lower levels below 0.02 WL. Higher exposure levels require action to be taken in a shorter	4 to 15 months

Climate change will have minor impacts on radon exposure in Forest County, if any. Climate change will have an increased impact on the vulnerability of individuals to radon if those individuals live in an area where permafrost is a feature of the climate. With rising global temperatures, permafrost can melt, resulting in increased soil and bedrock erosion. This can result in higher rates of radon exposure. This is of primary concern to those areas located in the northern latitudes and will not have a significant impact on the bedrock or soils of Forest County. It is possible that climate change could impact soil and bedrock erosion rates in Forest County, but these impacts would be minor or unknown, at this time.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.11.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Proper testing for radon levels should be conducted across Forest County, especially in the areas of higher incidence levels, and for those individuals and households that are susceptible to the contributing risks. This testing will determine the level of vulnerability that residents face in their homes, as well as in their businesses and schools.

Forest County is in the EPA Radon Hazard Zone Two, meaning there is a moderate risk of radon exposure. Smokers can be up to ten times more vulnerable to lung cancer from high levels of radon depending on the level of radon to which they are exposed. Additionally, older homes that have crawl spaces or unfinished basements are more vulnerable to high radon levels. Average basement radon levels for homes that reported their results to the PA DEP are often found to be above the EPA action level of 4 pCi/L. *Figure 34 – Radon Levels by Zip Code* shows the best available data from the EPA about the percentage of homes with radon levels at, or above, the EPA action level. The EPA estimates that an average radon mitigation system costs approximately \$1,200.00. The PA DEP Bureau of Radiation Protection provides short- and long-term tests to determine radon levels, as well as information on how to mitigate high levels of radon in buildings. The 2023 PA HMP estimates that there are 3,161 vulnerable buildings in Forest County that are in areas with high radon test results, and the cost to mitigate the most impacted of those buildings (an estimated 20% of them or 632 buildings) would be \$758,640.00.

The historic properties in Forest County are at varying levels of risk to radon levels. Tionesta is in an area that has had at least an average of 12 pCi/L based on tests reported to the state of Pennsylvania.

The cultural resources in Forest County could be adversely impacted by radon exposure. The areas that underlay in Forest County have previous average radon levels between 3.6 pCi/L and 15.7 pCi/L. If these locations have not been properly mitigated, the visitors to these locations could be at risk of radon exposure, even for a short time.

The direct hazard to radon exposure at these locations is not related to the buildings, but to the individuals who live, work, visit, and maintain these structures.

The vulnerability of natural areas to radon exposure is negligible. Since radon exposure typically is a natural hazard to humans when in enclosed spaces, and over a large portion of time, natural areas are at a lower risk. Most individuals doing activities outdoors and are usually not stationary for hours and days. The local parks, state game lands, state forests, and state parks are at low risk and low vulnerability.

Municipalities with an increased risk of radon exposure (with areas with a basement pCi/L over 11.7):

- Barnett Township

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

Municipalities without an increased risk of radon exposure (with areas with a basement pCi/L under 11.7):

- None

Socially vulnerable populations in Forest County are at an increased vulnerability to radon exposure than other groups in Forest County. Approximately 25% of the population of Forest County is in poverty, and those individuals may be located in areas of high radon risk. Those individuals may also be unable to purchase or install radon remediation kits and systems due to economic factors. Information from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection states that installing a radon reduction system can cost between \$500.00 to \$2,000.00 with the average costing \$1,000.00 (PA DEP, 2023). Radon exposure may also impact the health of those considered to be socially vulnerable. With unequal access or opportunity to health care, potential health effects related to radon exposure can go unreported and unaddressed in socially vulnerable populations.

Population changes, especially any increase in population, in Forest County pose an increased risk to vulnerability of radon exposure to individuals in each municipality. Between the 2010 and the 2020 US Census, one municipality in Forest County experienced population growth which is Jenks Township. This increase can be seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*. Another risk to radon exposure due to population changes could occur from people moving into structures with basements that have been empty for extended periods of time or converting camps into homesteads. Education about the dangers of radon exposure should occur at the municipal level when existing homes are purchased. New construction can be built with radon prevention systems in place costing between \$500.00 to \$2,000.00 per building.

Land use could result in more rapid radon exposure if the areas being used for different land uses are over areas of high radon levels. If new land use results in exposure of the bedrock to weathering, increased radon exposure and leakage will occur. This could include the development of new or commercial properties in an area. New development may be built and constructed with radon reduction systems already in place, reducing the vulnerability for each new location with these systems. New development may have clean aggregate in construction,

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

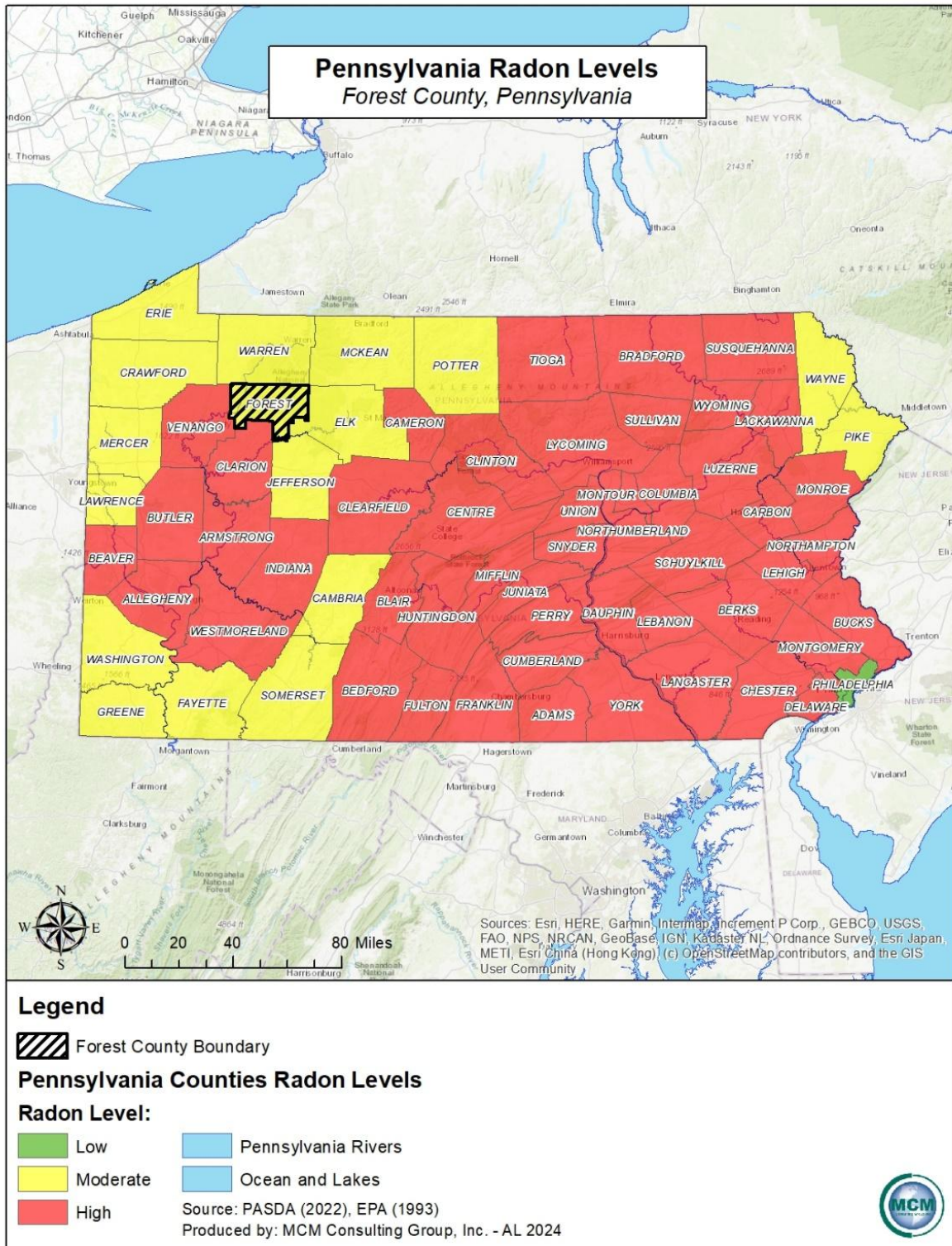
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pipings below the foundation slab, sealing of openings in foundations, or electric boxes in the attic for radon reduction system fans (PA DEP, 2023).

Radon can impact Forest County infrastructure systems by accelerating corrosion in metal components of buildings such as steel reinforcements in concrete, leading to weakening of structural elements over time. This corrosion can compromise the stability of bridges, tunnels, and other critical infrastructure. Additionally, radon-induced degradation of building materials like concrete can cause cracks, spalling, and overall degradation of structural integrity. Radon can infiltrate underground utility tunnels that can corrode pipes, conduits and electrical wiring which can lead to the potential of leaks and electric failures. Radon has the ability to compromise both structural and operational functions of infrastructure system.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

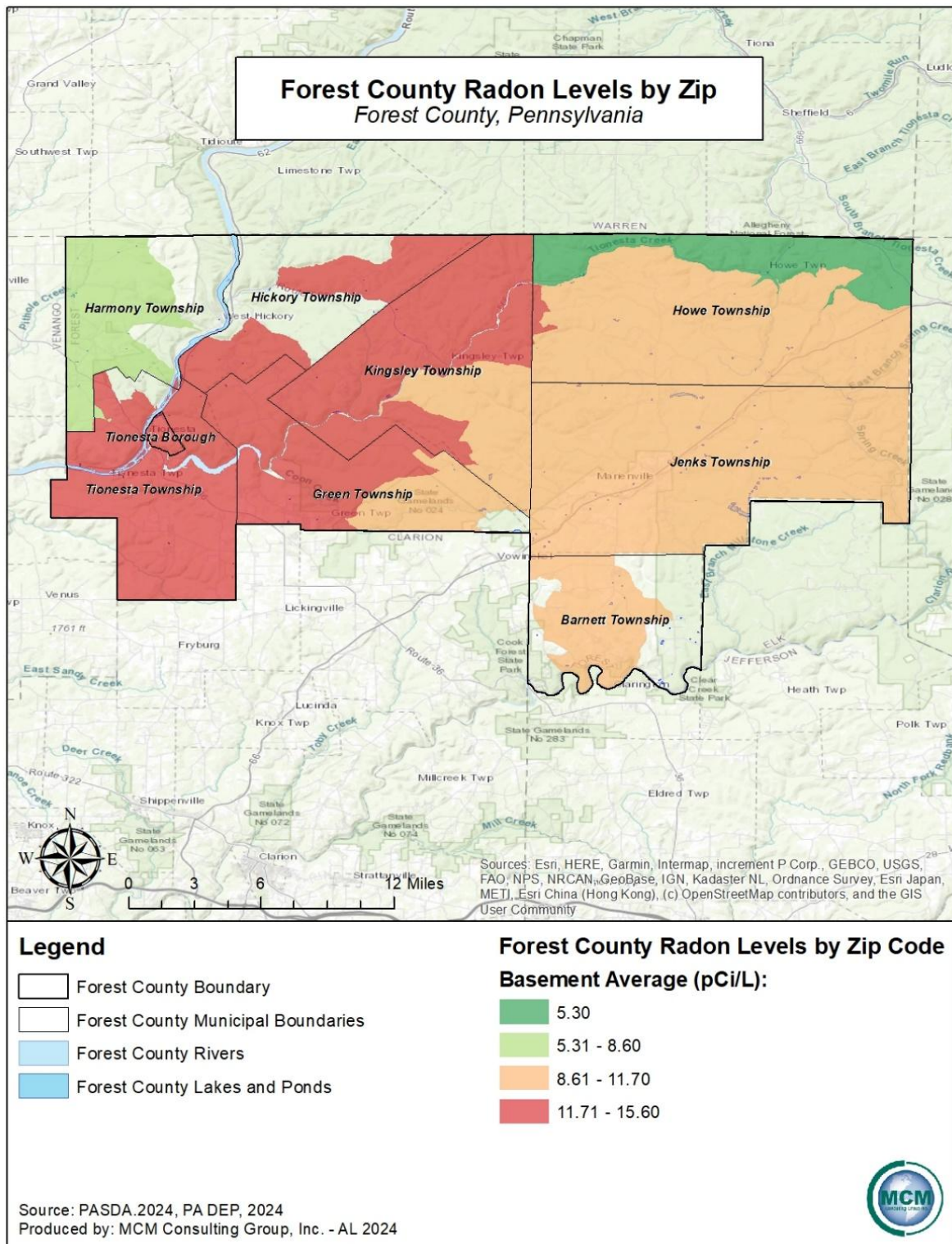
Figure 33 - Pennsylvania Radon Levels





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 34 - Radon Levels by Zip Code





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.12. Subsidence and Sinkhole**

#### **4.3.12.1 Location and Extent**

Subsidence is the sinking movement of the earth's surface; the result of this movement is commonly referred to as a sinkhole. There are two common causes of subsidence in Pennsylvania: 1) dissolution of carbonate rock such as limestone or dolomite and 2) mining activity. In the first case, water passing through naturally occurring fractures and bedding planes dissolves bedrock leaving voids below the surface. Eventually, overburden on top of those voids collapses, leaving surface depressions resulting in what is known as karst topography. Characteristic structures associated with karst topography include sinkholes, linear depressions, and caves. Often, sub-surface solutions of limestone will not result in the immediate formation of karst features. Collapse sometimes occurs only after a large amount of activity, or when a heavy burden is placed on overlying material. The bedrock geology is found mostly in the south-central and eastern portions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Forest County is not located in a karst vulnerable area. Subsidence in Forest County is potentially due to past mining activity that has occurred. This plan will focus on both carbonate rock and past mining activity.

Mining activity is concentrated in the southwestern region of the state. The majority of sub-surface (i.e., underground) extraction of materials such as oil, gas, coal, metal ores (i.e., copper, iron, and zinc), clay, shale, limestone, or water can result in slow-moving or abrupt shifts in the ground surface and these areas have a higher potential to be impacted by sinkholes and subsidence. Sinkholes often develop where the cover above a mine is thin. Sinkhole development normally occurs where the interval to the ground surface is less than three to five times the thickness of the extracted seam and the maximum interval is up to ten times the thickness of the extracted seam. In western Pennsylvania, most sinkholes develop where the soil and rock above a mine are less than fifty feet thick.

Human activity can also result in subsidence or sinkhole events. Leaking water pipes or structures that convey storm-water runoff may result in areas of subsidence as the water dissolves substantial amounts of rock over time. Poorly managed stormwater can be an exacerbating factor in subsidence events. In some cases, construction, land grading, or earthmoving activities that cause changes in stormwater flow can trigger sinkhole events.

#### **4.3.12.2 Range of Magnitude**

No two subsidence areas or sinkholes are exactly alike. Variations in size and shape, time period under which they occur (i.e., gradually, or abruptly), and the proximity to development ultimately determine the magnitude of damage incurred. Events could result in minor elevation changes or deep, gaping holes in the surface. Subsidence and sinkhole events can be addressed before significant damage occurs.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Primarily, problems related to subsidence include the disruption of utility services and damages to private and public property including buildings, roads, and underground infrastructure. Isolated incidents of subsidence throughout the coal regions over the past years have affected houses, garages, and trees that have been swallowed up by subsidence holes. Lengths of local streets and highways, and countless building foundations have been damaged.

If long-term subsident or sinkhole formation is not recognized and mitigation measures are not implemented, fractures or complete collapse of building foundations and roadways may result. The worst-case scenario of a mine subsidence event for Forest County would be similar to an event in Allegheny County in 2013, when sixty-nine homes in Hyde Park sustained mine subsidence damage. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection responded to the subsidence by filling the mine voids at a cost of \$3.7 million. If mitigation measures are not taken, the cost to fill in and stabilize sinkholes can be significant although sinkholes are limited in range of magnitude.

Voids in the earth's subsurface are created where coal was previously mined and removed. The condition removes a significant portion of the support of the overlying rock strata that usually causes the rock strata to fall or subside into the voids that may damage dwellings or other surface structures above the affected areas. Mining locations across the county should be carefully noted and avoided as sites for new construction unless the proper measures are taken to ensure the mine's soundness.

The Forest County local planning team assigned a risk factor assessment score of 1.6 to subsidence and sinkhole formation. This places the hazard at a low level risk factor. *Figure 35 – Sinkhole Susceptibility in Pennsylvania* illustrates the portions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania where sinkholes and subsidence are common. The hazard for subsidence and sinkholes in these regions is very low. Forest County has a small portion of mining areas.

### **4.3.12.3 Past Occurrence**

There is no comprehensive list of mine subsidence in Forest County. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) provides an online sinkhole inventory database, which lists a total of 3,619 identified sinkholes in Pennsylvania as of 2024. Of these sinkholes zero fall within Forest County. The fact that no sinkholes were identified does not necessarily mean there are no sinkholes in Forest County. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection indicates that some small incidences of sinkholes occur several times per week and cause limited damage and that many of these are related to failing infrastructure like water main breaks or collapsed pipes.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.12.4 Future Occurrence**

There is currently no reliable information regarding the probability of future occurrence of subsidence or sinkholes in Pennsylvania. One way of estimating the probability of future occurrences would be to project the historical trends into the future, but there is no comprehensive documentation of previous events in Forest County. The PA DEP has noted that mine subsidence events are constant though they vary in intensity and damage. Based on geological conditions and mining activities in Forest County, the annual occurrence of subsidence and sinkholes near karst topography and where mining occurs is considered unlikely. Although precise locations of future occurrences is difficult to predict due to site-specific conditions that contribute to sinkhole development, there are several signs that can signal potential development.

The signs include:

- Slumping or falling fence posts, trees, or foundations.
- Sudden formation of small ponds.
- Wilting vegetation.
- Discolored well water.
- Structural cracks in walls and/or floors.

Based on geological conditions and mining activity, subsidence events are unlikely to occur in Forest County. If land development and mining were to occur in an area that is unstable or unsafe, a subsidence event or sinkhole is likely to form. *Figure 36 – Unsuitable Areas for Mining in Pennsylvania* illustrates the areas of Pennsylvania where mining could potentially cause a subsidence event or a sinkhole. A very small number of these areas that are unsuitable for mining are located in and around Forest County. *Figure 36 – Forest County Unsuitable Areas for Mining* shows the areas in more detail in Forest County where the land is unsuitable for future development.

Climate change may increase the frequency of subsidence in Forest County. Climate change could result in more intense rainfall from more frequent hurricanes and tropical storms, or it could result in hot, dry areas becoming increasingly dry. The increase in precipitation could result in ground swelling, due to soils that contain clay minerals absorbing the rainfall. This swelling is seen as an increase in vertical land motion, while shrinking is the decrease in vertical land motion. Shrinking occurs when there are high temperatures that cause the land to dry out, resulting in more movement in the soil, which can be seen as a gradual settling or sudden sinking of Earth's surface. The combination of shrinking and swelling could increase with climate change and ultimately increase the frequency of subsidence and sinkholes in Forest County.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.12.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Areas of the county where commercial mining operations take place are the most vulnerable to subsidence and sinkhole hazards. Natural subsidence and sinkholes have never been reported in Forest County. A mined area may be differentially prone to subsidence based on its geology and depth of mineral seam, but reliable information about the different locations of varying depths of seams are not available. Geologists agree that all areas that are mined are prone to subsidence; therefore, coal mined areas are shown as vulnerable to mine subsidence.

Most of the mining that has occurred in Forest County was superficial mining of natural resources. The mine sites were abandoned after extraction can potentially become areas susceptible to subsidence events. Subsidence cannot be ruled out as a potential hazard for Forest County. There are no state or county critical infrastructure facilities at risk in the county due to sinkholes.

There are no abandoned mine areas in Forest County and there are no community lifeline or critical infrastructure within 500 feet of any mined areas.

#### **Municipalities with the highest risk of subsidence or sinkholes (abandoned mine areas and areas unsuitable for mining):**

- None

#### **Municipalities with an increased risk of subsidence or sinkholes (abandoned mine areas):**

- None

#### **Municipalities without an increased risk of subsidence or sinkholes (no abandoned mine areas):**

- Barnett Township
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

Underserved, unserved, and socially vulnerable populations face heightened impacts from subsidence and sinkholes. Limited resources often result in substandard infrastructure, exacerbating susceptibility to ground collapse. Housing in these areas is prone to structural damage, posing threats to lives and livelihoods. Displacement becomes a critical concern as

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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sinkholes disrupt communities, challenging access to safe shelter. Vulnerable populations may lack the financial means for adequate recovery, perpetuating economic hardships.

Population change can increase the impacts of subsidence or sinkholes in Forest County. Forest County has one municipality out of nine that had a population increase between the 2010 and the 2020 US Census. This population change can also be seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*. Based on this information, it can be speculated that no municipalities in Forest County have had an increased/equivalent risk to subsidence and sinkholes since 2010.

Current land use in Forest County can affect the vulnerability of the county to subsidence and sinkholes. Impervious surfaces allow pollutants from aerial and terrestrial sources to accumulate. During stormwater runoff, these pollutants will run into stormwater drains and directly to local waterbodies. When impervious surfaces increase, so does the quantity, speed, temperature, and pollutant load of the storm water runoff.

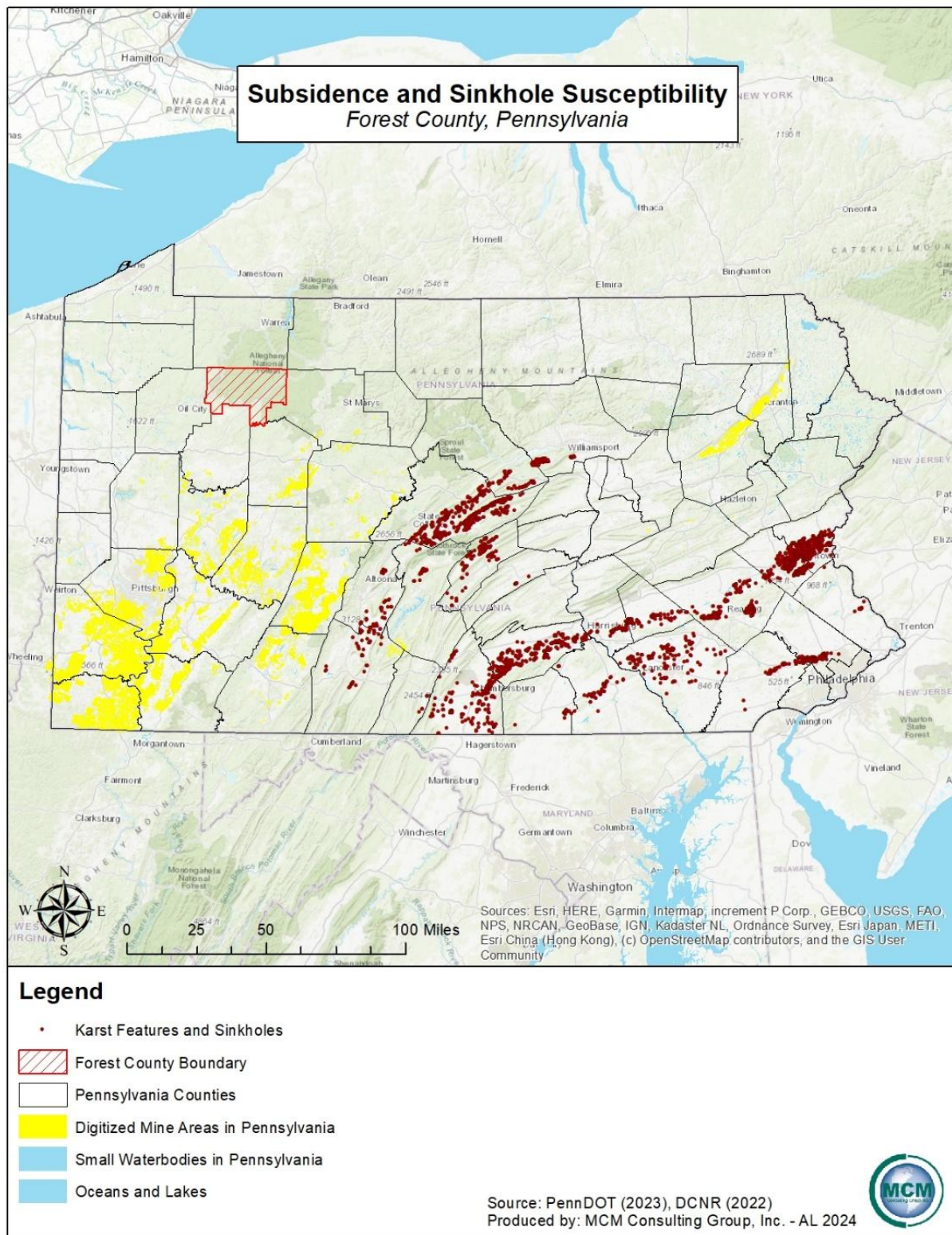
Subsidence and sinkholes present dual threats to both natural and cultural areas. Ecologically, these alter landscapes, compromising soil stability and disrupting ecosystems. Sinkholes can swallow habitats, impacting land use for the county. Culturally, the collapse of terrain endangers heritage sites, structures, and artifacts, erasing historical landscapes. Subsidence may threaten traditional agricultural practices linked to specific terrains.

Subsidence and sinkhole events can also pose a threat to systems within Forest County. Some systems that may be affected by subsidence and sinkhole events are natural gas, water, and the numerous other materials and chemicals transported through underground water systems in Forest County. During significant subsidence and sinkhole events, underground pipelines may crack, causing the transported material to leak into the ground and contaminating water sources in the county. Even in more contained scenarios, a small leak can have profound impact if the transported material is toxic or hazardous in nature, leading to degradation of the natural resources in the impacted communities. Subsidence and sinkhole events can also cause above ground localized transportation issues if an event were to occur along a transportation route through Forest County. This can cause a delay in daily transportation and may require alternate transportation routes to be established for an extended period of time.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

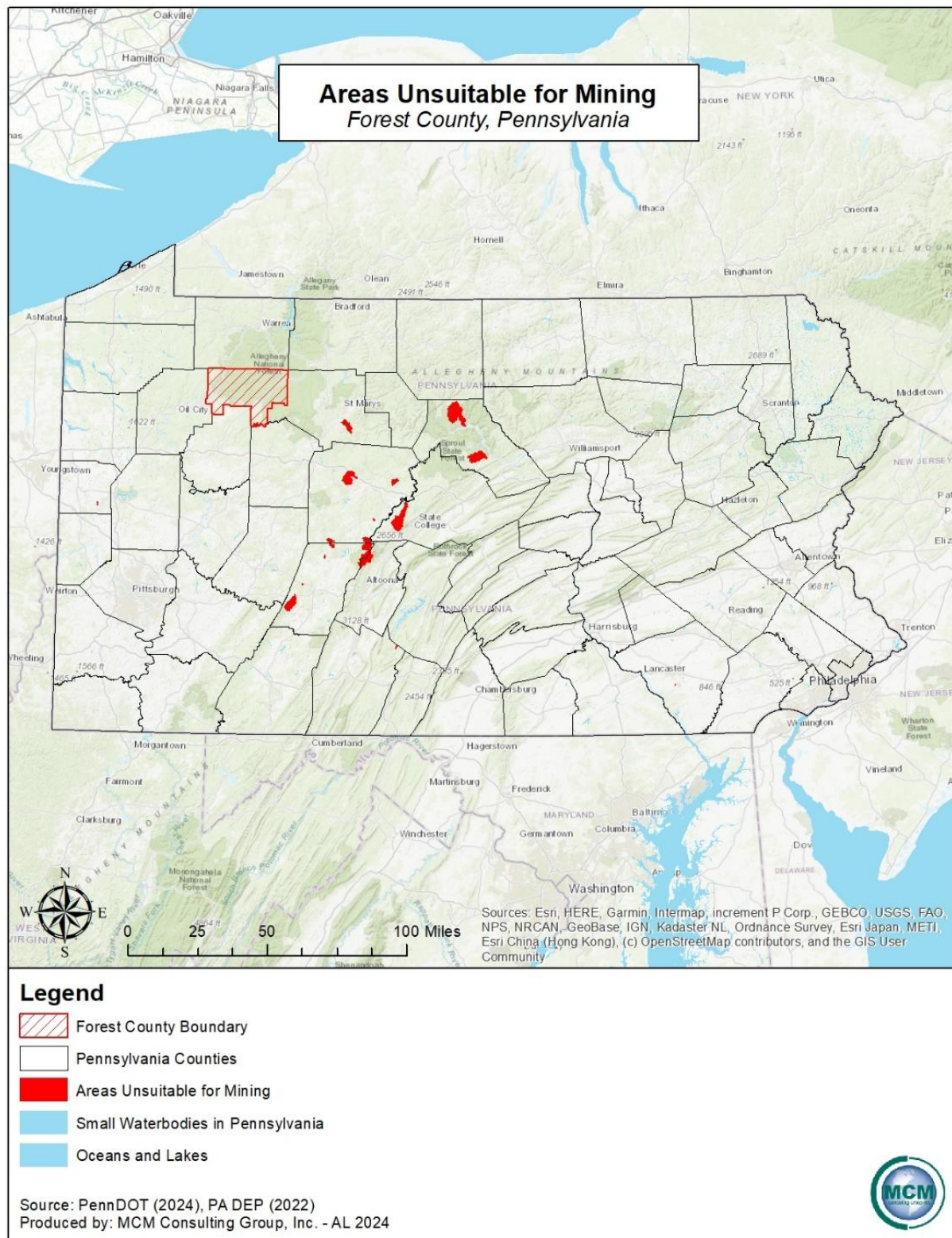
Figure 35 - Sinkhole Susceptibility in Pennsylvania





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 36 - Unsuitable Areas for Mining in Pennsylvania



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.13. Tornadoes/Windstorm**

#### **4.3.13.1 Location and Extent**

Tornadoes and windstorms can occur throughout Forest County and are usually localized in their location and extent. Severe thunderstorms may result in conditions favorable for the formation of windstorms, including tornadoes. Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms and can cause fatalities and devastation to neighborhoods and municipalities within the county and region. Tornadoes can occur at any time during the day or night but are most frequent during the late afternoon and early evening, which are typically the warmest hours of the day. Tornadoes are most likely to occur in the spring and summer.

#### **Tornadoes**

There are two main types of tornadoes: supercell and non-supercell. Supercell tornadoes are the most common and often the most dangerous type of tornado. A rotating updraft is key to the development of a supercell and, eventually, a tornado. Once the updraft is rotating and being fed by warm air, a tornado is formed. The other type of tornado is categorized as non-supercell, which is not as common as a supercell tornado. One type of non-supercell tornado is the "Quasi-Linear Convective Systems" (QLCS). The QLCS tornadoes typically arise during the late night or early morning hours and are typically weaker and more short-lived than supercell tornadoes. However, QLCS are more difficult to detect effectively. Another type of non-supercell tornado is a landspout. These tornadoes are narrow, rope-like funnels that form when a thundercloud grows without a rotating updraft, which causes the spinning motion common with tornadoes to appear near the ground.

#### **Windstorms**

Windstorms are experienced on a region-wide scale. The most frequent cause of windstorms in Pennsylvania are thunderstorms, although they may also be caused by hurricanes and winter storms. Windstorms are defined as sustained wind speeds of 40 mph or greater, lasting for at least one hour, or winds of 58 mph or greater lasting for any duration. There are a wide variety of windstorm events that can take place in Forest County.

#### **4.3.13.2 Range of Magnitude**

#### **Tornadoes**

Each year tornadoes account for \$1.1 billion in damages and cause over eighty deaths nationally. Thus far, 2011 was the second worst year on record for deadly tornadoes behind 1936. The number of tornado reports has increased since 1950. While the extent of tornado damage is usually localized, the vortex of extreme wind associated with a tornado can result in some of the most destructive forces on Earth. The damage caused by a tornado is a result of the high-wind velocity and windblown debris, also accompanied by lightning or large hail. The most violent

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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tornadoes have rotating winds of 250 mph or more and are capable of causing extreme destruction and turning normally harmless objects into deadly projectiles.

Tornado movement is characterized in two ways: direction/speed of spinning winds and the forward movement of the tornado, also known as the storm track. The rotational wind speeds can range from 65 to more than 200 miles per hour (mph). The speed of forward motion can range from 0 mph to 50 mph. Forward motion of a tornado path can be a few to several hundred miles in length. Widths of tornadoes vary from less than 100 feet in diameter to more than a mile wide in regard to the largest tornadoes on record. The National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) reports that, “the maximum winds in tornadoes are often confined to extremely small areas and vary tremendously over short distance,” which explains why one house in a tornado’s path may be completely demolished while a neighboring house could remain untouched. Some tornadoes never touch the ground and remain short lived, while others may touch the ground or “jump” along its path.

The destruction from tornadoes can range from minor to severe depending on the intensity, size, and duration of the storm. Typically, tornadoes cause the greatest damage to structures of light-weight construction, such as mobile homes. The Enhanced Fujita Scale, also known as the “EF-Scale,” measures tornado strength and associated damages. The EF-Scale is an update to the earlier Fujita Scale, also known as the “F-Scale,” that was published in 1971. These scales classify U.S. tornadoes into six intensity categories based upon the estimated maximum winds occurring within the wind vortex. This scale can be seen in *Table 44 – Enhanced Fujita Scale*. The EF-Scale became effective on February 1, 2007. Since its implementation by the National Weather Service in 2007, the EF-Scale has become the definitive metric for estimating wind speeds within tornadoes based upon damage to buildings and structures. Previously recorded tornadoes are reported with the older F-Scale values, but *Table 44- Enhanced Fujita Scale* shows F-Scale categories with corresponding EF-Scale wind speeds.

*Figure 24– Pennsylvania Wind Zones* identifies wind speeds that could occur across the state, which may be used as the basis for design and evaluation of the structural integrity of shelters and critical facilities. The majority of Pennsylvania falls within Zone III, meaning that the design of shelters and critical facilities should be able to withstand a three-second gust of up to 200 mph, regardless of whether the gust is a result of a tornado, hurricane, tropical storm, or windstorm incident. The western portion of the state falls within Zone IV, which indicates shelters can withstand up to 250 mph winds, while the eastern side falls within Zone II where shelters should be designed to withstand up to 160 mph.

Since Forest County falls within Zone IV, shelters and critical facilities should be designed to withstand up to 250 mph winds, regardless of whether the gust is the result of a tornado, coastal storm, or windstorm event. While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact locations at the greatest risk

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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of a tornado, the southeast, southwest, and northwest sectors of the commonwealth are more prone to tornadoes.

Tornadoes/windstorms of all types have caused the following problems in Forest County:

- Power failures lasting four hours or longer.
- Loss of communications networks lasting four hours or more.
- Residents requiring evacuation or provision of supplies or temporary shelter.
- Severe crop loss or damage.
- Trees down or snapped off high above the ground/tree debris-fire fuel.
- Toppled high profile vehicles, including those containing hazardous materials.

*Table 44 - Enhanced Fujita Scale*

<b>Enhanced Fujita Scale</b>			
<b>EF-Scale Number</b>	<b>Wind Speed (MPH)</b>	<b>F-Scale Number</b>	<b>Description of Potential Damage</b>
<b>EF0</b>	65–85	F0-F1	<b>Minor damage:</b> Peels surface off some roofs; some damage to gutters or siding; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over. Confirmed tornadoes with no reported damage (i.e., those that remain in open fields) are always rated EF0.
<b>EF1</b>	86-110	F1	<b>Moderate damage:</b> Roofs severely stripped; mobile homes overturned or badly damaged; loss of exterior doors; windows and other glass broken.
<b>EF2</b>	111–135	F1-F2	<b>Considerable damage:</b> Roofs torn off well-constructed houses; foundations of frame homes shifted; mobile homes completely destroyed; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated; cars lifted off ground.
<b>EF3</b>	136–165	F2-F3	<b>Severe damage:</b> Entire stories of well-constructed houses destroyed; severe damage to large buildings such as shopping malls; trains overturned; trees debarked; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown; structures with weak foundations blown away some distance.



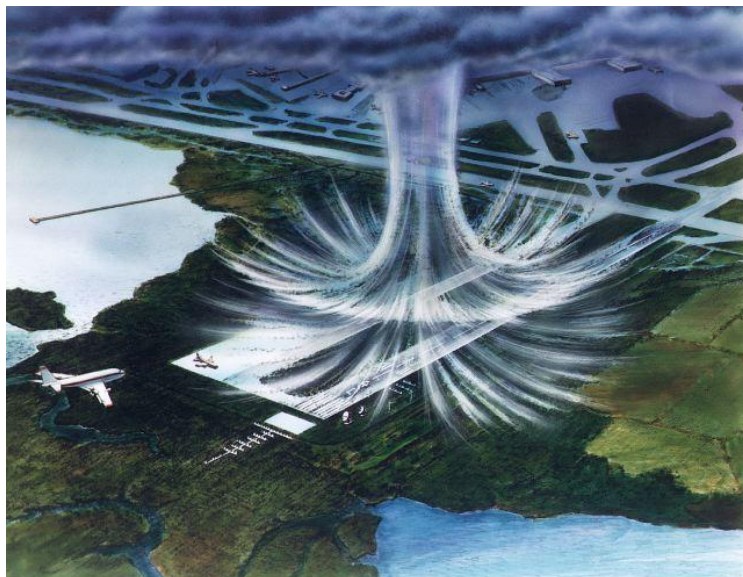
## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Enhanced Fujita Scale			
EF-Scale Number	Wind Speed (MPH)	F-Scale Number	Description of Potential Damage
EF4	166–200	F3	<b>Devastating damage:</b> Well-constructed houses and whole frame houses completely leveled; cars thrown, and small projectiles generated.
EF5	>200	F3-F6	<b>Extreme damage:</b> Strong frame houses leveled off foundations and swept away; automobile-sized projectiles fly through the air in excess of 100 m (300 ft.); steel reinforced concrete structure badly damaged; high-rise buildings have significant structural deformation.
Source: NWS, 2007			

Most of the tornadoes that have struck Forest County have occurred countywide. In 1985, a total of twenty-three confirmed tornadoes touched down across Eastern Ohio, Southwestern New York, and Central/Western Pennsylvania. This outbreak remains the worst in recorded history for this area. Of these twenty-three tornadoes, eight were of violent intensity (F4 or F5) with estimated wind speeds over 200 mph. Forest County was impacted by the 1985 outbreak.

### **Windstorms**

Windstorms can be broken down into multiple categories. Straight-line winds are the most



common wind event and are different from tornadic winds. It is a ground level, non-rotational, wind that comes out of a thunderstorm. Downdrafts are columns of air that rapidly sinks toward the ground and are classified as either a microburst or microburst. A microburst is the outward burst of strong winds that are near or at the surface with horizontal dimensions greater than 2 ½ miles. Microburst winds may begin over a smaller area and then spread out to a wider area, sometimes



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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producing damage similar to a tornado. On the other hand, microbursts are smaller outward bursts of strong winds near or at the surface. Microbursts are less than 2 ½ miles in horizontal dimension and are typically short-lived winds that last a maximum of ten minutes, with windspeeds reaching up to 100 mph. Microburst events can be wet or dry events. Wet microbursts are typically associated with heavy precipitation at the surface. Dry microbursts do not have precipitation associated with them and are commonly found in the western portion of the United States.

A gust front is characterized by wind shift, temperature drop, and gusty winds out ahead of a thunderstorm. Derecho is a long-lived windstorm that is associated with a band of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms. A typical derecho contains various downbursts and microbursts. If the wind damage is more than 240 miles and includes wind gusts of at least 58 mph, the event would then be classified as a derecho.

### **4.3.13.3 Past Occurrence**

Forest County has experienced ten tornado events since 1950, and ninety-two wind incidents between 1999 and summer of 2024 as seen in *Table 45– Forest County Tornado History* and *Table 46 - Forest County High Wind History*. Numerous sources provide information in regard to past occurrences and losses associated with tornadoes/windstorms in Forest County and the commonwealth as a whole. Due to the number of sources available with information, specific number of events and losses could vary slightly between sources. Tornado and windstorm data was present until the summer of 2024, even though more recent events could have possibly occurred. Historically, the county has experienced both severe windstorms and tornadoes.

The most recent tornado impacted Marienville on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

*Table 45 - Forest County Tornado History*

<b>Forest County Tornado History</b>					
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Magnitude (F/EF Scale)</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Injuries</b>	<b>Property Damage</b>
Forest County	05/31/1985	F4	0	0	\$25,000,000.00
Forest County	05/31/1985	F4	7	30	\$0.00
Forest County	05/31/1985	F2	0	0	\$0.00
Northeast Forest County	08/28/1994	F1	0	0	\$0.00
Duhring	08/19/2001	F1	0	0	\$100,000.00
Green Township	05/01/2017	EF1	0	0	\$25,000.00
Barnett Township	05/01/2017	EF1	0	0	\$0.00
Marienville	05/01/2017	EF1	0	0	\$0.00

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County Tornado History					
Location	Date	Magnitude (F/EF Scale)	Deaths	Injuries	Property Damage
Marienville	05/01/2017	EF2	0	0	\$0.00
Marienville	05/01/2017	EF2	0	0	\$0.00
Source: NOAA NCEI, 2024 Estimated Values are marked*					

Table 46 - Forest County High Wind History

Forest County High Wind History				
Location	Date	Magnitude (knots)	Injuries	Property Damage
Forest County	04/16/1999	50 kts.	0	\$0.00
Forest County	01/10/2000	50 kts. E	0	\$4,000.00
Forest County	12/12/2000	Unknown	0	\$25,000.00
Forest County	12/14/2001	50 kts. E	0	\$5,000.00
Forest County	03/09/2002	Unknown	0	\$10,000.00
Forest County	07/21/2003	52 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Forest County	11/13/2003	52 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Forest County	03/05/2004	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Cooksburg	05/20/2004	52 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Tionesta	06/06/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Tionesta	06/14/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Tionesta	07/25/2005	52 kts. EG	0	\$15,000.00
East Hickory	07/26/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Marienville	08/19/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$12,000.00
Tionesta	08/19/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Tionesta	11/06/2005	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Tionesta	06/19/2006	50 kts. EG	0	\$4,000.00
Forest County	12/01/2006	55 kts. EG	0	\$25,000.00
Tionesta	06/27/2007	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
West Hickory	09/26/2007	50 kts. EG	0	\$20,000.00
Forest County	01/30/2008	50 kts. EG	0	\$25,000.00
Forest County	09/14/2008	55 kts. EG	0	\$100,000.00
Forest County	02/12/2009	50 kts. EG	0	\$75,000.00
Forest County	12/09/2009	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Starr	04/25/2011	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County High Wind History</b>				
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Magnitude (knots)</b>	<b>Injuries</b>	<b>Property Damage</b>
East Hickory	11/14/2011	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Forest County	02/24/2012	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Hunter Station	06/28/2012	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	06/28/2012	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	08/09/2012	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Byromtown	09/22/2012	50 kts. EG	0	\$15,000.00
Clarrington	04/10/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Clarrington	04/10/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Marienville	06/25/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Marienville	06/25/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Tionesta	07/10/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$15,000.00
Clarrington	07/18/2013	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Marienville	06/17/2014	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Roses	06/17/2014	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Gilfoyle	06/17/2014	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Watson Farm	06/24/2014	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Clarrington	07/07/2014	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Starr	07/07/2015	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Starr	07/07/2015	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	07/19/2015	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Byromtown	07/19/2015	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	07/19/2015	50 kts. EG	0	\$250.00
Gilfoyle	07/13/2016	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Gilfoyle	08/13/2016	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Tionesta	09/10/2016	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Gultonville	01/12/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	05/01/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Glutonville	05/01/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Kelletville	05/01/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Byromtown	05/01/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Lynch	05/01/2017	65 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Byromtown	05/18/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,500.00
Hunter	08/22/2017	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Cooksburg	05/15/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County High Wind History</b>				
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Magnitude (knots)</b>	<b>Injuries</b>	<b>Property Damage</b>
Clarrington	05/15/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Cooksburg	05/15/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
East Hickory	06/18/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$500.00
Tionesta	06/18/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Gilfoyle	08/29/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Byromtown	10/02/2018	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Forest County	02/24/2019	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Muzette	04/14/2019	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Lynch	06/01/2019	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Kizer Corners	08/17/2019	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Kizer Corners	08/17/2019	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Hunter	03/20/2020	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Trunkeyville	04/07/2020	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Tionesta	11/15/2020	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Kizer Corners	11/15/2020	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Tionesta	06/21/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
East Hickory	07/13/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$5,000.00
Tionesta	07/13/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$20,000.00
Byromtown	07/13/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Tionesta	07/20/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$25,000.00
Marienville	09/13/2021	50 kts. EG	0	\$2,000.00
Tionesta	05/21/2022	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Lynch	06/16/2022	60 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
East Hickory	06/16/2022	55 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Lynch	06/16/2022	60 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Gultonville	06/22/2022	55 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Brookstown	07/25/2022	50 kts. EG	0	10,000.00
Byromtown	07/25/2022	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Tionesta	07/04/2022	52 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Marienville	04/01/2023	60 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
West Hickory	04/01/2023	55 kts. EG	0	\$0.00
Lynch	07/20/2023	50 kts. EG	0	\$1,000.00
Marionville	07/26/2026	50 kts. EG	0	\$10,000.00
Kellettville	06/18/2024	50 kts. EG	0	\$0.00

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Forest County High Wind History				
Location	Date	Magnitude (knots)	Injuries	Property Damage
Source: NOAA NCEI, 2024 Estimated Values are marked*				

### **4.3.13.4 Future Occurrence**

In the United States, tornado activity has increased in variability, with a general decrease in the number of days a year on which activity occurs, but an increase in the number of tornadoes on those days. This indicates an increase in tornado outbreaks. The future probability of a disastrous tornado occurring in Forest County is ranked as possible, but not highly likely. While the chance of being hit by a tornado in Forest County is small, the damage that results when the tornado arrives can be devastating. An EF-5 tornado, with a 0.019% annual probability of occurring, can carry wind velocities of 200 mph, resulting in a force of more than 100 pounds per square foot of surface area. This is a “wind load” that exceeds the design limits of most buildings in Pennsylvania. As jurisdictions within the county grow, and as residential and commercial construction continues, the number of people and properties will be greatly affected by tornadoes and windstorms as they increase accordingly.

Based on historic patterns, tornadoes are unlikely to remain on the ground for long distances, especially in areas of the country with hilly terrain, such as the majority of Pennsylvania. However, the high historical number of windstorms with winds at or over 50 knots indicates that the annual chance of a windstorm in the county is uniquely high. The annual tornado season has begun to lengthen, with the season starting earlier than it has historically and ending later. Pennsylvania had, for example, a record number of tornadoes in April and May of 2019 compared to any other April and May on record. Climate change is causing temperatures and air moisture to increase, increasing the frequency and intensity of tornadoes and windstorms. There remains some uncertainty regarding the recurrence of tornadoes. Therefore, the number of future tornadoes and windstorm events could potentially increase due to known and unknown factors.

Based on historical incidents, there are three zones in Pennsylvania that can either experience less than one, one to four, or five to ten of EF-2 or above tornadoes per 3,700 square miles. Communities in Forest County, as shown in *Figure 37 – Tornado Activity in Forest County* below, are expected to have one tornado approximately every ten years as a future occurrence. The approximation of one to four tornadoes annually assists with determining the rate of future tornado occurrences within Forest County. Future tornadoes will be similar to those that affected the county in past events.

Windstorm events occur on a more frequent basis compared to tornadoes. Forest County, specifically, experiences windstorm events more commonly than tornadoes, which causes power



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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failure, loss of communication networks, and residents requiring temporary shelters and provision of supplies. Therefore, unlike tornadoes, this hazardous event has a highly likely probability for future events to occur within the county.

Climate change and its relationship with tornado outbreaks is hard to identify. Some recent studies suggest that as average temperatures begin to rise, so will the intense storms that often lead to the creation of tornadoes. Warm, moist air is the most important aspect for developing strong tornadoes. Climate change can exacerbate this, and it could potentially lead to an increase in frequency and the severity of the events. Although not yet proven, this is one of the most prevalent theories on how climate change can impact tornado frequency and intensity.

### **4.3.13.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

The frequency of windstorms and minor tornadoes is expected to remain relatively constant; vulnerability increases in more densely developed areas. Factors that impact the amount of damage caused by a tornado include the strength of the tornado, the time of day, and the area of impact. Usually, such distinct funnel clouds are localized phenomena impacting a small area. However, the high winds of tornadoes make them one of the most destructive natural hazards. There can be many cascading impacts of tornadoes and windstorms including, but not limited to, transportation accidents, hazardous material spills, flooding, and power outages. A proper warning system is vital for the public to be informed of what to do and where to go during such events.

Additional dangers that accompany tornado-associated thunderstorms, and which increase the vulnerability of Forest County, include:

- Flash floods – 146 deaths annually nationwide.
- Lightning – 75 to 100 deaths annually nationwide.
- Damaging straight-line winds – reaching 140 mph wind speed.
- Large hail – can reach the size of a grapefruit and can cause several million in damages annually to property and crops

The economy of Forest County is highly vulnerable to tornadoes. While there may be severe impact on financial and commercial systems of the economy, these storms, and the damage they cause, can disrupt business long-term. The local economy is vulnerable due to the possibility of being crippled by tornadoes and windstorms and their cascading effects when buildings and supporting infrastructure are destroyed in a storm. Power outages can create work stoppages, while transportation accidents and road closures can limit transportation of goods and services. Additionally, flooding cannot be discounted as it can destroy physical structures, merchandise, and equipment essential for business operation.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Forest County's environment is also vulnerable to tornado events. However, since tornado events are typically localized, environmental impacts are rarely widespread. The impact of windstorms on the environment typically takes place over a large area. In either case, where these events occur, severe damage to plant species is likely. This includes uprooting or total destruction of trees and an increased threat of wildfire in areas where dead trees are not removed. Most notably, hazardous material spills can pollute ground water systems and vegetation. In the case of hazardous material spills, the local environment can be negatively impacted and can cause extensive cleanup and mitigation efforts. Forest County is considered a rural county that has a great amount of tourism which occurs in the surrounding hills, mountains, and state parks. Not only is the environment at risk to tornadoes and windstorms, but hikers, tourists, and hunters are also at risk when out in the environment. Consequently, in the event of a tornado or severe storm, these tourists have limited emergency notification measures which result in high vulnerability. A storm has the ability, potentially, to destroy structures, damage private and public property, and injure citizens and tourists to the area. People with disabilities, the elderly, functional needs, and non-English speaking residents are more vulnerable to tornadoes, windstorms, and their cascading effects. Without assistance to evacuate and/or seek shelter, and with potential difficulty understanding information, these at-risk populations may be unable to prepare themselves, or their homes and other possessions, to safely endure the storm.

Tornado, windstorm, and cascading events may affect a small portion, or the entirety, of the county. Therefore, it is important to identify specific critical facilities and assets that are most vulnerable to this hazard. Critical facilities are highly vulnerable to windstorms and tornado events. While many severe storms can cause exterior damage to structures, tornadoes can destroy structures, along with their surrounding infrastructure, immediately halting their function. Tornadoes are often accompanied by severe storms which can be threatening to critical facilities within the county. Many secondary effects from these disasters can jeopardize the operation of these critical facilities as well. Critical facilities are particularly vulnerable to power outages which can leave facilities functionless, potentially crippling infrastructure supporting the population of the county. Due to Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code Act 45, trailers and mobile homes built before 2004, because of their lightweight construction and often unanchored design, are more vulnerable to high winds/tornadoes and will generally sustain more damage than will mobile homes built after 2004.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, Jenks Township has seen a net population increase from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that this municipality may have an increased/equivalent vulnerability to tornado and windstorms, since 2010, due to the increase in population and construction.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Tornadoes and windstorm events may disproportionately affect underserved, unserved, and socially vulnerable populations, amplifying existing hardships. Fragile infrastructure in these areas is more prone to damage, which can hinder evacuation and rescue efforts. Limited access to resources exacerbates challenges during and after the storms, from securing safe shelter to obtaining essential supplies. Vulnerable communities often lack financial resilience, facing prolonged economic setbacks as local businesses may suffer.

Land use, in the form of a built environment, such as residential expansion, can cause tornado impact severity to increase. Impact severity increases when built environment expansion provides an influx of people, infrastructure, and critical infrastructure in harm's way. Since the population in Forest County had a minor overall decrease between 2010 and 2020, it can be speculated that the built environment did not increase.

There are no properties that are listed with the National Register of Historic Places that are at an increased risk of tornadoes in Forest County. This analysis was run off of the previous tornado paths in the county and 500 feet vulnerability zones.

Tornadoes and windstorms exert profound impacts on both natural and cultural areas. Ecologically, these intense weather events can result in habitat destruction, altering landscapes, and threatening biodiversity. Culturally, these storms endanger heritage sites, historic structures, and artifacts, eroding tangible, and intangible cultural elements. Sustainable recovery efforts must embrace an integrated approach, recognizing the interconnected vulnerability of natural, historical, and cultural landscapes to the formidable forces of tornadoes and windstorm.

### **Municipalities with an increased risk of tornadoes (previously impacted):**

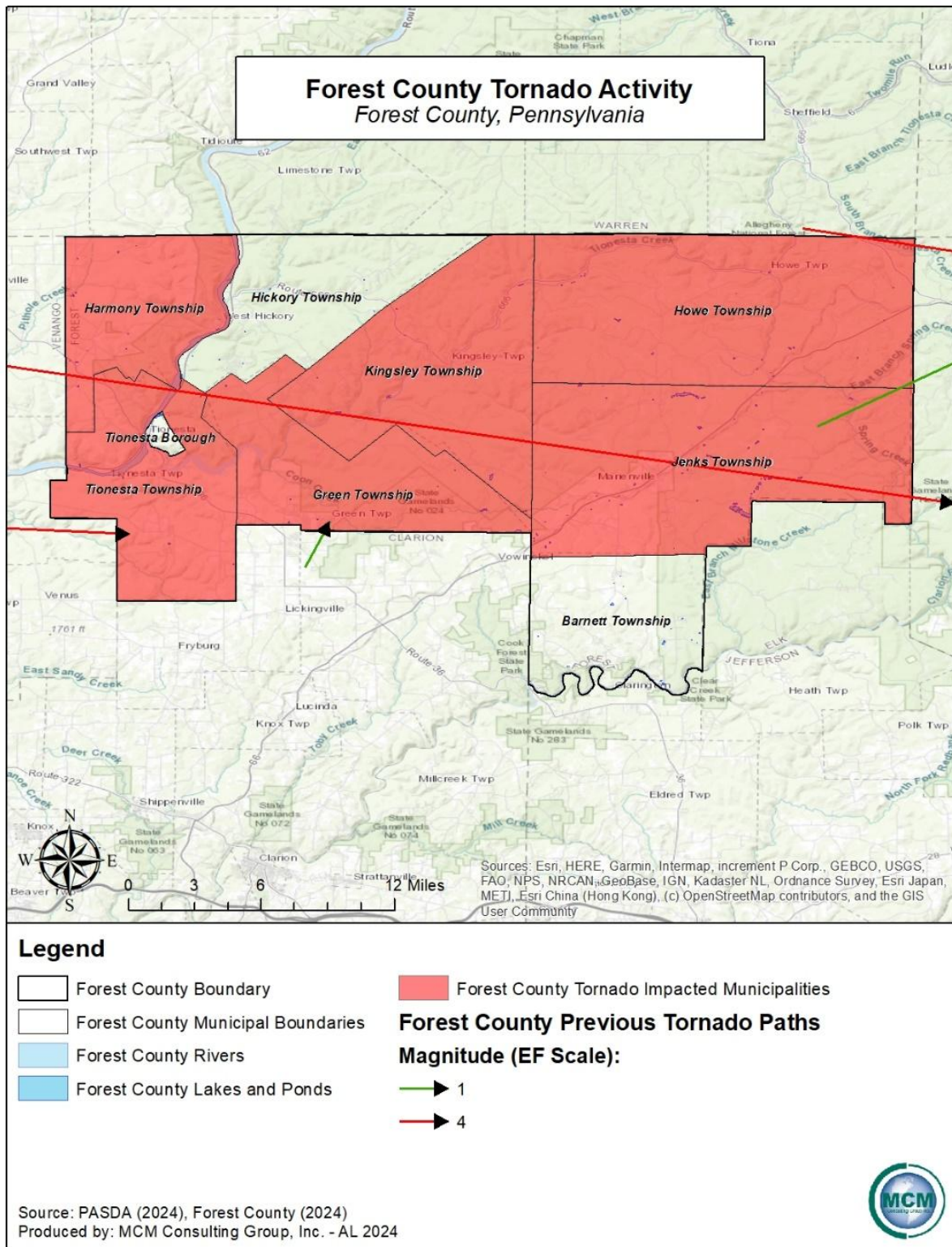
- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Howe Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Township

### **Municipalities without an increased risk of tornadoes (not previously impacted):**

- Barnett Township
- Hickory Township
- Tionesta Borough

*Figure 37 - Tornado Activity in Forest County*

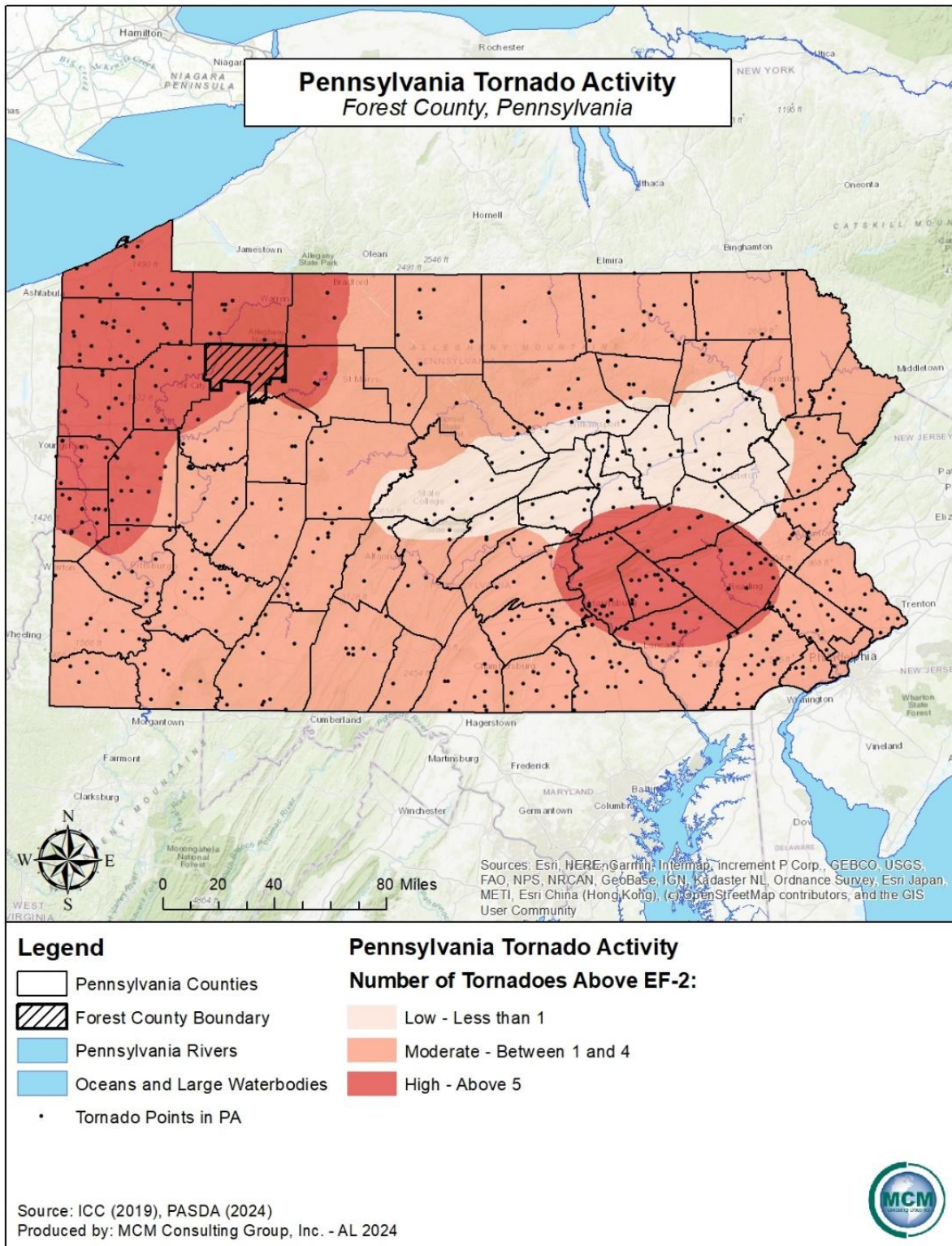
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 38 - Tornado Activity in Pennsylvania





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.14. Wildfire**

##### **4.3.14.1 Location and Extent**

The most prevalent causes of devastating wildfires are droughts, lighting strikes, arson, human carelessness, and in rare circumstances, spontaneous combustion. Most fires in Pennsylvania are caused by anthropogenic fires such as debris burns that spread and get out of control. A fire, started in somebody's backyard, could travel through dead grass and weeds into bordering woodlands starting a wildfire. Major urban fires can cause significant property damage, loss of life, and residential or business displacement. While wildfires are a natural and essential part of many native Pennsylvania ecosystems (e.g., pitch pine and scrub oak woodlands), wildfires can also cause devastating damage if they are undetected and allowed to propagate unfettered.

Wildfires most often occur in less developed areas such as open fields, grass, dense brush, or forests where they can spread rapidly by feeding off of vegetation and combustible fuels.

Wildfires are most prevalent under prolonged dry and hot spells, or general drought conditions.

A large portion of Forest County is covered by either farmland or forested areas, increasing the geographic extent of wildfire vulnerability in the county. Half of Forest County is preserved as public lands. Under dry conditions or droughts, wildfires have the potential to burn forests as well as croplands. For recreational enjoyment, the county boasts several local parks, one state park, one national forest and natural areas that include a series of trail systems – all of which are at risk of wildfires.

##### **4.3.14.2 Range and Magnitude**

Forested areas, croplands and properties that are at the interface between wild lands and human development are most at risk for being impacted by and causing wildfires. If an urban fire or wildfire is not contained, secondary impacts including power outages may result. Other negative impacts of wildfires can include death of people, livestock, fish, and wildlife, and destruction of valuable property, timber, forage, recreational and scenic values. Wildfires can also cause severe erosion, silting of stream beds and reservoirs, and flooding due to a loss of ground cover.

Almost all of the wildfires in the county occur in remote areas or areas away from residential structures. Unlike the wildland fires that occur in other parts of the country and affect vast areas of land and residential communities, most fires in Forest County are contained before they cause damage or extensive property loss. However, the county recognizes that wildfires of some magnitude will continue to occur in Forest County and will have more detrimental effects if development in and/or around the natural areas increases.

The United States Forest Service utilizes the Forest Fire Assessment System to classify the dangers of wildfire. *Table 47 – Wildland Fire Assessment System* identifies each threat classification and provides a description of the level.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Table 47 - Wildland Fire Assessment System

<b>Wildland Fire Assessment System (U.S. Forest Service)</b>	
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Low (L)</b>	Fuels do not ignite readily from small firebrands although a more intense heat source, such as lightning, may start fires in duff or punky wood. Fires in open cured grasslands may burn freely a few hours after rain, but woods fires spread slowly by creeping or smoldering and burn in irregular fingers. There is little danger of spotting.
<b>Moderate (M)</b>	Fires can start from most accidental causes, but with the exception of lightning fires in some areas, the number of starts is generally low. Fires in open cured grasslands will burn briskly and spread rapidly on windy days. Timber fires spread slowly to moderately fast. The average fire is of moderate intensity, although heavy concentrations of fuel, especially draped fuel, may burn hot. Short-distance spotting may occur but is not persistent. Fires are not likely to become serious and control is relatively easy.
<b>High (H)</b>	All fine dead fuels ignite readily, and fires start easily from most causes. Unattended brush and campfires are likely to escape. Fires spread rapidly and short-distance spotting is common. High intensity burning may develop on slopes or in concentrations of fine fuels. Fires may become serious and their control difficult unless they are attacked successfully while small.
<b>Very High (VH)</b>	Fires start easily from all causes and, immediately after ignition, spread rapidly and increase quickly in intensity. Spot fires are a constant danger. Fires burning in light fuels may quickly develop high intensity characteristics such as long-distance spotting and fire whirlwinds when they burn into heavier fuels.
<b>Extreme (E)</b>	Fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious. Development into high intensity burning will usually be faster and occur from smaller fires than in the very high fire danger class. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition. Fires that develop headway in heavy slash or in conifer stands may be unmanageable while the extreme burning condition lasts. Under these conditions the only effective and safe control action is on the flanks until the weather changes, or the fuel supply lessens.

### **4.3.14.3 Past Occurrence**

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has an extensive history of reported wildfires in its state forestry system and districts. Historically, Forest County experiences a minimal amount of these types of fires annually with all fires being relatively small. However, due to the many acres of farmland, forested areas, and open space in the county, under the right conditions the potential exists for a significant wildfire. Forest County lies in the Cornplanter District (District 14). DCNR's Bureau of Forestry District 14 encompasses three

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

counties (Forest, Crawford, and Warren). In 2023, there were a total of 582 fires in District 14 that were responsible for destroying 2,140.1 acres.

District 14 reports the following twenty-four-year wildfire summary based on observed and reported wildfires. *Table 48 – Annual Summary of Wildfire Events* illustrates the number of acres burned in a certain number of fires for District 14 from the year 2000 through the year 2023.

*Table 48 - Annual Summary of Wildfire Events*

<b>Annual Summary of Wildfire Events District 14</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Fires</b>	<b>Frequency Increase or Decrease</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Severity Increase or Decrease</b>
2000	11	-	47.1	-
2001	9	↓	74.2	↑
2002	2	↓	16.0	↓
2003	8	↑	85.1	↑
2004	1	↓	2.0	↓
2005	5	↑	19.3	↑
2006	11	↑	52.5	↑
2007	3	↓	4.6	↓
2008	6	↑	9.3	↑
2009	3	↓	59.7	↑
2010	17	↑	225.2	↑
2011	3	↓	9.1	↓
2012	17	↑	123.5	↑
2013	17	↔	21.9	↓
2014	14	↓	5.5	↓
2015	24	↑	44.0	↑
2016	59	↑	149.3	↑
2017	13	↓	10.3	↓
2018	43	↓	116.1	↑
2019	23	↓	36.2	↓
2020	16	↓	89.3	↑
2021	122	↑	752.7	↑
2022	51	↓	29.1	↓
2023	104	↑	158.1	↑
Source: PA DCNR, 2024				

In recent years, the number of prescribed burns in Pennsylvania has been increasing. This corresponds to an understanding of the need for fire in many natural ecosystems and management strategies for reducing vulnerability to wildfire; it also improves hunting

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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opportunities. In 2022, there were sixty-three prescribed burns in the commonwealth that were carried out by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). This number is up by seventeen prescribed burns from the total number of reported prescribed burns in 2021 by the DCNR only, with a total of forty-six. Data for years after 2022 were not available at the time of writing this plan. Also, at the time of the writing of this plan, DCNR had paused prescribed burns across the commonwealth and stopped publishing a running list of counties with burn bans, opting for a statewide burn ban list instead. Forest County was not listed among the counties with burn bans, but four counties contiguous to it were listed.

### **4.3.14.4 Future Occurrence**

Annual occurrences of urban fires and wildfires in Forest County are expected. Urban fires are most often the result of human errors, outdated wiring and occasionally, malintent (arson). The occurrence of large scale and intense wildfires is somewhat unpredictable and highly dependent on environmental conditions and human response. Weather conditions play a major role in the occurrence of wildfires, so in the event of drought conditions, wildfire caution should be heightened. Any fire without the quick response or attention of firefighters, forestry personnel, or visitors to the forest, has the potential to become a wildfire. In the year 2024, a year of abnormally dry conditions for the county, the numbers in *Table 48 – Annual Summary of Wildfire Events* are expected to be higher.

Climate change is expected to bring an elongated wildfire season and more intense and long-burning fires (Pechony & Shindell, 2010). In some regions of the United States, this is a very real concern. Northern California has experienced unprecedented devastating wildfires and continues to experience these events in a yearly fashion. The fires that have been occurring in California are thought to be burning faster and hotter due to worsening drought conditions caused by increased climate change (Cvijanovic et al., 2017). Wildfire conditions in Pennsylvania are not nearly as severe as in Northern California, but the intensification is a signal that the changes brought by climate change are relevant to wildfires. In Pennsylvania, higher air temperatures and earlier warming in the spring are expected to continue, resulting in more wildfire prone conditions in the summer and fall (Shortle et al., 2015).

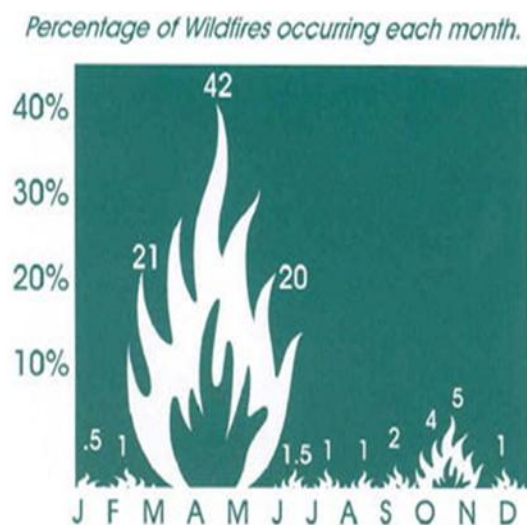
Climate change significantly influences wildfires by altering environmental conditions. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and changes in precipitation patterns create drier landscapes, fostering the ignition and rapid spread of wildfires. Elevated temperatures contribute to increased evaporation, drying out vegetation and creating more fuel for fires. Altered precipitation patterns can lead to extended periods of drought, further desiccating ecosystems. Climate change also affects the timing and intensity of seasons, extending the fire-prone period. The data in *Table 48 – Annual Summary of Wildfire Events* show a significant upward trend starting in 2021.

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

### 4.3.14.5 Vulnerability Assessment

The size and impact of a wildfire depends on its location, climate conditions, and the response of firefighters. If the right conditions exist, these factors may often mitigate the effects of wildfires; however, during a drought, wildfires can be devastating. The highest risk for wildfires in Pennsylvania occurs during the spring (March to May) and the fall (October to November) months and 99% of all wildfires in Pennsylvania are caused by people. Approximately 83% of all Pennsylvania wildfires occur in the months outlined above. In the spring, bare trees allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, drying fallen leaves and other ground debris and increasing wildfire vulnerability. In the fall, the surplus of dried leaves is fuel for fires. Additionally, warming temperatures facilitate the expansion of pests and diseases that weaken trees, making forests more susceptible to ignition. *Figure 39 – Seasonal Wildfire Percentages* shows the wildfire percentage occurrence during each month in Pennsylvania.

Figure 39 - Seasonal Wildfire Percentages



Firefighters and other first responders can encounter life-threatening situations due to forest and wildfires. Traffic accidents during a response and the impacts of fighting the fire once on scene are examples of first responder vulnerabilities.

Firefighters call the area where homes and development meet and intermingle with undeveloped forests the Wildland Urban Interface or WUI. More than half of all wildfire ignitions in Pennsylvania occur within the WUI. People moving into the WUI often make choices that increase the potential for their homes to be destroyed by wildfire.

The Wildland Urban Interface was nationally mapped by a United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service effort in 2015 that used data from 1990-2010 to develop a robust dataset that related housing density and vegetative density. The dataset provides a way to identify locations where larger numbers of people are living in or near natural areas that could be at risk in the event of a wildfire. The WUI defines two types of communities – interface and intermix. Intermix refers to areas where housing and wildland vegetation intermingle, and interface refers to areas where housing is in the vicinity of a large area of dense wildland vegetation. The WUI was the fastest-growing land use type in the United States between 1990 and 2010. Factors behind the growth include population shifts, expansion of cities into the wildlands, and the expansion of new vegetation growth. The primary cause has been the migration of people, not vegetation growth.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Pennsylvania is among the states with the largest WUI and the most housing units in a WUI designated area. Pennsylvanians desire the proximity of natural beauty in their daily lives, and the growth in WUI housing noted above illustrates this. *Figure 40 – Wildland Urban Interface* shows the extent of Forest County and the critical infrastructure facilities, functional needs facilities, and fire stations. Wildfire hazard is defined by conditions that affect wildfire ignition and/or behavior such as fuel, topography, and local weather. The many addressable structures in the Wildland Urban Interface and Intermix zones are broken up by assessed parcel use codes.

There are three fire departments that serve Forest County, a list of which can be seen in *Figure 41 – Fire Station Locations*. Each fire department conducts its own schedule of in-house training sessions for its members. Other fire departments in contiguous counties are available via mutual aid.

The response of firefighters is integral to the containment of wildfires in the county. There is a potential for fire stations and services to close, which affects response to wildfire in Forest County. *Figure 41 – Fire Station Locations* illustrates the position of fire stations and the location of state game lands, state forests, the national forest, and natural areas within Forest County. It is recommended that each municipality assess vulnerabilities to department closures by building a relationship with their local providers and planning accordingly for if a local service were to close.

As seen above in Section 4.3.14.4 climate change may increase the frequency of wildfires. With this potential increase in wildfires comes disruption of systems that humans rely upon for daily activities. The systems wildfires most heavily impact include, but are not limited to transportation, water supply, power, and communications. Wildfires can block off transportation routes directly or can impact visibility of transportation routes due to the intense smoke that can be produced and settle over roadways.

As seen in the Community Profile, *Table 3– Population Change in Forest County*, all municipalities except Jenks Township have seen a net population decrease from the 2010 decennial census to the 2020 decennial census. Based on this information, it can be speculated that these municipalities may have had a decreased vulnerability to wildfires since 2010. Unserved, underserved, and socially vulnerable populations within Forest County may be at an increased vulnerability to wildfires than other populations. This is because these populations may not have access to or the ability to relocate during wildfire events. Those that are unsheltered within Forest County have an increased vulnerability to wildfire events due to being openly exposed to the elements, such as bad air quality from the smoke that wildfires produce.

Forest County promotes fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, canoeing, and other outdoor activities. These land use events can increase the risk of wildfires starting for the county because most of Forest County is made up of woodlands. Natural areas can be extremely vulnerable to wildfires within Forest County. Ecologically, wildfires alter landscapes, compromising soil

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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stability and disrupting ecosystems. Conditions of drought or invasive species that could damage forested areas can lead to wildfires. Wildfires can lead to devastation which can foster landslides and flash flood events. These events can destroy the forested terrain within the county and consume acres of traditional agricultural practices in a short amount of time. In addition to the widespread burning that wildfires cause, these events also pollute the air within the county and surrounding areas, as well as waterways due to run off and the settling of the air pollution to ground level.

Wildfires may also rob a community of its historic and cultural treasures. There are two historic properties located in Forest County: Cook Forest State Park Indian Cabin District, located off Pennsylvania Route 36 in Barnett Township was added to the National Register of Historic Places on February 12, 1987; and, West Hickory Bridge, a girder bridge that crosses the Allegheny River and is located between Harmony Township and Hickory Township, was added to the National Register of Historic Structures in 1988.

### **Community lifeline facilities within the areas of high-density interface and high density intermix for Forest County are:**

- Farm Fresh Foods
- Tionesta Health Mart Pharmacy
- Tionesta Volunteer Fire Department

### **Municipalities with high risk due to wildfires (with areas of high-density interface or intermix):**

- Green Township
- Harmony Township
- Hickory Township
- Jenks Township
- Kingsley Township
- Tionesta Borough
- Tionesta Township

### **Municipalities with lower risk due to wildfires (no areas of high-density interface or intermix):**

- Barnett Township
- Howe Township

Figure 40 - Wildland Urban Interface

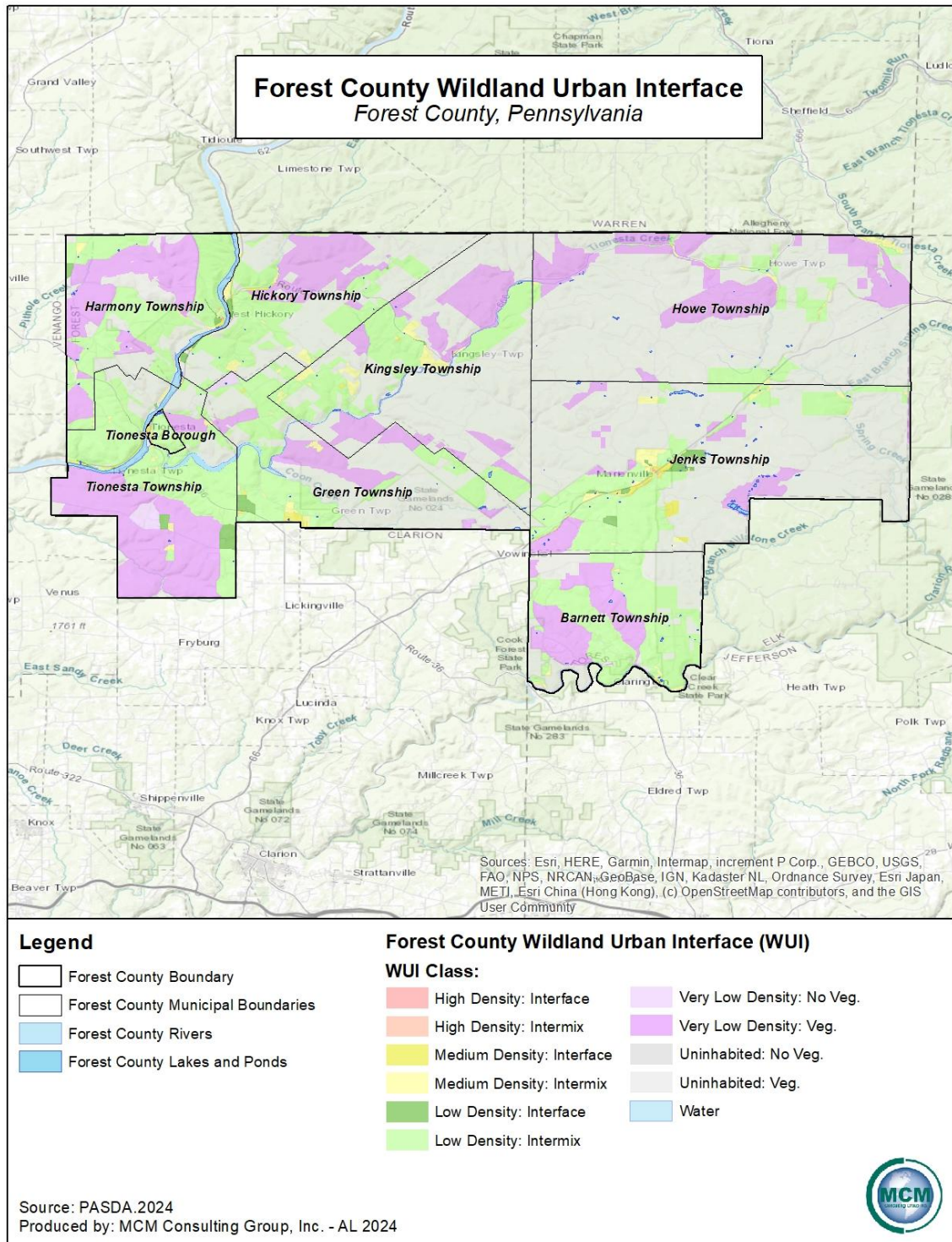
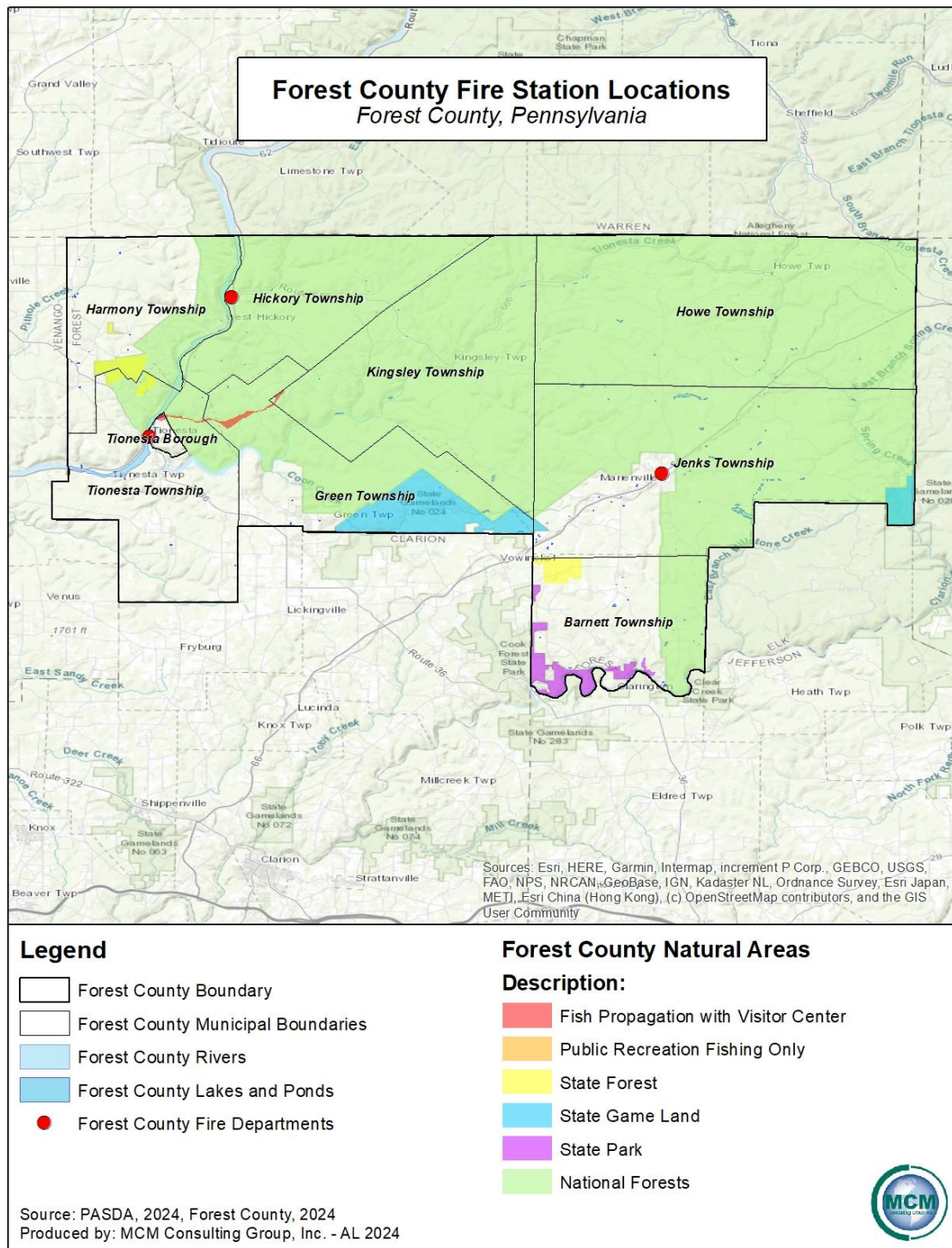


Figure 41 - Fire Station Locations



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.15. Winter Storm**

#### **4.3.15.1 Location and Extent**

Most severe winter storm hazards include heavy snow (snowstorms), blizzards, sleet, freezing rain, and ice storms. Since most extra-tropical cyclones (mid-Atlantic cyclones locally known as Northeasters or Nor'easters), generally take place during the winter weather months, these hazards have also been grouped as a type of severe winter weather storm. According to the Pennsylvania State Hazard Mitigation Plan (PA HMP), winter storms are frequent events for the Commonwealth and occur from late October until mid-April. These types of winter events or conditions are further defined below.

- **Heavy Snow:** According to the National Weather Service (NWS), heavy snow is generally snowfall accumulating to four inches or more in depth in twelve hours or less; or snowfall accumulating to six inches or more in depth in twenty-four hours or less. A snow squall is an intense but limited duration, period of moderate to heavy snowfall, also known as a snowstorm, accompanied by strong, gusty surface winds and possibly lightning.
- **Blizzard:** Blizzards are characterized by low temperatures, wind gusts of thirty-five miles per hour (mph) or more and falling and/or blowing snow that reduces visibility to 1/4-mile or less for an extended period of time (three or more hours).
- **Sleet of Freezing Rainstorm:** Sleet is defined as pellets of ice composed of frozen or mostly frozen raindrops or refrozen partially melted snowflakes. These pellets of ice usually bounce after hitting the ground and other hard surfaces. Freezing rain is rain that falls as a liquid but freezes into glaze upon contact with the ground.
- **Ice Storm:** An ice storm is used to describe occasions when damaging accumulations of ice are expected during freezing rain situations. Significant accumulations of ice pull down trees and utility lines resulting in loss of power and communication. These accumulations of ice make walking and driving extremely dangerous and can create extreme hazards to motorists and pedestrians.
- **Extra-Tropical Cyclone:** Sometimes called mid-latitude cyclones are a group of cyclones defined as synoptic scale, low pressure, weather systems that occur in the middle latitudes of the Earth. These storms have neither tropical nor polar characteristics and are connected with fronts and horizontal gradients in temperature and dew point otherwise known as "baroclinic zones." Extra-tropical cyclones are everyday weather phenomena which, along with anticyclones, drive the weather over much of the Earth. These cyclones produce impacts ranging from cloudiness and mild showers to heavy gales and thunderstorms. Tropical cyclones often transform into extra-tropical cyclones at the end of their tropical existence, usually between 30° and 40° latitude, where there is



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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insufficient force from upper-level shortwave troughs riding the westerlies (weather systems moving west to east) for the process of extra-tropical transition to begin. A shortwave trough is a disturbance in the mid or upper part of the atmosphere which induces upward motion ahead of it. During an extra-tropical transition, a cyclone begins to tilt back into the colder air mass with height, and the cyclone's primary energy source converts from the release of latent heat from condensation to baroclinic processes.

### **4.3.15.2 Range of Magnitude**

The magnitude or severity of a severe winter storm depends on several factors including a region's susceptibility to snowstorms, snowfall amounts, snowfall rates, wind speeds, temperatures, visibility, storm duration, topography, and time of occurrence during the day (e.g., weekday versus weekend), and time of season. The extent of a severe winter storm can be classified by meteorological measurements, such as those above, and by evaluating its societal impacts.

The Northeast Snowfall Impact Scale (NESIS) categorizes snowstorms in this manner. Unlike the Fujita Scale (tornado) and Saffir Simpson Scale (hurricanes), there is no widely used scale to classify snowstorms. NESIS was developed by Paul Kocin of The Weather Channel and Louis Uccellini of the National Weather Service and rank high impact, northeast snowstorms. These storms have large areas of ten-inch snowfall accumulations and greater. NESIS has five ranking categories: Notable (1), Significant (2), Major (3), Crippling (4), and Extreme (5). These ranking can be seen in *Table 49 – NESIS Winter Storm Rankings*. The index differs from other meteorological indices in that it uses population information in addition to meteorological measurements. Thus, NESIS gives an indication of a storm's societal impacts. This scale was developed because of the impact of northeast snowstorms can have on the rest of the country in terms of transportation and economic impact.

*Table 49 - NESIS Winter Storm Rankings*

NESIS Winter Storm Rankings			
Category	Description	NESIS Range	Definition
1	Notable	1.0 – 2.49	These storms are notable for their large areas of 4-inch accumulations and small areas of 10-inch snowfall.
2	Significant	2.5 – 3.99	Includes storms that produce significant areas of greater than 10-inch snows while some include small areas of 20-inch snowfalls. A few cases may

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

NESIS Winter Storm Rankings			
Category	Description	NESIS Range	Definition
			even include relatively small areas of very heavy snowfall accumulations (greater than 30 inches).
3	Major	4.0 – 5.99	This category encompasses the typical major Northeast snowstorm, with large areas of 10-inch snows (generally between 50 and 150 x 103 mi <sup>2</sup> – roughly one to three times the size of New York State with significant areas of 20-inch accumulations.
4	Crippling	6.0 – 9.99	These storms consist of some of the most widespread, heavy snows of the sample and can be best described as crippling to the northeast U.S, with the impact to transportation and the economy felt throughout the United States. These storms encompass huge areas of 10-inch snowfalls, and each case is marked by large areas of 20-inch and greater snowfall.
5	Extreme	10+	The storms represent those with the most extreme snowfall distributions, blanketing large areas and populations with snowfalls greater than 10, 20, and 30 inches. These are only storms in which the 10-inch accumulations exceed 200 X 103 mi <sup>2</sup> and affect more than 60 million people.
Source: Kocin and Uccellini, 2004			

The climate of Pennsylvania is marked by abundant snowfall. Winter weather can reach Pennsylvania as early as October and is usually in full force by late November with average winter temperatures between 20- and 40-degrees Fahrenheit. Forest County receives an average of about 50.8 inches of snowfall a year. Most areas of Forest County experience the effects of winter storms frequently. The general indication of the average annual snowfall map shows areas that are subject to a consistent risk for large quantities of snow. *Figure 42 - Pennsylvania Annual Snowfall 1981 – 2010* illustrates the long-term trends for snowfall accumulation in Pennsylvania over three decades.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.15.3 Past Occurrence**

*Figure 43 – Winter Storm Events by County in Pennsylvania* shows the number of winter storm events from 1950 – 2013 for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Forest County has experienced a total of 109 winter events from 1950 to present. Of those 109 events there was one lake-effect snow event, thirteen ice storms, thirty-three heavy snow events, twenty winter storm events, and forty-two winter weather instances. *Table 50 – Recent Annual Snowfall Estimates* shows recent annual snowfall measurements as stated by NOAA. Overall, Forest County has experienced an overall decrease on the annual estimated average of snowfall. On average, the annual snowfall totals have increased in the time periods from 2020 to present. A list of additional Forest County winter storms, and other related events is outlined in *Table 51 – Forest County Winter Storm History*.

*Table 50 - Recent Annual Snowfall Estimates*

Recent Annual Snowfall Estimates	
Time Span	Snowfall Estimates (inches)
1999-2000	23.5
2000-2001	50.1
2001-2002	18.0
2002-2003	65.6
2003-2004	59.5
2004-2005	53.4
2005-2006	45.1
2006-2007	48.8
2007-2008	76.3
2008-2009	25.7
2009-2010	66.5
2010-2011	33.8
2011-2012	25.8
2012-2013	42.7
2013-2014	63.3
2014-2015	48.9
2015-2016	1.0
2016-2017	53.7
2017-2018	40.5
2018-2019	27.7
2019-2020	2.3

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Recent Annual Snowfall Estimates	
Time Span	Snowfall Estimates (inches)
2020-2021	16.4
2021-2022	39.0
2022-2023	24.4
Source: NOAA, 2024	

*Table 51 - Forest County Winter Weather History*

Forest County Winter Weather History		
Location	Date	Event Type
Forest County	01/02/1996	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/06/1996	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/16/1997	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/12/1997	Heavy Snow
Forest County	03/14/1997	Ice Storm
Forest County	11/13/1997	Ice Storm
Forest County	12/17/1998	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/02/1999	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/08/1999	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/13/1999	Winter Storm
Forest County	03/03/1999	Winter Storm
Forest County	03/06/1999	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/17/2000	Winter Storm
Forest County	11/22/2000	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/13/2000	Winter Storm
Forest County	03/04/2001	Winter Storm
Forest County	03/25/2002	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/11/2002	Ice Storm
Forest County	12/26/2002	Heavy Snow
Forest County	04/07/2003	Ice Storm
Forest County	12/14/2003	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/20/2003	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/05/2004	Ice Storm
Forest County	01/14/2004	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/03/2004	Ice Storm

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Winter Weather History</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event Type</b>
Forest County	02/06/2004	Ice Storm
Forest County	03/16/2004	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/14/2004	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/05/2005	Ice Storm
Forest County	01/11/2005	Ice Storm
Forest County	01/22/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/20/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	03/01/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	04/03/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	11/24/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/15/2005	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/13/2007	Heavy Snow
Forest County	03/16/2007	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/13/2007	Ice Storm
Forest County	01/01/2008	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/01/2008	Winter Storm
Forest County	02/12/2008	Winter Storm
Forest County	03/07/2008	Winter Storm
Forest County	10/28/2008	Winter Weather
Forest County	11/20/2008	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/06/2009	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/09/2009	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/17/2009	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/27/2009	Ice Storm
Forest County	12/13/2009	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/25/2009	Ice Storm
Forest County	02/09/2010	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/05/2010	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/20/2011	Heavy Snow
Forest County	02/25/2011	Heavy Snow
Forest County	04/23/2012	Heavy Snow
Forest County	12/26/2012	Heavy Snow
Forest County	01/28/2013	Ice Storm
Forest County	11/26/2013	Heavy Snow



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Winter Weather History</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event Type</b>
Forest County	02/04/2014	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/02/2014	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/15/2016	Heavy Snow
Forest County	04/08/2016	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/11/2016	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/12/2017	Lake-effect snow
Forest County	01/12/2018	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/29/2018	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/07/2018	Heavy Snow
Forest County	11/15/2018	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/18/2019	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/01/2019	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/04/2019	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/07/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/12/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/27/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	04/17/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	11/01/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/01/2020	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/16/2020	Winter Storm
Forest County	12/24/2020	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/01/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/03/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/25/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/01/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/10/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/15/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/22/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	11/14/2021	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/16/2022	Winter Storm
Forest County	01/23/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/24/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/03/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	03/09/2022	Winter Weather

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Forest County Winter Weather History		
Location	Date	Event Type
Forest County	03/11/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	04/18/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	11/15/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/15/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/23/2022	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/22/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/25/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/26/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	03/06/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	03/13/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	12/18/2023	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/06/2024	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/14/2024	Winter Weather
Forest County	01/18/2024	Winter Weather
Forest County	02/16/2024	Winter Weather
Forest County	03/10/2024	Winter Weather
Source: NOAA NCEI, 2024		

### **4.3.15.4 Future Occurrence**

Winter storm hazards in Pennsylvania are guaranteed yearly since the state is located at a relatively high latitudes resulting in winter temperatures that range between 0- and 32-degrees Fahrenheit for a good deal of the fall through early spring season (later October until mid-April). In addition, the state is exposed to large quantities of moisture from both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. While it is almost certain that a number of significant winter storms will occur during the winter and fall season, what is not easily determined is how many such storms will occur during that time frame. Based on historical snow related disaster declaration occurrences, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania can expect a snowstorm of disaster declaration proportions, on average, once every three to five years. Similarly, for ice storms, based on historical disaster declarations, it is expected that on average, ice storms of disaster proportions will occur once every seven to ten years within the state.

Climate change could increase the intensity of winter storms in the northeastern United States and Forest County, Pennsylvania. With warmer air temperatures, more moisture will be held in the air, and if the temperatures on the ground are below freezing, this could result in more snow

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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falling during a weather event like a winter storm. These events may become less frequent as the climate warms, but they could be more intense.

### **4.3.15.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Severe winter storms are of significant concern to Forest County because of their frequency and magnitude in the region. Additionally, they are of significant concern due to the direct and indirect costs associated with these events; delays caused by the storms and impacts on the people and facilities of the region related to snow and ice removal, health problems, cascade effects such as utility failure and traffic accidents, and stress on community resources.

Every year, winter weather indirectly and deceptively kills hundreds of people in the United States, primarily from automobile accidents, over exertion, and exposure. Winter storms are often accompanied by strong winds creating blizzard conditions with blinding wind-driven snow, drifting snow, extreme cold temperatures, and dangerous wind chill. They are considered deceptive killers because most deaths and other impacts or losses are indirectly related to the storm. Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees and powerlines, disabling electrical power and communications for days or weeks. Heavy snow can immobilize a region and paralyze a city, shutting down all air and rail transportation and disrupting medical and emergency services. The economic impact of winter weather each year is quite large, with costs for snow removal, damage, and loss of business in the millions each year. Heavy snow can immobilize and strand commuters as well as stopping the flow of supplies through an area or transportation corridor. In rural areas, homes and farms may be isolated for days and unprotected livestock may be lost. Bridge and overpasses are particularly dangerous because they freeze before other transportation surfaces. For the purposes of this Hazard Mitigation Plan, the entire population of Forest County (6,973 as of the 2020 U.S. Census) is exposed to severe winter storm events. The elderly are considered the most susceptible to this hazard due to their increased risk of injury and death from falls, overexertion, and or attempts to clear ice and snow. The elderly population is also more vulnerable to utility outages in winter, especially when they are paired with winter storm events. *Table 67 – Utility Outages in Forest County in Winter* shows the number of power outages, phone outages, and 911 outages, which have occurred in the county during winter months. Vulnerable populations within Forest County may not have access to housing or their housing may be less able to withstand cold temperatures (e.g., homes with poor insulation and heating supply). The unsheltered populations of an area are at most risk to winter storm events.

The table below illustrates the number of citizens per municipality under the age of five or over the age of sixty-five years of age who are at an increased vulnerability to winter storms, and cascading hazards from winter storms:

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 52 - Population per Municipality under 5 Years or 65 Years or Older*

<b>Population per Municipality under 5 Years or 65 Years or Older</b>				
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of People under 5 years of age</b>	<b>Percent of Population (%)</b>	<b>Number of People 65 years or older</b>	<b>Percent of Population (%)</b>
Barnett Township	0	0.00	146	48.80
Green Township	6	1.60	172	44.70
Harmony Township	64	7.00	157	17.30
Hickory Township	1	0.30	85	26.60
Howe Township	2	1.00	52	24.90
Jenks Township	198	5.30	593	15.80
Kingsley Township	0	0.00	59	35.50
Tionesta Borough	2	0.60	163	45.50
Tionesta Township	166	29.40	5	0.90
Source: United States Census Bureau (USCB), American Community Survey (ACS), 2022				

Approximately 4.0% of the total population of Forest County is under the age of five years old and approximately 22.9% of the total population is sixty-five years old or older. In total, 26.9% of the population is at an increased risk from exposure to winter storm events and cascading hazards.

The entire general building stock inventory in Forest County is exposed and vulnerable to the severe winter storm hazard. In general, structural impacts include damage to roof and building frames, rather than building content. There was no historic information available that identified property damages within Forest County due to a single severe winter storm event. Current modeling tools are not available to estimate specific losses for this hazard. The cultural aspects of Forest County, including the single museum, are also at an increased vulnerability to winter storms. This museum is the Forest County Historical Society located in Tionesta Borough.

A specific area that is vulnerable to the severe winter storm hazard is the floodplain. At risk general building stock and infrastructure in floodplains are present in the flood profile due to snow and ice melt. Generally, losses from flooding associated with severe winter storms should be less than those associated with a 100-year or 500-year flood.

Full functionality of critical facilities such as police, fire, and medical facilities is essential for response during and after a severe winter storm event. These critical facility structures are largely constructed of concrete and masonry; therefore, they should only suffer minimal structural damage from severe winter storm events. Backup power is recommended critical infrastructure and facilities due to the potential for power interruption. Infrastructure at risk for

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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this hazard includes roadways that could be damaged due to the application of salt and intermittent freezing and warming conditions that can damage roads over time. Severe snowfall requires infrastructure to clear roadways and alert citizens to dangerous conditions. In spring, this type of roadway damage must be repaired. Additionally, freezing rain and ice storms impact utilities (i.e., power lines and overhead utility wires) causing power outages for hundreds to thousands of residents.

The cost of snow and ice removal and repair of roads from the freeze/thaw process can drain local financial resources. However, because severe winter storms are a regular occurrence in this area, Forest County is generally well-prepared for snow and ice removal each season.

Winter storm vulnerability is going to increase in Forest County when climate change is considered. As mentioned above in Section 4.3.15.4, climate change is expected to increase the intensity of winter storms. With warmer air temperatures, more moisture will be held in the air, and if temperatures on the ground rapidly decrease, or fall below freezing, this could result in more snow falling during a weather event like a winter storm. These events may become less frequent as the global temperatures increase, but they could become more intense.

As seen in *Table 3 – Population Change in Forest County*, one municipality has seen a net population increase from the 2010 census to the 2020 census according to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey estimates. The impact that a winter storm can have on these municipalities will vary. Municipalities with an increase in population could have more resources available as well as personnel to mitigate the impacts that a winter storm can bring to one's community. A municipality that experienced a population decrease may not have these resources or personnel available to prepare for and mitigate against an impending winter storm. Adversely, municipalities with an increase in population could experience a more significant impact simply because they have more individuals being impacted compared to a smaller municipality. All municipalities within Forest County are at the same level of risk to winter storms, but the direct and indirect impacts and vulnerability will vary by municipality.

Vulnerable, or underserved, populations within Forest County may not have access to housing or their housing may be less able to withstand cold temperatures (e.g., homes with poor insulation and heating supply). The unsheltered populations of an area are at the highest vulnerability to winter storm events. Individuals who are also in poverty, based on information provided in the United States Census are more likely to have issues meeting economic requirements for utility bills in the winter as well. All of these populations can be considered socially vulnerable or communities that have unmet needs.

Land use and major developments will have negligible impacts on the vulnerability of Forest County to winter storm events. Land use may impact the response capabilities of Forest County



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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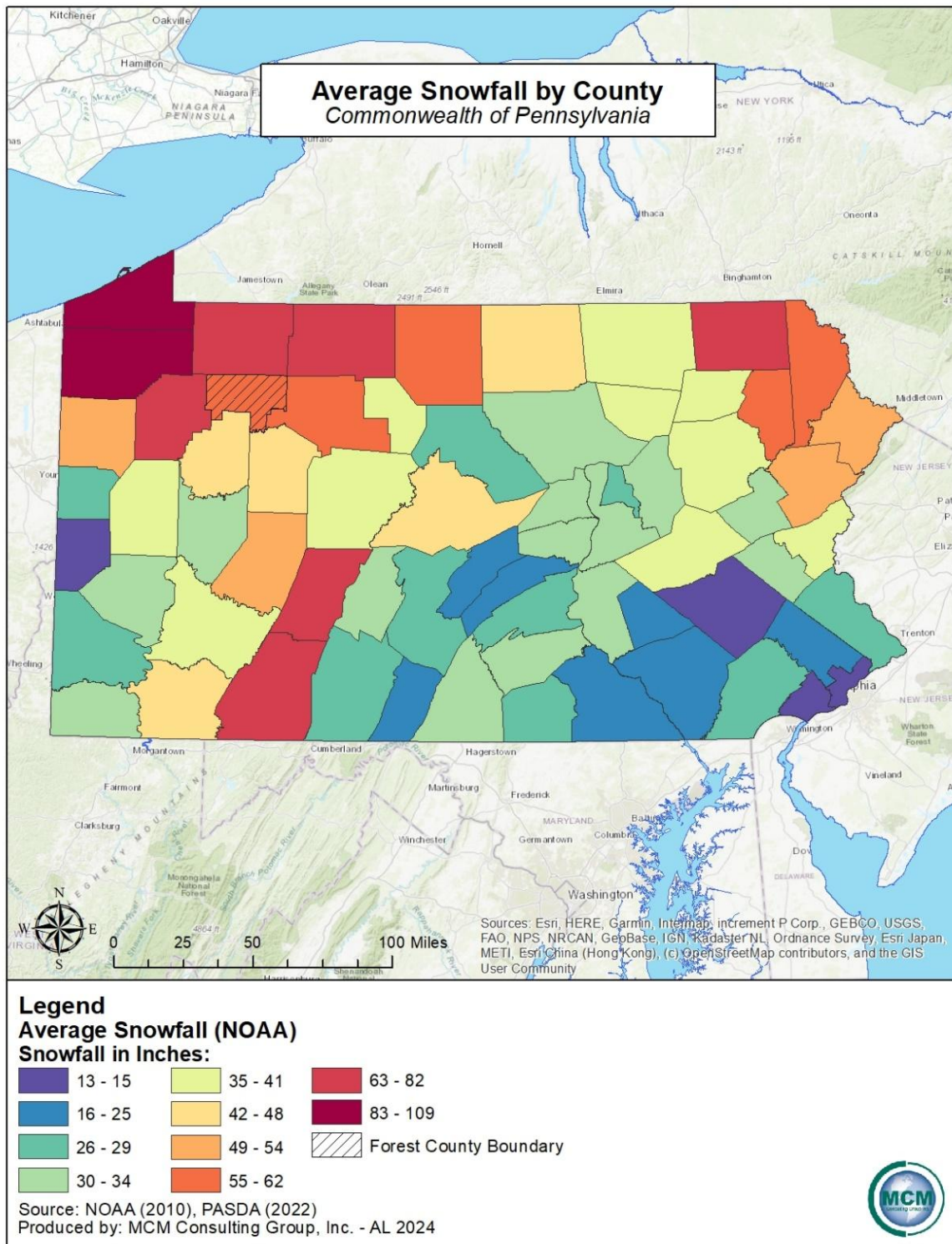
in a winter storm event, but changes in that land use will not increase the vulnerability. Forest County has significant capabilities to respond to winter storm events. Major development in the county will need to be planned to allow for winter storm response, including size and makeup of transportation routes, and location of snow removal areas.

Winter storms may also negatively impact the natural resources in Forest County. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, 446,991 tons of salt were used in the commonwealth, including Forest County, during the 2022 through 2023 winter storm weather season. Although the use of salt and other anti-skid materials protect life safety by improving roadway conditions, there can also be unintended consequences. When salt used on roadways permeates the surrounding soil, it can infiltrate groundwater and contaminate wells. Hence, any groundwater sources near roadways, in Forest County, may be vulnerable to degradation.

Roadway salt can also pose a risk to freshwater aquatic life near to the routes of transportation treated with the minerals. Salt that makes its way into soil or freshwater becomes a persistent hazard, damaging plants and wildlife that are not adapted to coexist with high salinity. Its persistent nature is due to a lack of any known biological system that can remove it from the environment in which it exists. Although it may be diluted with water, such a treatment would not be sufficient in isolation, and some intervention would likely be necessary to extract the salt from the environment which it pollutes.

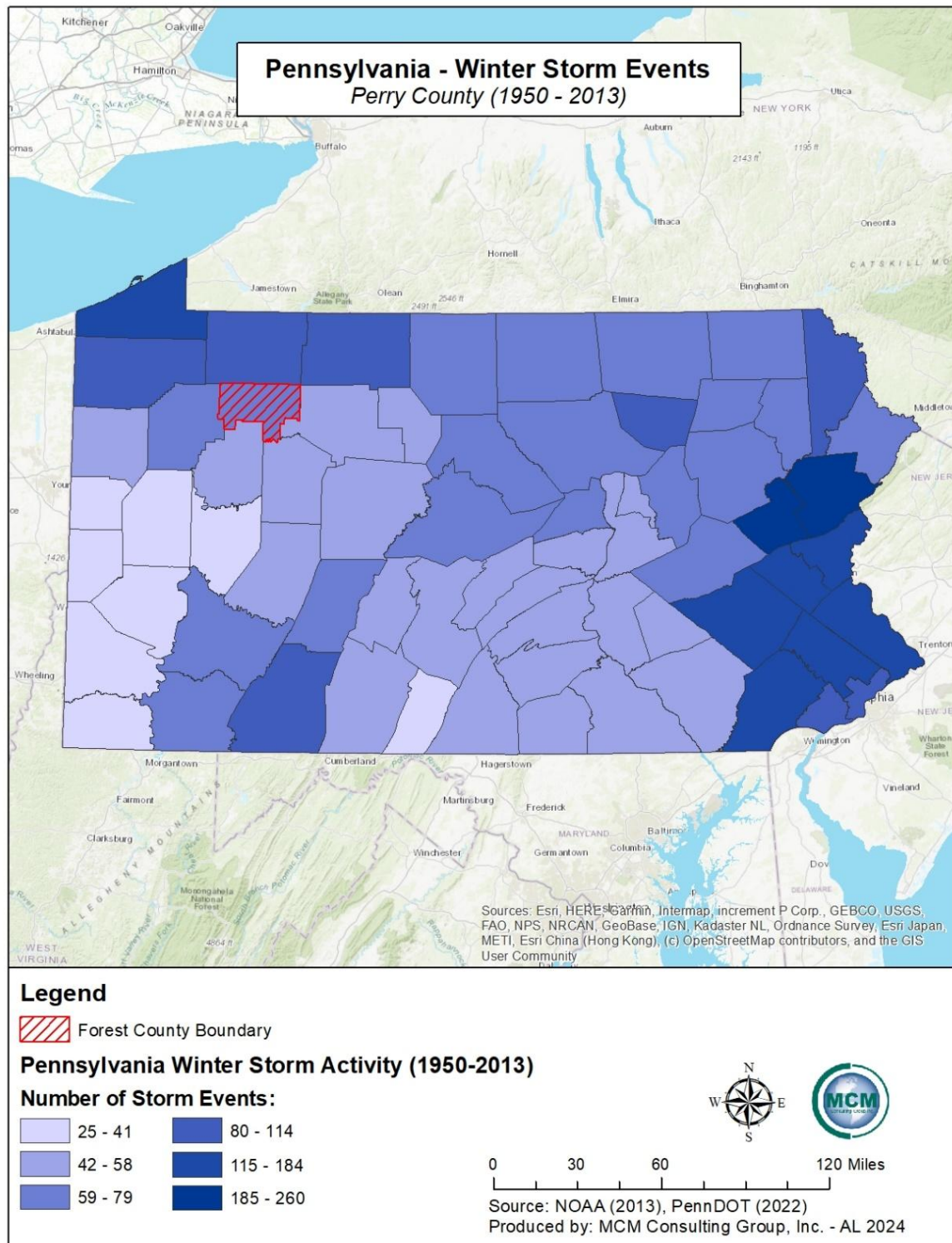
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 42 - Pennsylvania Annual snowfall 1981-2010



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 43 - Winter Storm Events by County in Pennsylvania



## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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### **4.3.16. Building/Structural Collapse/Blighted Properties**

#### **4.3.16.1 Location and Extent**

The presence of blighted properties in Forest County is a nuisance for both residents and visitors to the county on a year-round basis. Blighted properties include areas of the county where the infrastructure is damaged and aging beyond occupation, habitation, and/or commercial use.

Blighted properties are described by the Pennsylvania State Statute 1945 Act 385 as:

1. Any premises which because of physical condition or use is regarded as a public nuisance by common law or has been declared a public in accordance with the local housing, building, plumbing, fire, and related codes.
2. Any premises which because of physical condition, use, or occupancy is considered an attractive nuisance to children, including but not limited to abandoned wells, shafts, basements, excavations, and unsafe fences or structures.
3. Any dwelling which because it is dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe, vermin-infested, or lacking in the facilities and equipment required by the housing code of the municipality, has been designated by the department responsible for enforcement of the code as unfit for human habitation.
4. Any structure which is a fire hazard or is otherwise dangerous to the safety of persons or property.
5. Any structure from which the utilities, plumbing, heating, sewage, or other facilities have been disconnected, destroyed, removed, or rendered ineffective so that the property is unfit for its intended use.
6. Any vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground in a predominantly built-up neighborhood, which by reason neglect or lack of maintenance has become a place for the accumulation of trash or debris, or a haven for rodents or other vermin.
7. Any unoccupied property which has been tax delinquent for a period of two years prior to the effective date of Pennsylvania State Statute 1945 Act 385 or local municipality regulations and those in the future having a two-year tax delinquency.
8. Any property which is vacant but not tax delinquent, which has not been rehabilitated within one year of the receipt of notice to rehabilitate from the appropriate code enforcement agency.
9. Any abandoned property.

#### **4.3.16.2 Range of Magnitude**

Forest County has a large number of blighted properties that are located in urban environments, including Marienville, Tionesta, and West Hickory. Most of the blighted properties in Forest County are unsecured and highly unsafe due to one or more of the following issues: structure rot,



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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infestation from vermin including but not limited to rats, mice, and insects, and occupation by squatters. These properties can create a risk for the county because they are unsafe for occupation and future construction.

### **4.3.16.3 Past Occurrence**

The number of blighted properties in Forest County has decreased in recent years. Some properties that are considered to be blighted in Forest County have been demolished by the county itself. With recent market trends in real estate, a large number of vacant buildings in Forest County are sold prior to them being blighted.

### **4.3.16.4 Future Occurrence**

Blighted properties in Forest County will continue to increase unless blighted property procedures are put into practice at the county and local levels. With the requisite policies put into place the number of blighted properties in Forest County is liable to decrease.

### **4.3.16.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Blighted properties are a significant concern when the health and safety of the citizens of Forest County are impacted. Blighted properties, while being an eye sore, are also a threat to the health and safety of individuals. Buildings that are blighted often can be unsafe due to building materials exposed to the environment or to unintentional consumption by humans. Buildings that have utilized asbestos in construction can become a major health hazard if the building is not maintained, the asbestos exposed, and people breathe in those particles because the property has become abandoned and blighted. Another large health issue is mold in blighted properties and buildings. After a property becomes blighted, the functional systems that prevent mold from growing and spreading are often rendered useless, thus facilitating the growth of harmful mold and fungi that pose a threat to human health.

Just as blighted properties can adversely affect the health and safety of humans, it can also hurt the environment of an area. The leaching of building materials from an open or fallen property into water features, such as streams and creeks, can damage the wildlife in a water feature and hurt the public supply of drinking water. As mentioned above, asbestos is a large concern if the blighted property is of older construction. Also, potential chemicals from a blighted property, like paints and oils, can make their way into water tables, streams, and creeks, thus polluting the water features.

Blighted properties also offer shelter for animals and vermin that may not be able to find a home, and an area for breeding in the wild. This can result in the spread of rats and other pests in an area with a large concentration of blighted properties. Along with the accumulation of pests like rats, there is also a high chance of that area also attracting vermin like cockroaches. The increase



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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in vermin can also pose a threat to human health, as vermin and pests can carry diseases which can be contracted due to close contact.

Blight can also adversely affect the infrastructure and its ability to function if the blighted properties in Forest County are adjacent to or near critical facilities and functional needs facilities. If a blighted property abuts a critical facility, it may be best for that structure to be torn down so that potential negative effects from the blighted property do not cause damage or limit the function of the critical facility.

Finally, blighted properties can be a problem for tourism and attracting new residents to Forest County. If blighted properties fester in the county, people who travel to Forest County for pleasure, whether that be for summer vacations or seasonal hunting, might reconsider that travel due to the presence of blighted properties.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.17. Civil Disturbance**

#### **4.3.17.1 Location and Extent**

Civil disturbance refers to mass acts of disobedience where participants can become hostile to authority and there is a threat to maintaining public safety and order. Such disturbances can often be forms of protest in the face of socio-political problems. Riots have not been frequent occurrences throughout the history of the Commonwealth, however when they occur, they can cause significant property damage, injury and even loss of life. The scale and scope of civil disturbance events varies widely. Government facilities, local landmarks, prisons, and universities are common sites where crowds and mobs may gather.

Criminal activity refers to all criminality, including enemy attack, sabotage, physical or information break of security, workplace or school violence, harassment, discrimination, and other crimes. Criminal activity is a very broad hazard category and similar to civil disturbance, the scale and scope of incidents or events vary widely.

#### **4.3.17.2 Range of Magnitude**

Civil disturbances can take the form of small gatherings or large groups blocking or impeding access to a building or disrupting normal activities by generating noise and intimidating people. They can range from a peaceful sit-in to a full-scale riot, in which a mob burns or otherwise destroys property and terrorizes individuals. Even in its more passive forms, a group that blocks roadways, sidewalks, or buildings interferes with public order. There are two types of large gatherings typically associated with civil disturbances: a crowd and a mob. A crowd may be defined as a casual, temporary collection of people without a strong, cohesive relationship. Crowds can be classified into four categories:

**Casual Crowd:** A casual crowd is merely a group of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time. Violent conduct does not occur.

**Cohesive Crowd:** A cohesive crowd consists of members who are involved in some type of unified behavior. Members of this group are involved in some type of common activity, such as worshipping, dancing, or watching a sporting event. Although they may have intense internal discipline, they require substantial provocation to arouse to action.

**Expressive Crowd:** An expressive crowd is one held together by a common commitment or purpose. Although they may not be formally organized, they are assembled as an expression of common sentiment or frustration. Members wish to be seen as a formidable influence. One of the best examples of this type is a group assembled to protest.

**Aggressive Crowd:** An aggressive crowd is comprised of individuals who have assembled for a specific purpose. This crowd often has leaders who attempt to arouse the members or motivate them to take action. Members are noisy and threatening and will taunt

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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authorities. They may be more impulsive and emotional and require only minimal stimulation to arouse violence. Examples of this type of crowd could include demonstrators and strikers, though not all demonstrators and strikers are aggressive.

A mob can be defined as a large disorderly crowd or throng. Mobs are usually emotional, loud, tumultuous, violent, and lawless. Similar to crowds, mobs have different levels of commitment and can be classified into four categories:

**Aggressive Mob:** An aggressive mob is one that attacks, riots, and terrorizes. The object of violence may be a person, property, or both. An aggressive mob is distinguished from an aggressive crowd only by lawless activity. Examples of aggressive mobs are the inmate mobs in prisons and jails, mobs that act out their frustrations after political defeat, or violent mobs at political protests or rallies.

**Escape Mob:** An escape mob are those groups which attempt to flee from something such as a fire, bomb, flood, or other catastrophe. Members of escape mobs are generally difficult to control and can be characterized by unreasonable terror.

**Acquisitive Mob:** An acquisitive mob is one motivated by a desire to acquire something. Riots caused by other factors often turn into looting spree. This mob exploits a lack of control by authorities in safeguarding property.

**Expressive Mob:** An expressive mob is one that expresses fervor or revelry following some sporting event, religious activity, or celebration. Members experience a release of pent-up emotions in highly charged situations.

In the event of a significant civil disturbance or criminal activity incident, local government operations and the delivery of services in the community may experience short-term disruptions. The greatest secondary effect is the impact on the economic and financial conditions of the affected community, particularly in relation to the property, facilities, and infrastructure damaged as a result of the disturbance. More serious acts of vandalism may result in limited power failure or hazardous material spills, leading to a possible public health emergency. Altered traffic patterns may increase the probability of a transportation accident.

Forest County's greatest likelihood for civil disturbance is in Tionesta, the county seat. Citizens, property, and infrastructure could be affected if a large-scale disorder were to take place. Typically, government facilities, landmarks, prisons, and universities are common sites where crowds or mobs may gather. Forest County is home to one post-secondary education centers.

### **4.3.17.3 Past Occurrences**

The county has not experienced any *significant* civil disturbance events.

Following the death of African-American George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020 at the hands of law enforcement, civil unrest erupted across the nation. A Proclamation of

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Disaster Emergency was established by the Governor’s Office for the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 15, 2021. This gave the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Director command and control of the statewide emergency operations and directed all agencies and departments to utilize all resources and personnel to cope with the magnitude and severity of the event.

### **4.3.17.4 Future Occurrence**

While unlikely, civil disturbances may occur in Forest County, and it is difficult to accurately predict the probability of future occurrence for civil disturbance events over the long-term. However, *Table 53 - Civil Disturbance Events Reported to PEMA 2018-2023*, depicts the range of potential civil disturbances in Pennsylvania and gives the county some background for consideration of future occurrences.

*Table 53 - Civil Disturbance Events Reported to PEMA 2018-2023*

EVENT TYPE	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Demonstration	4	2	35	14	10	1
Juvenile Detention Center	7	0	0	0	0	0
Prison Disturbance	0	1	5	3	2	0
Detainee Escape	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protest	8	17	172	42	16	7
Large gathering	8	4	16	3	7	1
Riot	0	0	4	0	1	0
School Threat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gun/Bomb Incident	0	0	0	0	0	0
Work Stoppage	0	0	0	0	2	0
Other	1	13	28	29	13	1
<b>Civil Disorder - totals</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>10</b>

*\*Events totaled through April 2023*

According to the Pennsylvania State Hazard Mitigation Plan, from 2018 to 2023, the commonwealth experienced an average of eighty-one civil disturbance events each year. While that number is relatively low and the occurrences in Forest County are rare, the local planning team (LPT) decided that civil disturbance should be regarded as a low-risk hazard.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.17.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Climate change has the potential to increase Forest County's vulnerability to civil disturbances, and disturbance events. Intense weather events and weather patterns can lead to riots and civil disturbance in areas that are directly impacted. For example, an extreme heat or drought event, which could become more common from climate change, could cause residents to seek water and resources, and create a conflict from increased competition for resources.

All municipalities in Forest County can be vulnerable to civil disturbance and criminal activity; however, the anticipated impact from such events is minimal. These events may be sparked for varying reasons and the seriousness of the event may well be exacerbated by how authorities handle the crowd. At the writing of this plan, the political temperature of the country as a whole continues to run high, making this hazard vulnerability one for consistent monitoring by public safety officials.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.18. Dam Failure**

#### **4.3.18.1 Location and Extent**

##### **Dams**

A dam restricts the flow of water or underground streams and often creates reservoirs for water storage. The reservoirs created by these barriers not only suppress floods but also provide water for activities such as irrigation, human consumption, industrial use aquaculture, and navigability.

Dam failures occur usually as a secondary effect of massive amounts of rainfall and flooding, causing too much water to enter the spillway system. This type of failure occurs with little to no warning. Spring thaws, severe thunderstorms, and heavy rainfall are also contributing factors to potential dam failures. Depending on the size of the body of water where the dam is constructed, additional water may come from distant upstream locations. Water contributions may also come from dam failures in adjoining counties that are along the same riverine or water features.

FEMA considers the following to be the most frequent causes of dam failures:

- Overtopping caused by floods that exceed the capacity of the dam
- Deliberate acts of sabotage
- Structural failure of materials used in dam construction
- Movement and/or failure of the foundation supporting the dam
- Settlement and cracking of concrete or embankment dams
- Piping and internal erosion of soil in embankment dams
- Inadequate maintenance and upkeep

Poor engineering or poor maintenance may also cause dam failure. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) awards permits for dams and also share inspection responsibilities. Inspection results are characterized as either safe or unsafe.

The National Inventory of Dams (NID) is a registry that captures information about structures that are greater than or equal to 25 feet in height or impound 50-acre-feet or more of water (an acre-foot is equal to 325,851 gallons of water); it includes structures above 6 feet in height where failure would potentially cause damage downstream. The dams are classified in terms of hazard potential as “High,” “Significant,” or “Low,” with high-hazard dams requiring emergency action plans (EAPS) There is one high-hazard and one low-hazard dams in Forest County that are both publicly and privately owned and are registered with the USACE in the NID. There are no dams with a hazard classification as significant. There is one dam within the county that is high-hazard and requires an emergency action plan. *Table 55– Forest County Dam Inventory* illustrates the

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

dams located in Forest County. *Table 54 – High-Hazard Dams Municipality Summary* summarizes the high-hazard dams in Forest County by municipality. The municipalities not listed do not have high-hazard dams.

*Table 54 - High- Hazard Dams Municipality Summary*

<b>High-Hazard Dams – Municipal Summary</b>	
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of High-Hazard Dams</b>
Tionesta Township	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1</b>
Source: NID, 2024	

*Table 55 - Forest County Dam Inventory*

<b>Forest County Dams</b>							
<b>Dam Name</b>	<b>River</b>	<b>Owner Name</b>	<b>Year Completed</b>	<b>Dam Height (feet)</b>	<b>Drainage Area (acres)</b>	<b>Hazard</b>	<b>EAP</b>
Beaver Meadow	Salmon Creek	USDA Forest Service	1936	16	5	L	NR
Tionesta Dam	Tionesta Creek	CELRP	1940	N/A	478	H	Y
Source: NID, 2024							

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection defines a high-hazard dam as “Any dam so located as to endanger populated areas downstream by its failure.” High-hazard dams receive two inspections each year, once by a professional engineer on behalf of the owner and once by a PA DEP inspector (DEP, 2008).

### **4.3.18.2 Range of Magnitude**

#### **Dams**

Dam failures can pose a serious threat to communities located downstream from major dams. The impact of a dam failure is dependent on the volume of water impounded by the dam and the amount of population or assets located downstream. Catastrophic failures are characterized by the sudden, rapid, and uncontrolled release of impounded water from a dammed impoundment or water body. *Figure 44 – Forest County Dams* shows the location of dams within Forest County as well as their hazard designation.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.18.3 Past Occurrence**

There have been no past occurrences of dam failure or major incidence occurring at the locations of dams within Forest County. Smaller incidents have occurred but have not had significant impacts in the county.

There have been a few historically destructive dam failures in Pennsylvania over the course of the past two hundred years. The most destructive dam failure in United States history took place in Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Cambria County) in 1889, claiming 2,209 lives. Another significant dam failure took place in Austin, Pennsylvania (Potter County) in 1911, claiming seventy-eight lives. Similarly, a dam failure in West Taylor Township, Pennsylvania (Cambria County) claimed the lives of forty people when the Laurel Run Dam, No. 2 failed during the Johnstown Flood in the early morning hours of July 20th, 1977.

### **4.3.18.4 Future Occurrence**

#### **Dams**

Although dam failures can occur at any time, given the right circumstances, the likelihood of a dam failure in Forest County is considered to be unlikely.

The presence of structural integrity and inspection programs significantly reduces the potential for major dam failure events to occur. The PA DEP inventories and regulates all the dams that meet or exceed the following criteria (PA, DEP, 2008):

- Impound water from a drainage area of greater than 100 acres
- Have a maximum water depth greater than 15 feet
- Have a maximum storage capacity of 50 acre-feet or greater

The construction, operation, maintenance, and abandonment of dams is reviewed and monitored by the PA DEP Division of Dam Safety. Dams are evaluated based on those categories such as slope stability, undermining seepage, and spillway adequacy. With more strict construction and design procedures in place, the future occurrence of a dam failure is increasingly small. The new procedures and rules protect public safety and both public and private property. Newly constructed dams are thoroughly examined by professional engineers to prevent future dam failure events.

### **4.3.18.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

#### **Dams**

Property and populations located downstream from any dams are vulnerable to dam failures. The Pennsylvania Code (§105.91 Classification of dams and reservoirs) classifies doth dams by size and the amount of loss of life and economic loss expected in a failure event. *Table 56 – Dam*

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Classification* displays the dam classification guide for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Although the size of a dam may result in varying impacts, the hazard potential classification of category one dams is a more important indicator, since that will indicate the level of potential substantial loss of life and excessive economic loss.

*Table 56 - Dam Classification*

<b>Dam Classification (PA Code 1980)</b>		
<b>Dam Size Classification</b>		
<b>Class</b>	<b>Impoundment Storage (Acre-Feet)</b>	<b>Dam Height (Feet)</b>
<b>A</b>	Equal to or greater than 50,000	Equal to or greater than 100
<b>B</b>	Less than 50,000 but greater than 1,000	Less than 100 but greater than 40
<b>C</b>	Equal to or less than 1,000	Equal to or less than 40
<b>Dam Damage Classification</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Loss of Life</b>	<b>Economic Loss</b>
<b>1</b>	Substantial	Excessive
<b>2</b>	Few	Appreciable
<b>3</b>	None Expected	Minimal

Dam failures can cause significant environmental effects, as the resulting flood from a dam failure is likely to disperse debris and hazardous materials downstream that can damage local ecosystems. Debris carried downstream can block roads, cause traffic accidents, disrupt traffic patterns, and delay the delivery of essential services along major traffic corridors. Debris flow can also cause landslides along steep slopes and embankments with low slope stability. The economic and financial impact from damage and recovery ranges from minimal to severe, depending on the magnitude of damage and scale of failure event.

Emergency action plans are developed by the owners of high-hazard dams. These plans are then disseminated to first responders and other planning partners within the county. Vulnerable populations are those residents and businesses located downstream from a high-hazard dam within the inundation area. The emergency action plan identifies a call list to notify downstream at-risk populations. Emergency action plan exercises are held every five to seven years depending on local policy.

With only two dams, one of which is high-hazard, being present in Forest County, the characteristics are not dissimilar. The Salmon Creek Dam was constructed in 1936, followed by

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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the Tionesta Dam in 1940. The Tionesta Dam, located in Tionesta Township, is the largest in terms of drainage area, with a total drainage areas of 478 acres. The Salmon Creek Dam is located near Salmon Creek, while the Tionesta Dam is located near Tionesta Creek. Both dams are owned by public/government entities.

The failure or partial failure of a High-Hazard Potential Dam can have impacts that affect many different jurisdictions across Forest County and counties adjacent to Forest County. A failure at any of the dams in Forest County would result in some inundation in at least those municipalities adjacent to the dam in question. A more comprehensive examination of risk inundation areas from High-Hazard Potential Dams can be conducted in future iterations of the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan. This dataset was not readily accessible at the time of this writing. However, each of this municipalities that could be affected by the failure of a High-Hazard Potential Dam could result in the inundation of police stations and fire departments, critical infrastructure facilities, and community lifeline locations like medical facilities, power and energy facilities, and schools, nursing homes, and senior care and long term care facilities.

Forest County is at risk when high-hazard potential dams are considered. There are three types of risk related to high-hazard potential dams and they are listed below in *Table 57 – High-Hazard Potential Dams Risk Type*:

*Table 57 - High- Hazard Potential Dams Risk Type*

High-Hazard Potential Dams Risk Types	
Type of Risk	Description
Incremental Risk	The risk (likelihood and consequences) to the pool area and downstream floodplain occupants that can be attributed to the presence of the dam should the dam breach prior or subsequent to overtopping, or undergo component malfunction or mis operation, where the consequences considered are over and above those that would occur without dam breach. The consequences typically are due to downstream inundation, but loss of the pool can result in significant consequences in the pool area upstream of the dam.
Non-Breach Risk	The risk in the reservoir pool area and affected downstream floodplain due to ‘normal’ dam operation of the dam (e.g., large spillway flows within the design capacity that exceed channel capacity) or ‘overtopping of the dam without breaching’ scenarios.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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High-Hazard Potential Dams Risk Types	
Type of Risk	Description
Residual Risk	The risk that remains after all mitigation actions and risk reduction actions have been completed. With respect to dams, FEMA defines residual risk as “risk remaining at any time” (FEMA, 2015, p A-2). It is the risk that remains after decisions related to a specific dam safety issue are made and prudent actions have been taken to address the risk. It is the remote risk associated with a condition that was judged to not be a credible dam safety issue.
Source: “Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams Grant Program Guidance,” June 2020	

At this time, insufficient information is available to conduct a substantive analysis of incremental, non-breach and residual risk relative to Forest County’s high hazard potential dams. However, it is acknowledged that incremental risk is “the risk (likelihood and consequences) to the pool area and downstream floodplain occupants that can be attributed to the presence of the dam, should the dam breach prior or subsequent to overtopping, or undergo component malfunction or mis operation, where the consequences considered are over and above those that would occur without dam breach;” non-breach risk is “the risk in the reservoir pool area and affected downstream floodplain due to ‘normal’ dam operation of the dam (e.g., large spillway flows within the design capacity that exceed channel capacity) or ‘overtopping of the dam without breaching’ scenarios;” and residual risk) is “the risk that remains after decisions related to a specific dam safety issue are made and prudent actions have been taken to address the risk. It is the remote risk associated with a condition that was judged to not be a credible dam safety issue” (FEMA, 2020 Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams Grant Program Guidance).

The risk of high-hazard potential dams in Forest County is present but at the time of this writing, there is insufficient data to identify in exact detail the vulnerable populations and assets in inundation areas for the high-hazard potential dams. The areas downstream from the high-hazard potential dams are more vulnerable to inundation than areas that are upstream from said dams. There are current datasets to address high-hazard potential dam impacts in greater detail, but these datasets are still in development from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the United States Army Corp of Engineers, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Specifically, vector GIS boundary data for dam inundation areas would allow for more comprehensive damage overlays and damage analysis. Vector GIS information would allow for inundation areas to be mapped along with community lifelines and critical facilities to see what specific facilities could be impacted by a failure at a high-hazard potential dam, including type

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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and use of those facilities impacted. This inundation data could also lead to greater analysis on the construction type of the buildings impacted, including what materials are used for building and what the physical characteristics of the buildings are made of that may be impacted. While useful for vulnerability assessment, these datasets would have to be carefully regulated in regard to access to ensure that no unauthorized individuals or organizations have the ability to see or use the data. Dam inundation maps could also be used if GIS boundary data is not available or able to be released.

Once these datasets have been published and inundation data is easier to acquire, this information will be used to develop more detailed risk assessments and vulnerability assessments for dam failure at the high-hazard potential dams. Continued collaboration with state and federal partners will occur to ensure that any data created or made available is utilized for vulnerability assessment for high-hazard potential dams.

Although there are data limitations to take into account in regard to high-hazard potential dams in Forest County, some open source, nationally available data can be integrated into this vulnerability assessment. One of those tools is the Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT), administered by FEMA. This tool can overlay areas of interest around certain features to determine what types of populations are within certain distances of those features. In the table below, a 2-mile distance was calculated around each high-hazard dam in Forest County. Those locations were then used to determine how many people or households are vulnerable to a dam failure based strictly on distance. Some of the indicators used for this analysis were total population, households with vehicles, households with limited English and housing units that are mobile homes.

*Table 58 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data*

<b>High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data</b>				
<b>Dam</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Households without a vehicle</b>	<b>Households with limited English</b>	<b>Housing units that are mobile homes</b>
Tionesta Dam	136	8	0	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>
Source: RAPT, ACS, 2017-2021, Table B08201, Table S1602, and Table DP04				

An analysis was also conducted for high priority infrastructure within 2-miles of high-hazard dams in Forest County. There were no law enforcement locations within 2 miles of the dams. The information in the table below illustrates which infrastructure was located in that vulnerability zone.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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*Table 59 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data- Infrastructure*

High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data – Infrastructure				
Dam	Hospitals	Nursing Homes	Fire Stations	Public Schools
Tionesta Dam	0	0	1	0
Source: RAPT, Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data, 2024				

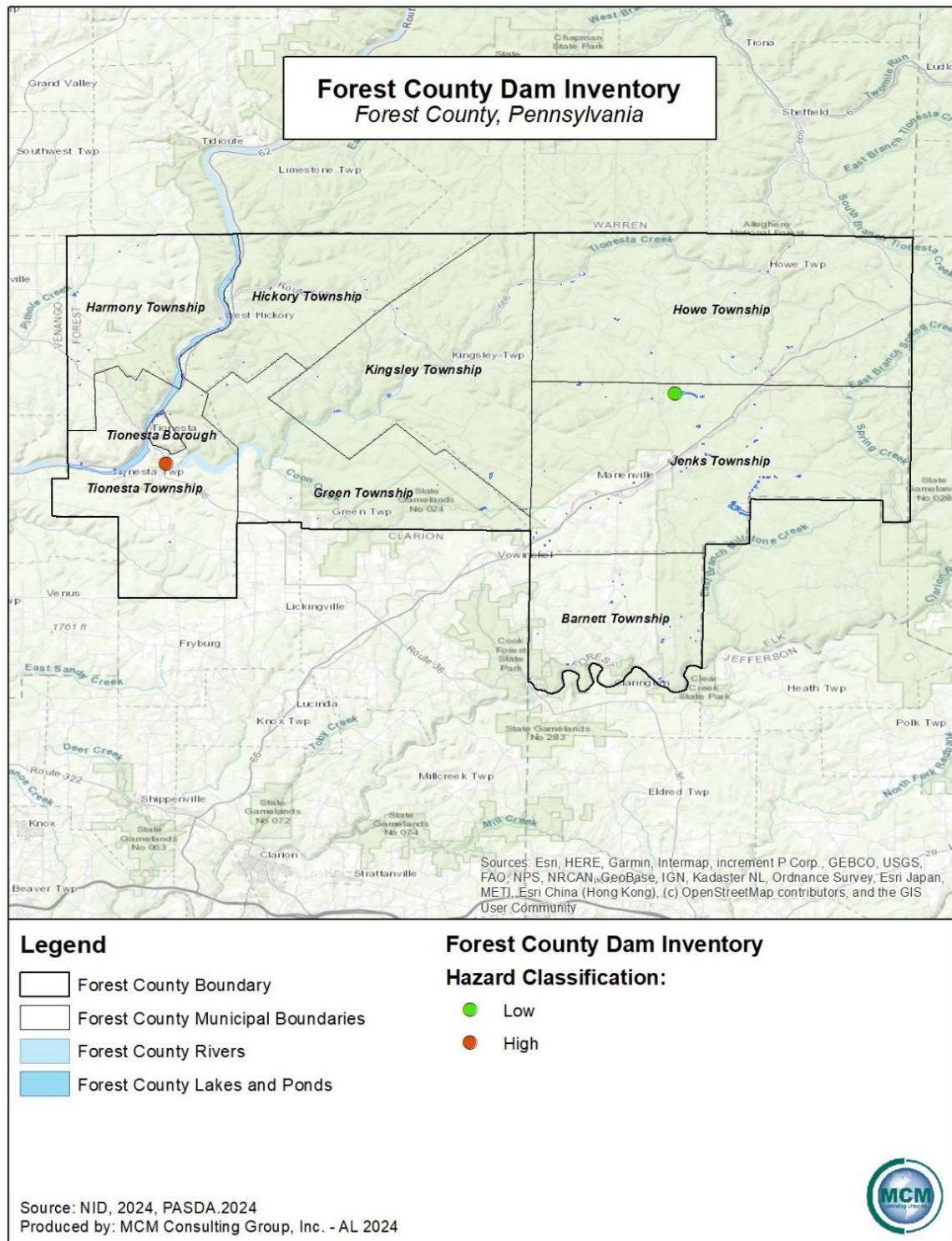
The table below provides more information on infrastructure within 2 miles of high-hazard dams.

*Table 60 - High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data- Infrastructure (Additional)*

High-Hazard Dam Vulnerability Data – Infrastructure Names	
Dam	Infrastructure Details
Tionesta Dam	1. Fire Station – Tionesta Volunteer Fire Department
Source: RAPT, Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data, 2024	

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 44 - Forest County Dams



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.19. Disorientation**

#### **4.3.19.1 Location and Extent**

Many people are attracted to Pennsylvania's rural areas for recreational purposes such as hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. People can become lost or trapped in remote and rugged wilderness areas, as a result. Forest County has most parks and large forested areas that may attract locals and tourists due to the natural appeal of the landscape and the expanses of land, both state-owned and otherwise. Forest County is home to Cook Forest State Park, as well as Cornplanter State Forest, Clear Creek State Forest, Allegheny National Forest, Hickory Creek Wilderness, and several state game lands. In the event of disorientation, search and rescue may be required for people who suffer from medical problems or injuries and those who become accidentally or intentionally disoriented. Search and rescue efforts are often focused in and around state forest and state park lands as they contain numerous miles of hiking and biking trails.

#### **4.3.19.2 Range of Magnitude**

Approximately 99% of Forest County is undeveloped forest land (Comprehensive Plan, 2013). A wide variety of factors can contribute to the outcome of a search and rescue mission, but the most common dangers associated with disorientation are lack of food, water, and shelter. Forest County generally has a limited amount of water 0.88% of total land area is surface water, and during the warmer summer months shelter is less of a necessity than during winter months when extreme cold poses a threat. Age, physical fitness, and familiarity with the area can also have a bearing on the outcome.

Initial search and rescue efforts are often made with teams of dogs, people on horseback, and or volunteers from fire departments, and for longer term incidents drones may be employed.

#### **4.3.19.3 Past Occurrence**

Wilderness search and rescue often requires considerable resources, sometimes resulting in the expenditure of hundreds of man-hours, both paid and volunteer. Forest County utilizes a database system called WebEOC to track various incidents within the county. However, no such data was available to reference for disorientation during the development of this report, and as such no detailed list of past disorientation events can be displayed at this time.

#### **4.3.19.4 Future Occurrence**

During the warm summer months, as activities such as hiking, biking, and camping increase, so does the likelihood of individuals become disoriented. Many search and rescue events also occur in November due to individuals getting lost during hunting season. Disorientation occurs most often in state parks and state forests where outdoor recreation is most abundant, and the woods



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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are most dense. Additionally, medical emergencies occur regularly in the county, especially among the elderly, which could result in disorientation events.

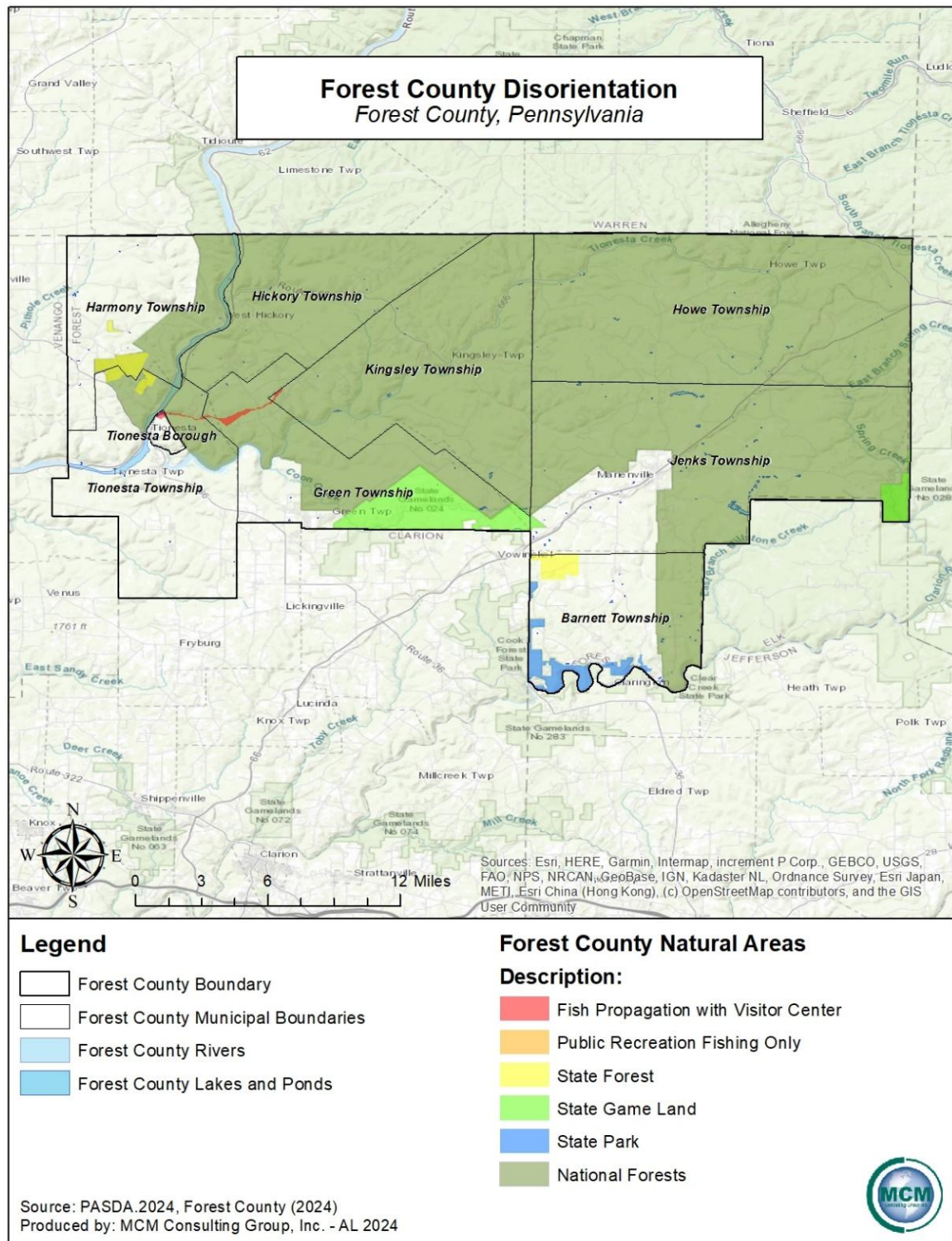
### **4.3.19.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Individuals are most likely to become disorientated in areas of vast, open wilderness. Children and the elderly are most vulnerable to exposure to the elements. The elderly tend to be more vulnerable to disorientation due to medical/mental related issues that may occur outside of rugged terrain. Often, an individual with dementia or Alzheimer's may become disoriented in residential or wilderness locations.

The most dangerous period to become lost outdoors is during the winter months when heat and shelter are vital. Forest County regularly experiences winter storms and temperatures below freezing, so people participating in outdoor recreational activities in the winter are at a higher risk in the event of disorientation. *Figure 45 – Forest County Disorientation Vulnerability* identifies areas within the county that are most vulnerable to disorientation.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 45 - Forest County Disorientation Vulnerability



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.20. Drowning**

#### **4.3.20.1 Location and Extent**

Drowning can be a significant hazard in communities with bodies of water (e.g., ponds, lakes, rivers, etc.) and extensive outdoor recreational activities. Forest County has grown, and continues to grow in popularity as a tourist destination. Water related recreational opportunities such as fishing, boating, and swimming are popular among residents and visitors. Some of the most popular tourist destinations in the county are the Alleghany River and Tionesta Lake. Other creeks, lakes, and ponds are spread throughout the county.

In addition to natural bodies of water, swimming pools are another location where drownings occur. Many swimming pools are located at residences and hotel/lodges throughout the county. Drownings can also be caused due to flooding events; this hazard is discussed further in Section 4.3.4 of this hazard mitigation plan.

#### **4.3.20.2 Range of Magnitude**

Drownings can result in death due to the lungs filling with water and not allowing the transfer of oxygen to the body. Drowning rates are particularly high for children ages one to nineteen. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) 2021, from 2011-2020, there was an average of 4,012 deaths each year in the United States due to unintentional drownings (non-boating related). An additional 332 people die each year from drowning in boating-related incidents. In 2021, 658 boating-related deaths were reported by the U.S. Coast Guard. The CDC also reports that about one in five people who die from drowning are children fourteen years of age and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another seven receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Of those that are treated in emergency departments for submersion injuries, more than 40% require hospitalization or transfer for further care. Nonfatal submersion injuries can cause severe brain damage that may result in long-term disabilities such as memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functioning. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that more than forty people die by drowning every hour of every day. They also report that drowning is one of the top ten leading causes of death for children in every region of the world.

#### **4.3.20.3 Past Occurrence**

Record of past occurrences of drowning were difficult to identify, no such data was available to reference for drowning during the development of this report, and as such no detailed report of past events can be displayed at the time of the writing of this plan.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.20.4 Future Occurrence**

It is impossible to predict when and where a drowning may occur. During the warm summer months, as activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing increase so does the likelihood of drowning. Based on past trends, Forest County on average can expect several drownings each year.

### **4.3.20.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

As tourism continues to increase in the county and the number of visitors grows, drowning are likely to continue without mitigation actions in place. Natural water sources like rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds are identified as vulnerable locations. In addition to natural water sources, man-made water sources such as pools pose a high vulnerability to visitors and residents of the county.

With tourism high in Forest County, it is anticipated that drownings will continue at pools and natural water sources. Pools with no supervision or lifeguards create a higher vulnerability than ones that are supervised. Children and the elderly are at a higher vulnerability than all other age groups. Natural water sources located in federal and state parks are more vulnerable than natural water sources located in remote areas. In general, all water sources (natural and man-made) in Forest County create some level of vulnerability to the residents and visitors of the county.

*Figure 46 – Drowning Hazards – Water Features* reflects the vulnerability for drowning in Forest County.

The WHO has identified ten actions created by high-income countries to reduce their drowning burden:

1. Install barriers controlling access to water.
2. Provide safe places away from water for pre-school children, with capable childcare.
3. Teach school-age children basic swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills.
4. Train bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation.
5. Strengthen public awareness of drowning and highlight the vulnerability of children.
6. Set and enforce safe boating, shipping, and ferry regulations.
7. Build resilience and manage flood risks and other hazards locally and nationally.
8. Coordinate drowning prevention efforts with those of other sectors and agendas.
9. Develop a national water safety plan.
10. Address priority research questions with well-designed studies.

The United States' National Weather Service (NWS) reports that more than half of flood fatalities result from automobiles being swept downstream. In 2003 the NWS started the 'Turn around, don't drown' campaign to help reduce these deaths.

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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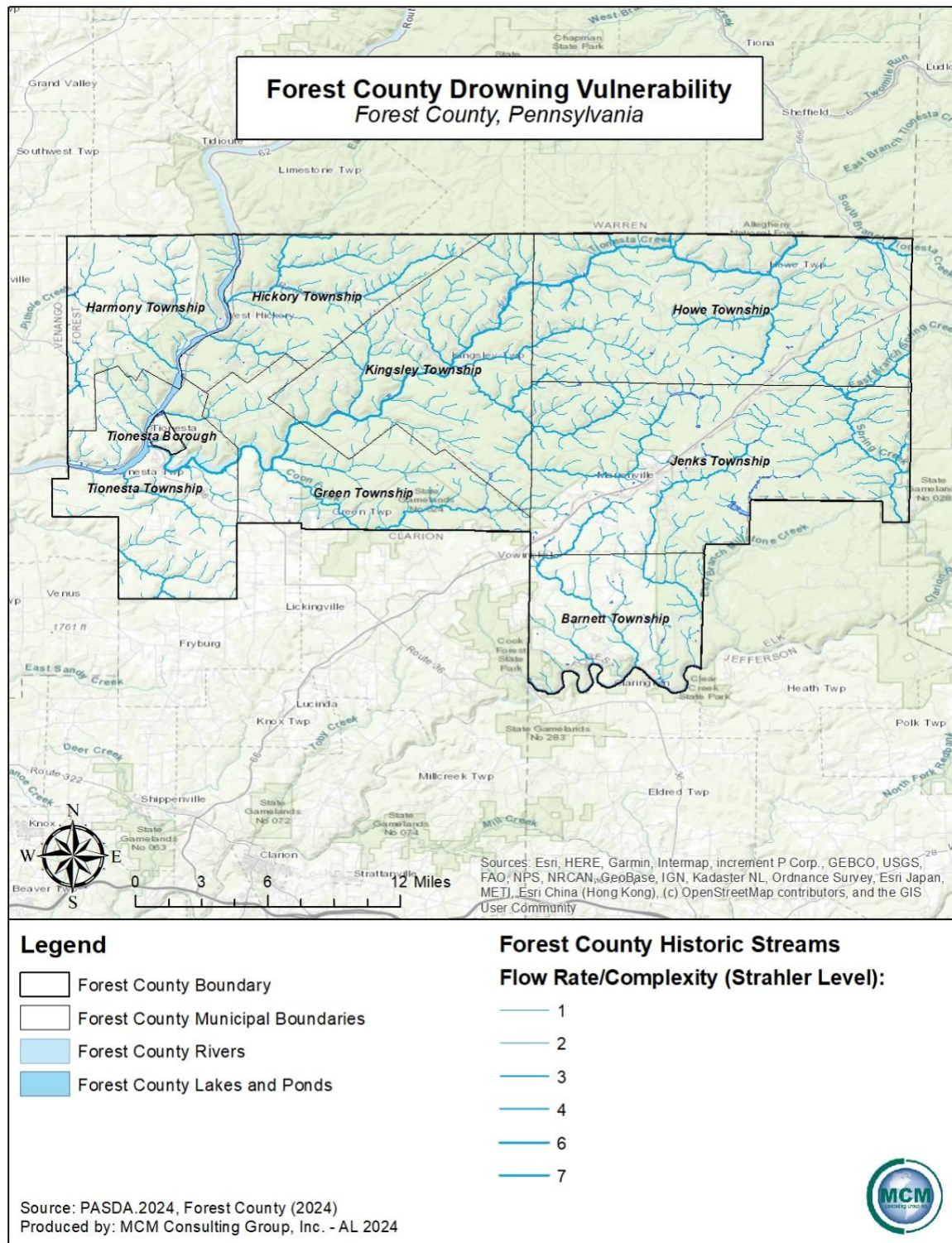
While participating in winter sports such as ice skating, ice fishing, or sledding participants must check the ice layer. Determining the safety of ice can be accomplished by assessing the following factors together:

- Appearance of the ice, its color, texture, and features.
- Thickness of the ice, there are recommended thicknesses for different uses.
- External temperature over a period of time and on the day.
- Snow coverage.
- Depth of water under the ice.
- Size of water body.
- Chemical composition of water, whether water is fresh or salt.
- Local climate fluctuations.
- Extent of ice.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 46 - Drowning Hazards- Water Features



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.21. Environmental Hazards**

#### **4.3.21.1 Location and Extent**

##### Transportation

Environmental hazards are most commonly due to hazardous materials incidents occurring when such materials are manufactured, used, stored, or transported. Most hazardous materials incidents are unintentional, however hazardous materials could also be released in a criminal or terrorist act. A release, whether it is intentional or accidental, can result in injury or death and may contaminate air, water, and/or soils. Hazardous materials incidents can be generally broken down into the subcategories of transportation and fixed facility. This section will focus on environmental hazards and how they relate to transportation of hazardous materials.

Tanker trucks, tractor trailers, and rail cars often are used to transport hazardous materials. When there are transportation incidents involving these types of vehicles, hazardous materials can be released in significant quantities. *Figure 49 – Environmental Hazard Transportation Vulnerability* shows major transportation routes through Forest County, including US 62, PA 36, PA 66, PA 127, PA 227, PA 666, PA 899, and PA 948.

##### Fixed Facility

Hazardous materials incidents can be broken down into the subcategories of transportation and fixed facility. This section of the report focuses on environmental hazardous materials at fixed facilities.

In Pennsylvania, facilities that use, manufacture, or store hazardous materials must comply with Title III of the federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), and the Commonwealth's reporting requirements under the Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning and Response Act (1990-165), as amended. There are four SARA Title III facilities in Forest County. These facilities listed as SARA sites should not be considered an exhaustive and comprehensive list of all locations where hazardous materials reside in the county. *Figure 48 – Hazardous Waste Locations* identifies SARA Title III facilities as well as several other locations that consume, store, or release potentially hazardous materials and wastes.

Fixed facilities are also monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA has identified hazardous materials sites, not regulated by SARA Title III, and are known as Toxic Releases Inventory (TRI) sites. Facilities which employ ten or more full time employees, and which manufacture or process more than 25,000 pounds (or use more than 10,000 pounds) of any SARA Section 313-listed toxic chemical in the course of a calendar year are required to report TRI information to the EPA. The EPA is the federal enforcement agency responsible for SARA Title III and PEMA classifications. As of 2024, there are zero TRI facilities in Forest County.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania* *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Oil and gas extraction facilities can also be sources of hazardous material release. Most wells in the county are active, but there are also many inactive and abandoned wells. *Figure 47 – Oil & Gas Well Locations* shows the location of all oil and gas wells in the county along with their proximity to surface waters.

### **4.3.21.2 Range of Magnitude**

#### Transportation

While often accidental, releases can occur because of human carelessness, intentional acts, or natural hazards. When caused by natural hazards, environmental hazards are known as secondary events. Hazardous materials can include toxic chemicals, radioactive materials, infectious substances, or hazardous wastes. Such releases can affect nearby populations and contaminate critical or sensitive environmental areas.

Hazardous material release can contaminate air, water, and soil, and can possibly cause injuries, poisonings, or deaths. Hazardous materials fall into nine hazards classes. These hazard classes are as follows:

- Class #1: Explosives
- Class #2: Gases (flammable, non-flammable, non-toxic, and toxic)
- Class #3: Flammable and Combustible Liquids
- Class #4: Flammable Solids (spontaneously combustible and dangerous when wet materials/water reactive substances)
- Class #5: Oxidizing substances and organic peroxides
- Class #6: Toxic Substances and Infectious Substances
- Class #7: Radioactive Materials
- Class #8: Corrosive Substances
- Class #9: Miscellaneous Hazardous Materials / Substances

All nine hazard classes can be found in transportation incidences.

#### Fixed Facility

All nine hazard classes can be found at fixed facilities. Certain conditions can exacerbate release incidents and these events include fixed facilities:

- Micrometeorological effects of buildings and terrain which alters the dispersion of hazardous materials.
- Proximity to surface water and ground water resources.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Compliance with applicable codes (e.g., building or fire codes) and maintenance failures (e.g., fire protection and containment features can substantially increase the damage to the facility itself and to surrounding buildings.

The type of material released, distance, and related response time of emergency responders also significantly impact severity and scope of hazardous material releases and clean-up efforts. Areas most proximal to the release are usually at the greatest level of risk, but depending on the material, a release can travel great distances or remain present in the environment for long periods of time (centuries or millennia for some radioactive materials) resulting in chronic and extensive impacts on people and the environment.

Oil and gas well drilling can have a variety of effects on the environment. Abandoned oil and gas wells, not properly plugged can contaminate groundwater and consequently drinking water wells. Surface waters and soil are sometimes polluted by brine, a salty wastewater product of oil and gas well drilling, and from oil spills occurring at the drilling site or from a pipeline breach. A pipeline breach or an accidental dispersal can spoil public drinking water supplies and can be particularly detrimental to vegetation and aquatic animals, making water safety an important factor in oil and gas extraction. In some cases, associated with hydraulic fracturing (fracking), methane has been found contaminating drinking water in surrounding areas.

Natural gas fires occur when natural gas is ignited at the well site. Often, these fires erupt during drilling when a spark from machinery or equipment ignites the gas. The initial explosion and resulting flames have the potential to seriously injure or kill individuals in the immediate area. These fires are often difficult to extinguish due to the intensity of the flame and the abundant fuel source.

### **4.3.21.3 Past Occurrence**

#### **Transportation**

From 2021 to 2023 there has been three reported hazardous material incidents within Forest County and are summarized in *Table 61– Hazardous Material Incidents*. Transportation accidents that involved hazardous materials were included in the table below.

*Table 61 - Hazardous Material Incidents*

<b>Hazardous Material Incidents</b>		
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
Howe Township	07/08/2021	Oil spill into pond
Jenks Township	07/11/2021	Natural gas leak
Hickory Township	11/29/2023	Natural gas release



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Hazardous Material Incidents		
Municipality	Date	Event
Source: WebEOC, County Reporting System, 2024		

Hazardous materials can be transported by air, sea, and land (over the road or through pipelines). Transportation accidents along roadways are a regular occurrence and a large number of hazardous materials are transported by roadway every day.

Fixed Facility

There have been a number of hazardous material incidents in Forest County in the past but few of those events have been related to fixed facilities in the county. More recent events are recorded in WebEOC and county reporting software and are summarized in *Table 61 – Hazardous Material Incidents*.

The EPA tracks the management of hazardous materials in facilities that handle significant amounts of hazardous materials. There are zero TRI facilities in Forest County as of 2024.

As of 2024, Forest County is home to 3,557 active natural gas wells.

**4.3.21.4 Future Occurrence**

Transportation

While many incidents involving hazardous material releases have occurred in Forest County in the past, they are generally difficult to predict. The nature of traffic accidents is that there is little to no warning for their occurrence, and they can have disastrous results. An occurrence is largely dependent upon the accidental or intentional actions of a person or group.

Fixed Facility

Hazardous material release incidents are generally difficult to predict, but the presence of such dangerous materials warrants preparation for accidental or intentional release events. Emergency response agencies in Forest County should be prepared to handle the types of hazardous materials housed and used at the SARA Title III facilities, TRI facilities, and oil and gas wells that are located within the county. The Federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) is also known as the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), and the Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) are designed by EPCRA to ensure that state and local communities are prepared to respond to potential chemical accidents.

**4.3.21.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Transportation



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Quick response to transportation accidents involving hazardous materials minimizes the volume and concentration of hazardous materials that are transported and dispersed through the air, water, and soil. Every municipality within Forest County is vulnerable to a hazardous materials incident caused along a transportation route. These incidents can occur along highways, railways, and pipelines. *Figure 49 – Environmental Hazard Transportation Vulnerability Map* identified the 2,000-foot hazard corridor for all major highways in Forest County. *Figure 50 – Annual Truck Traffic Percentages* identifies the annual truck traffic percentages for all of the roadways in Forest County.

### Fixed Facility

Populations, critical infrastructure, and natural habitats within 1.5 miles of SARA Title III and Toxic Release Inventory sites are vulnerable to hazardous material incidents.

Private water suppliers such as domestic drinking water wells in the vicinity of oil and gas wells are at risk of contamination from brine and other pollutants, including methane, which can pose a fire and explosive hazard. Ideally, vulnerability of private drinking well owners would be established by comparing the distance of drinking water wells to known oil and gas well locations, but this extensive detailed data is not readily available. Private drinking water is largely unregulated and information on these wells is voluntarily submitted to the Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey by water well drillers, and the existing data is largely incomplete and/or not completely accurate. Howe Township contains the most oil and gas wells and Kingsley Township contains the most drinking water wells, meaning that Kingsley Township is most vulnerable to water contamination from oil and gas wells. *Table 62 – Oil and Gas Wells & Drinking Water Wells* illustrates the type of well and the local domestic drinking water wells for each municipality.

*Table 62 - Oil and Gas Wells & Drinking Water Wells*

Oil & Gas Wells in Forest County (2024)					
Municipality	Type of Well				Domestic Drinking Water Wells
	Active	Abandoned	Inactive	Proposed	
Barnett Township	30	0	0	0	58
Green Township	34	0	0	0	120
Harmony Township	371	1	0	0	118
Hickory Township	452	1	0	0	138
Howe Township	1515	0	27	0	51
Jenks Township	618	0	1	0	87

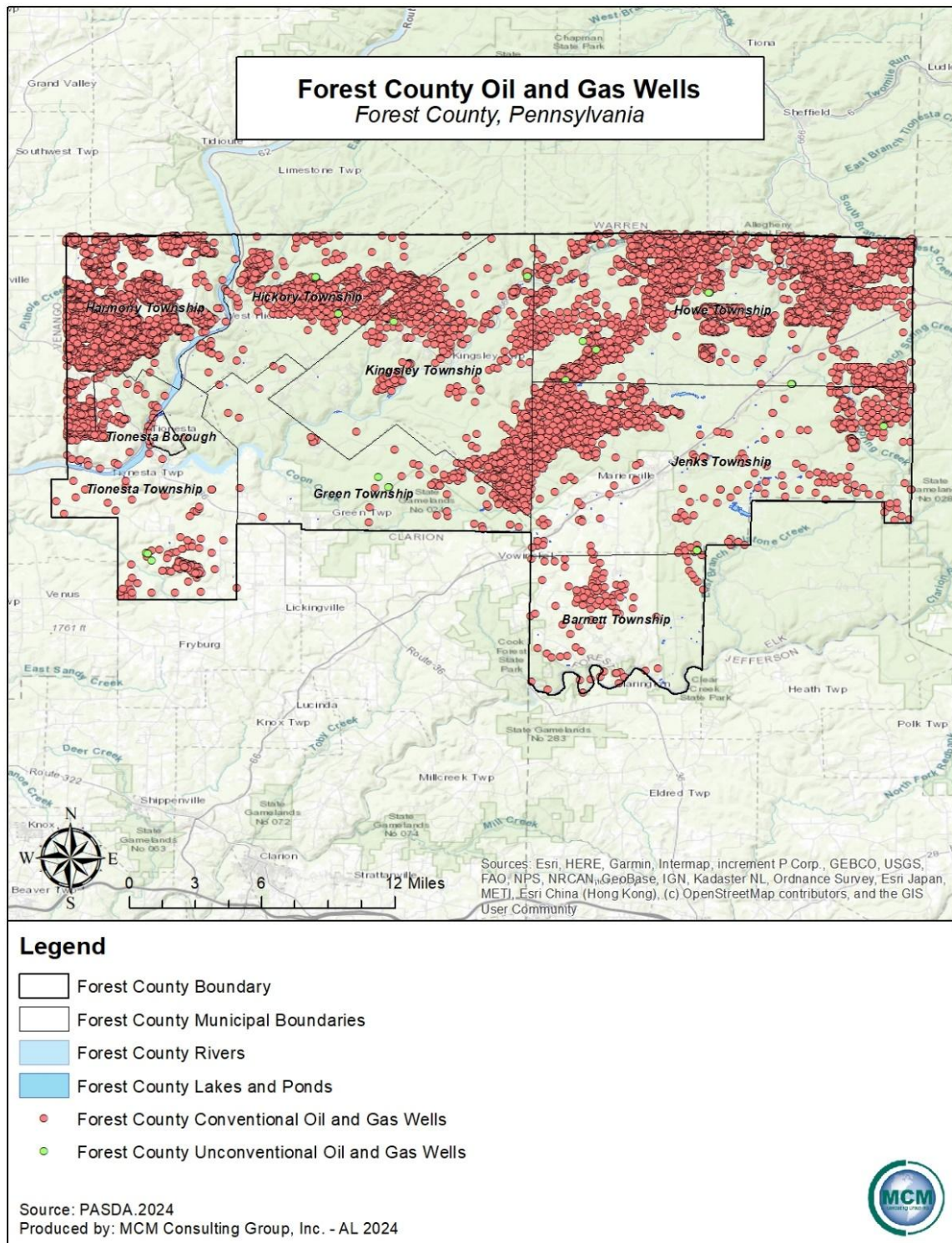
*Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Oil & Gas Wells in Forest County (2024)					
Municipality	Type of Well				Domestic Drinking Water Wells
	Active	Abandoned	Inactive	Proposed	
Kingsley Township	535	1	0	0	170
Tionesta Borough	2	0	0	0	3
Tionesta Township	0	0	0	0	135
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,557</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>880</b>
Source: PA DEP, 2024					

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

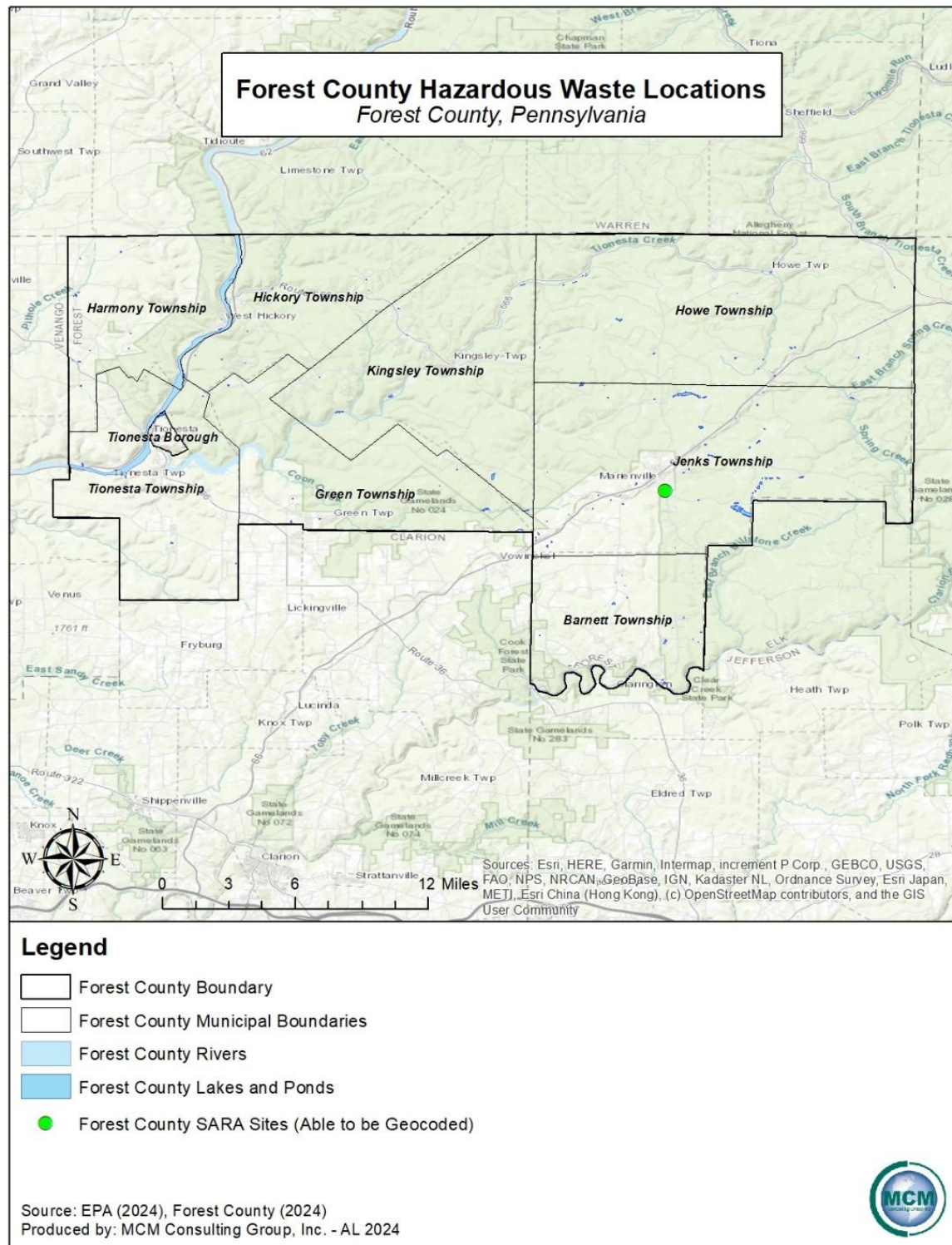
Figure 47 - Oil and Gas Well Locations





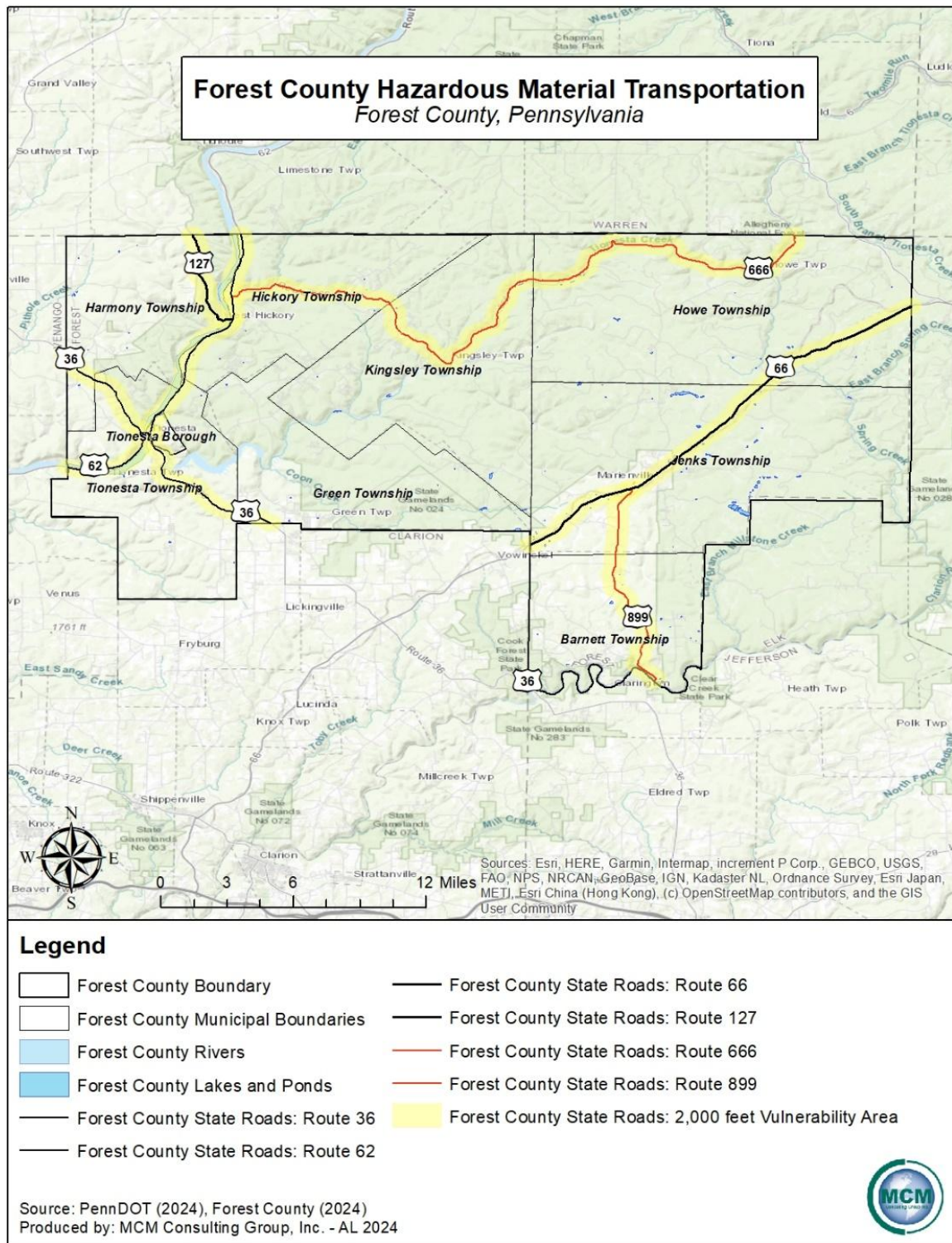
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 48 - Hazardous Waste Locations



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

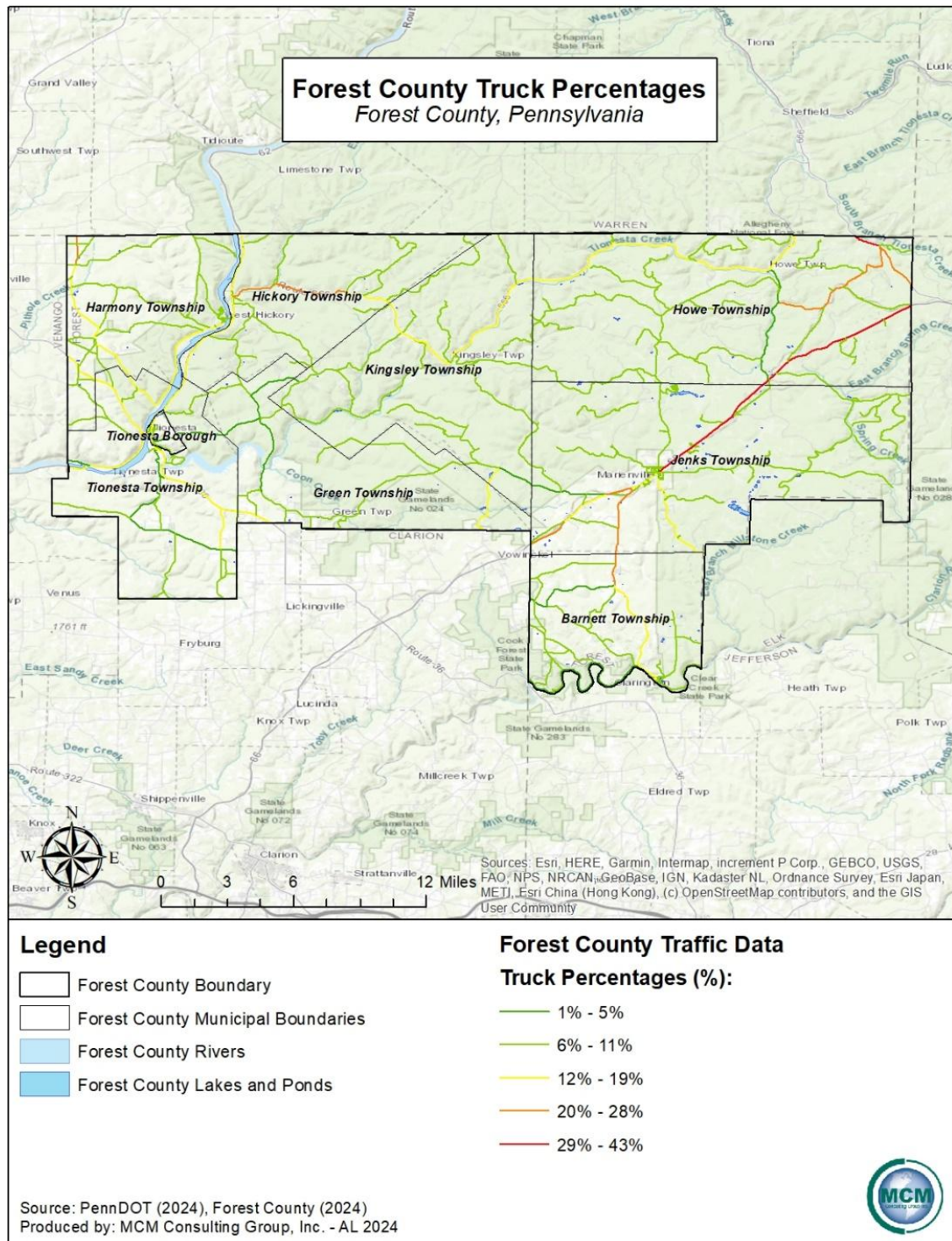
Figure 49 - Environmental Hazard Transportation Vulnerability





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 50 - Annual Truck Traffic Percentages



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.22. Substance Use Disorder**

#### **4.3.22.1 Location and Extent**

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a chronic condition characterized by compulsive drug or alcohol use despite the harmful consequences. According to the American Addiction Centers substance use disorder affects brain function and behavior, leading to an inability to control substance intake (Fuller 2023). Symptoms include intense cravings, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and continued use despite negative effects on health, relationships, and responsibilities. Substance use disorder can impact anyone regardless of age, gender, or background, and often requires comprehensive treatment involving therapy, medication, and support to achieve recovery.

Substance use disorder escalates into opioid addiction through a progression that often starts with the legitimate medical use of prescription opioids for pain relief. Over time, individuals may develop a tolerance, requiring larger doses for the same effect. This can evolve into physical dependence, where the body experiences withdrawal symptoms without the drug. Psychological factors, such as seeking relief from stress, trauma, or co-occurring mental health disorders, may compel individuals to continue using opioids despite negative consequences. Eventually, the compulsive need to use opioids takes over, characterized by addiction, where obtaining and using the drug becomes a central focus of life.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) ten classes of substance use disorder exist. These substance use related mental illnesses are alcohol use disorder, cannabis use disorder, phencyclidine use disorder, other hallucinogen use disorder that differ from phencyclidine, inhalant use disorder, opioid use disorder, sedative, hypnotic or anxiolytic use disorder and lastly stimulant use disorder which accompanies cocaine or methamphetamine.

Pennsylvania and the United States at large have been experiencing a substance use disorder epidemic which can lead to opioid drug abuse. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the opioid overdose epidemic is the worst public health crisis in Pennsylvania. It affects Pennsylvanians across the state, from big cities to rural communities.

Opioids, mainly synthetic opioids (other than methadone), are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 72.9% of opioid-involved overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids. Opioid addiction occurs when an individual becomes physically dependent on opioids. Opioids are a class of drug that reduces pain by interacting with receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain. The use of opioids is a broad term and includes opiates, which are drugs naturally extracted from certain types of poppy

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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plants, and narcotics. Opioids can also be synthetically made to emulate opium. Opioid drugs are highly addictive and typically result in increasing numbers of overdose deaths both prescribed (e.g., fentanyl) and illicit (e.g., heroin) opioids. Overdose deaths from opioids occur when a large dose slows breathing, which can occur when opioids are combined with alcohol or antianxiety drugs. While generally prescribed with good intentions, opioids can be over-prescribed, resulting in addiction.

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), opioids come in various forms such as tablets, capsules, skin patches, powder, chunks in various colors from white to brown/black, liquid form for oral or injection use, syrups, suppositories, and lollipops. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines the following as the three most common types of opioids:

- **Prescription Opioids:** Opioid medication prescribed by doctors for pain treatment. These can be synthetic oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), or natural (morphine).
- **Fentanyl:** A powerful synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more powerful than morphine and used for treating severe pain; illegally made and distributed fentanyl is becoming more prevalent.
- **Heroin:** An illegal natural opioid processed from morphine which is becoming more commonly used in the United States.

Opioids are highly addictive. They block the body's ability to feel pain and can create a sense of euphoria. Additionally, individuals often build a tolerance to opioids, which can lead to misuse and overdose.

While other addictive substances such as methamphetamines and alcohol can be problematic for the health of individuals in Forest County, this profile focuses on opioid drugs and the substance use disorder epidemic. The opioid crisis along with substance use disorder was declared to be a public health emergency on October 26, 2017. While the declaration provides validation for the scope and severity of the problem, it was not accompanied by any release of funding for mitigating actions. On January 10, 2018, Governor Tom Wolf declared the opioid epidemic to be a statewide public health disaster emergency for Pennsylvania. The declaration is intended to enhance response and increase access to treatment.

#### **4.3.22.2 Range of Magnitude**

Substance use disorder may lead to a narcotic addiction which could lead to an overdose and can sometimes be fatal. The most dangerous side effect of an overdose can include depressed breathing. Lack of oxygen to the brain causes permanent brain damage, leading to organ failure, and eventually death. Signs and symptoms include respiratory depression, drowsiness, disorientation, pinpoint pupils, and clammy skin. Substance use dependency can also be passed

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

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from mother to child in the womb. This condition, known as neonatal abstinence syndrome, has increased five-fold, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). This results in an annual estimate of 22,000 babies born in the United States with this condition.

### 4.3.22.3 Past Occurrence

In 2023, there was an estimated total of 107,543 drug-related overdose deaths in the United States. This is the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to the recent provisional data from the CDC. *Table 63 – Drug Overdose Mortality In Forest County* shows death rates and deaths per year in Forest County from 2019 to 2024. The years 2020 and 2024 have the highest number of deaths. The most common age group for opioid abuse in Forest County is the 25-35 years of age demographic. In Forest County, the overdose rate of males is greater than the overdose rate of females. Whites have the highest total rate of overdose deaths in Forest County, while African Americans have the highest per capita rate of overdose deaths when adjusted for population size. The most used opioids in Forest County are fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, benzodiazepines, and Rx opioids.

*Table 63 - Drug Overdose Mortality in Forest County*

Drug Overdose Mortality in Forest County	
Year	Deaths Per Year
2019	35
2020	38
2021	37
2022	36
2023	36
November of 2024	39

*Table 64 - Drugs Present in 2020 Pennsylvania Overdose Deaths*

Drugs Present in 2020 PA Overdose Deaths (DEA, 2020)	
Drug Category	Percent Reported Among 2020 Decedents
Cannabis	25%
Cocaine	20%
Heroin	15%
Fentanyl	14%
Methamphetamine	10%
Prescription Opioids	5.5%
Cathinones	5.5%



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Drugs Present in 2020 PA Overdose Deaths (DEA, 2020)	
Drug Category	Percent Reported Among 2020 Decedents
Benzodiazepines	5%

### **4.3.22.4 Future Occurrence**

Both Forest County, and Pennsylvania as a whole, have seen a steady rise in substance use disorder and the use of opioids over the last several years, with drug-related death rates increasing at a high percentage. Substance use disorder is a pressing issue in Pennsylvania, with far-reaching implications for public health, safety, and the well-being of individuals. Future occurrences of substance use and opioid addiction are unclear as the state moves forward with overdose prevention initiatives through the use of Naloxone, alternative pain treatments, improvement of tools for families and first responders, and expansion of treatment access. The Pennsylvania government has taken various approaches to help with the prevention of mass future occurrences across the Commonwealth. To help prevent future drug abuse and protect individual health among communities in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PA DMP) collects information on all filled prescriptions for controlled substances. This information helps health care providers safely prescribe controlled substances and helps patients get correct treatment. The PA DMP also has drug take-back boxes located in the counties for an easy, convenient location where anyone can dispose of their unused, expired, or unwanted prescriptions to help lower potential drug overuse. In Forest County, there is one drug take-back box located at the Forest County Courthouse entrance.

In the event of an opioid overdose, death can sometimes be prevented with the use of the drug naloxone. The former Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, in 2020, signed updated standing order prescriptions of naloxone. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug (i.e., prescription pain medication or heroin). Naloxone is used to block the effects of opioids and is sold under the brand name Narcan. When administered during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing within two to eight minutes. Naloxone has been used safely by medical professionals for more than forty years and its only function is to reverse the effects of opioids on the brain and respiratory system in order to prevent death. Also, with the January 10, 2018 disaster declaration, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are now allowed to leave naloxone behind at a scene of a recent overdose further increasing the distribution and accessibility of the lifesaving medication. According to a study published in September 2018, drug users reported that users often have multiple overdoses in the course of their drug use, and availability of naloxone has saved many lives. While the introduction of naloxone has been a significant benefit to the fight against opioid abuse, efforts to prevent future overdoses are still underway. Naloxone is another



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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way to reduce future occurrences of the opioid epidemic from occurring in Forest County. According to the National Library of Medicines, supervised injection sites can provide disordered substance users with a secure location to reduce the risk of overdose, while also weaning them off of addictive substances.

Opioid drugs have been a problematic and addictive method for patients to deal with pain. Employing alternative approaches to pain management could prevent patients from ever being introduced to addictive opioids, especially considering the most common overdose drugs in Forest County have been prescription opioids. A possible alternative pain treatment comes from hemp extracted cannabidiol, or CBD. Unlike THC (the psychoactive constituent of cannabis), CBD is non-psychoactive and does not have the same intoxicating effect as THC; however, CBD can provide relief from pain, inflammation, anxiety, and even psychosis. CBD is legal without a prescription throughout the United States of America.

### **4.3.22.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Opioid overdoses have resulted in many tragic deaths in Pennsylvania and many people have been affected by the epidemic through the loss of either a family member, a close friend, or a member of their community. Substance use disorder is a direct detriment to the personal wellbeing of addicts, a burden to their families and communities, and a strain on the emergency response system that cares for overdose victims. In general, jurisdictions that are more densely populated are more vulnerable to opioid addiction threats as access to the drugs increases. However, rural communities in general experience larger per-capita opioid-related deaths. Jurisdictional losses in the opioid addiction crisis stem from lost wages, productivity, and resources rather than losses to buildings or land. Many counties across the Commonwealth, including Forest County, have seen an increase of time and resources devoted to the opioid epidemic as overdose and response increase.

While Substance use disorder and opioid addiction is often viewed as a criminal problem, it can also be viewed as a chronic disease. This paradigm shift moves away from faulting the abuser and incentivizing quick cures, to viewing the abuser as a patient and working towards long-term management of the disease. In general, it is important to consider alternative approaches to pain treatment.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, substance use disorder often stems from underlying mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, trauma, or unresolved psychological struggles. Individuals may turn to substances as a coping mechanism to alleviate emotional pain or distress. However, prolonged substance abuse can exacerbate mental health symptoms and lead to a vicious cycle of dependency. Additionally, genetic predispositions and environmental factors can also contribute to the development of both substances use disorders and mental health disorders (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023).

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The vulnerability in the county depends on the number of additional risk factors on the vulnerable population such as genetic, psychological, and environmental factors that play a role in addiction. The known risk factors of opioid misuse and addiction include poverty, unemployment, family and/or personal history of substance abuse, history of criminal activity, history of severe depression or anxiety, and prior drug/alcohol rehabilitation. In addition, women have a unique set of risk factors for opioid addiction. Women are more likely than men to have diagnosed chronic pain. Compared with men, women are also more likely to be prescribed opioid medications, to be given higher doses, and to use opioids for longer periods of time. Women may also have biological tendencies to become dependent on prescription pain relievers more quickly than men. Therefore, if the county were to have a population with a great amount of these risk factors, the county would be very vulnerable to the opioid epidemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its periods of quarantine caused vulnerability in opioid users throughout Forest County. It is likely that the emergence of COVID-19 and subsequent disruptions in health care and social safety nets combined with social and economic stressors has fueled the opioid epidemic. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged vulnerable populations, including those with opioid use disorders. The opioid epidemic and COVID-19 pandemic intersected and presented unprecedented challenges for families and communities. Opioid use affects respiratory and pulmonary health which may make those with opioid use disorders more susceptible to COVID-19. In addition, chronic respiratory disease is already known to increase overdose mortality risk among people taking opioids, and decreased lung capacity from COVID-19 could lead to similar health effects. Secondary impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic included disruption of treatment and recovery services, limited access to mental health services and peer support, disrupted routines, loss of work, and increased stress which led to increased opioid use and risk of relapse for those in recovery. Additionally, the pandemic took away the attention from the media, from legislators, and from public health agencies that was being focused on the opioid crisis. According to the National Library of Medicine the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania increased 475% from 2010 to 2019.

Risk factors may arise from indirect factors including housing instability and incarceration. Those with substance use disorder and opioid use disorders are potentially at a higher risk for housing insecurity, homelessness, and incarceration. Congregate living facilities such as homeless shelters, jails, and prisons are high-risk environments for virus transmission, and there are challenges in implementing recommendations from the CDC such as social distancing and quarantine.

Additionally, first responders and medical personnel are also a vulnerable population when dealing with the substance use disorder and opioid epidemic. First responders face exposure risk

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

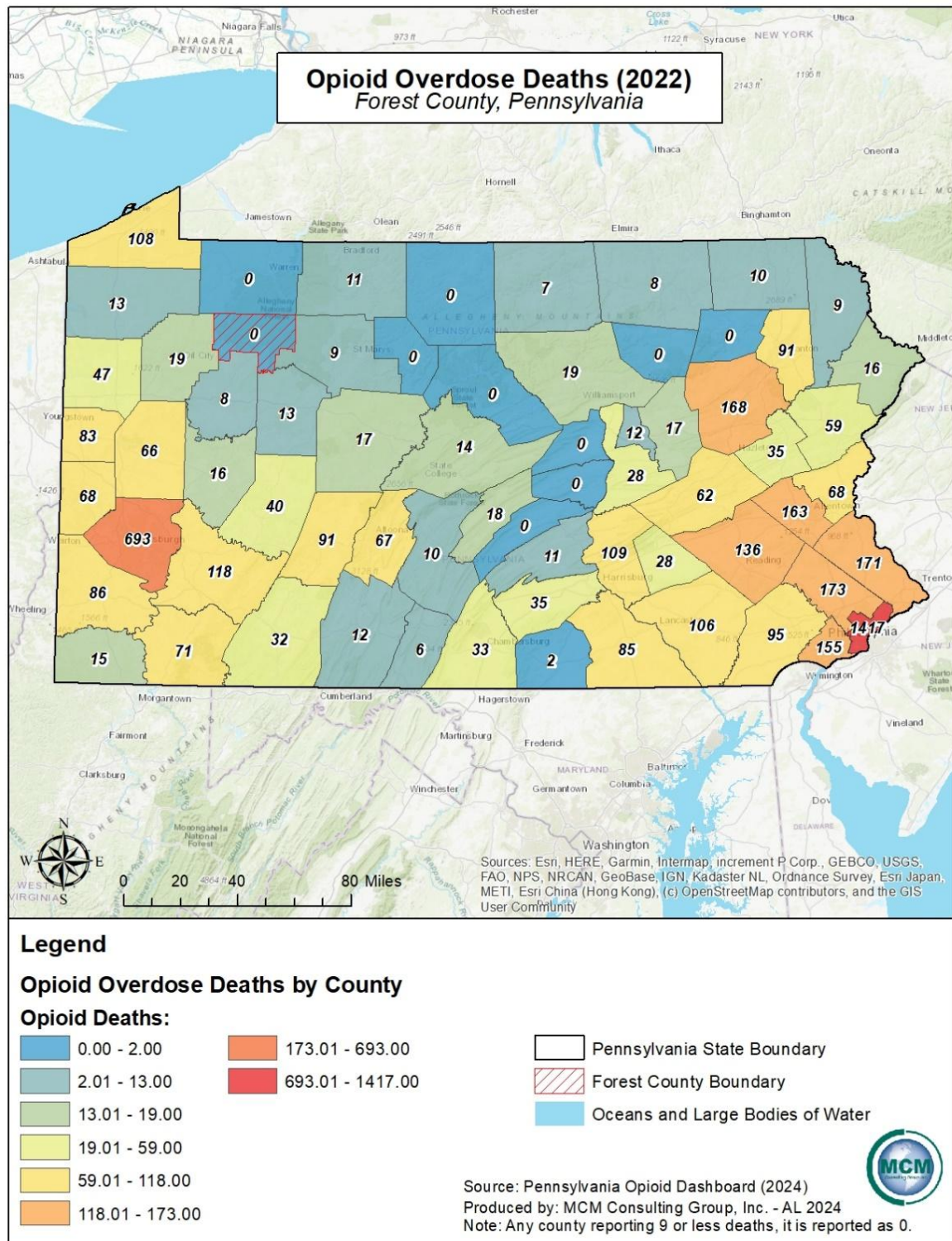
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due to an increase in emergency calls due to an increase in the crisis, particularly to synthetic fentanyl. Fentanyl and related substances are hazardous materials, which cause the environment and the people around the substance to be vulnerable. Unintentional fentanyl contact can impact first responders and others that are in close proximity to the opioid user. Depending on the potency of the drug, it can take as little as a few milligrams of fentanyl to cause fatal health complications, the equivalent of a few grains of sand. There have been several reports nationally of first responders accidentally overdosing on fentanyl through brief skin contact or the drug becoming airborne. It is best for first responders to remain wary to avoid any potential exposure. The American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) and the American Academy of Clinical Toxicology (AACT) suggest that nitrile gloves provide sufficient protection for handling fentanyl, and for “exceptional circumstances where the drug particles or droplets suspended in the air, an N95 respirator provides sufficient protection”. Other environmental structures such as streams, rivers, and lakes have been known to contain traces of opioids and other drugs within them. These traces come from excreted human urine and feces, or improper disposal of medications. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that while the risks of pharmaceuticals found in wastewater, ambient water, and drinking water are low, further research is needed. A worst-case scenario with substance use in Forest County would be a high number of overdoses among residents and insufficient first responder personnel and material resources.

*Figure 51 – Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2022 and Figure 52 – Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2023* illustrate the number of deaths per county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

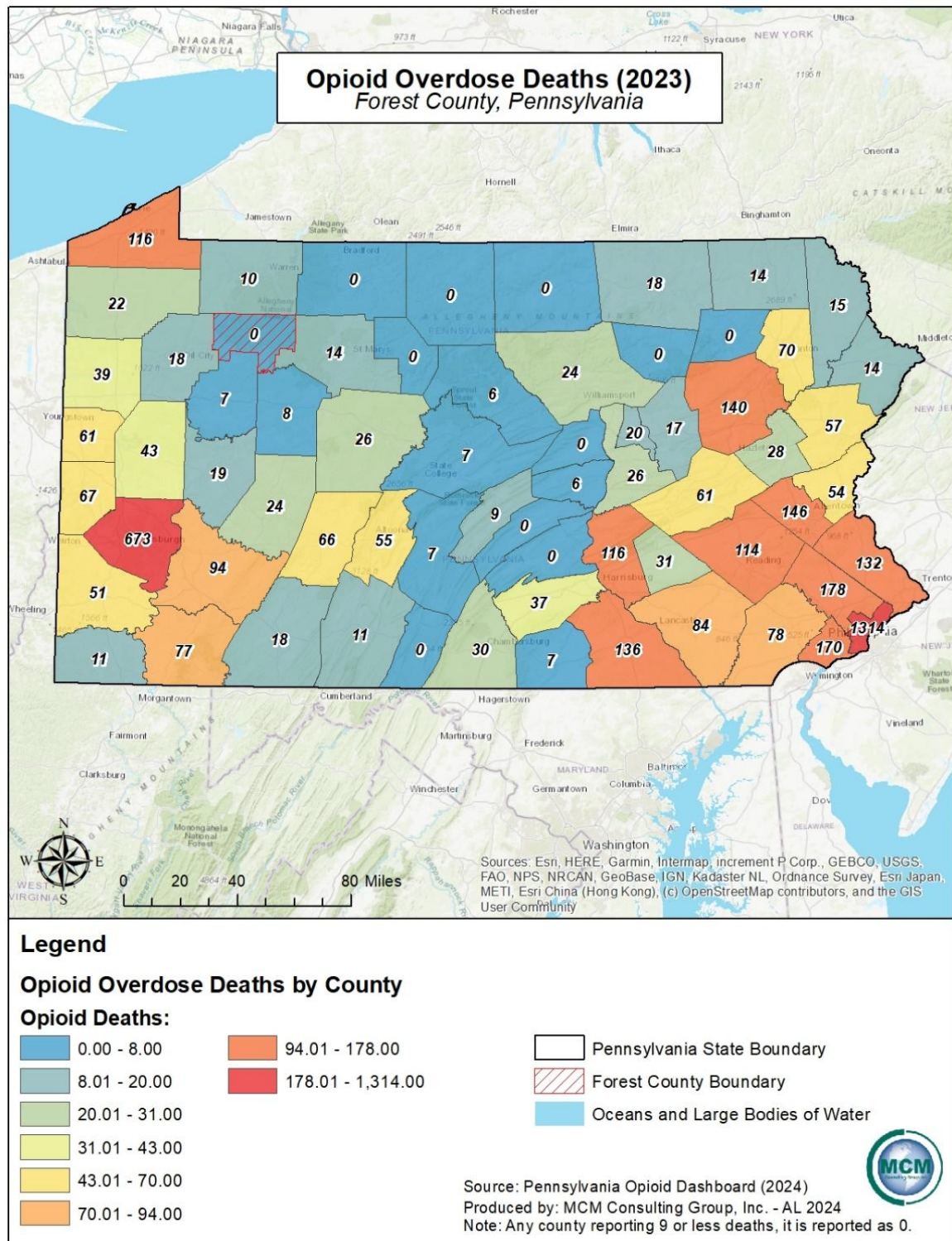
Figure 51 - Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2022





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 52 - Opioid Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania 2023





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.23. Terrorism/ Cyberterrorism**

#### **4.3.23.1 Location and Extent**

Following several serious international and domestic terrorist incidents during the 1990s and early 2000s, citizens across the United States paid increased attention to the potential for deliberate, harmful actions of individuals or groups. The term “terrorism” refers to intentional, criminal, malicious acts. The functional definition of terrorism can be interpreted in many ways. Officially, terrorism is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations as “...the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” (28 CFR §0.85)

Cyberterrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence over technological methods to cause harm to financial security, identity information, personal information, and attacking personal computers, mobile phones, gaming systems, and other Bluetooth or wirelessly connected devices. Cyberterrorism can be just as damaging to infrastructure as conventional terrorism, due to the large amount of business that is carried out over the internet, through wirelessly connected devices, or from employees of companies working remotely.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) further characterizes terrorism as either domestic or international, depending on the origin, base, and objectives of the terrorist organization. Often, the origin of the terrorist or person causing the hazard is far less relevant to mitigation planning than the hazard itself and the consequences. However, it is important to consider that the prevalence of homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) has increased in recent years, with individuals able to become radicalized on the internet. In a speech on August 29, 2018, addressed to the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Utah National Security and Anti-Terrorism Conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray describes HVEs as “the primary terrorist threat to the homeland here today, without question.”

Community lifeline facilities are either in the public or private sector that provide essential products and/or services to the general public. Community lifeline facilities are often necessary to preserve the welfare and quality of life in the county, or fulfill important public safety, emergency response, and/or disaster recovery functions. Community lifeline facilities identified in the county are hospitals and health care facilities, schools, childcare centers, fire stations, police departments, municipal buildings, and hazardous waste facilities. In addition to critical facilities, the county contains at risk populations that should be factored into a vulnerability assessment. These populations include not only the residents and workforce in the county, but also the tourists that visit the area on a daily basis, those that are traveling through the county on any major highway and marginalized groups such as LGBTQ persons and racial, religious, or other minorities.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Potential targets include:

- Commercial facilities
- Family planning clinics/organizations associated with controversial issues
- Education facilities
- Events attracting large amounts of people
- Places of worship
- Industrial facilities, especially those utilizing large quantities of hazardous materials
- Transportation infrastructure
- Historical sites
- Cultural sites
- Government facilities

### **4.3.23.2 Range of Magnitude**

Terrorism may include the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) (including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive weapons) which include arson, incendiary, explosive, armed attacks, industrial sabotage, intentional release of hazardous materials, and cyber-terrorism. Within these general categories, there are many variations. There is a wide variety of agents and ways for them to be disseminated, particularly in the case of biological and chemical weapons.

Terrorist methods can take many forms including:

- Active assailant
- Agri-terrorism
- Arson/incendiary attack
- Armed attack
- Assassination
- Biological agent
- Chemical agent
- Cyberterrorism
- Conventional bomb or bomb threat
- Hijackings
- Release of hazardous materials
- Kidnapping
- Nuclear bomb
- Radiological agent

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Active assailant incidents and threats can disrupt the learning atmosphere in schools, interfere with worship services, cause traffic to be re-routed, and use taxpayer assets by deploying police, EMS, and/or fire units. Forest County has two (public schools K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) that include East Forest and West Forest. There is one post-secondary schools located in Forest County.

The areas along major transportation routes can be susceptible to forms of public transit terrorist attacks. More populated areas of the county, including the county seat of Tionesta can be susceptible to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive (CBRNE) events due to the concentration and density of residential communities and government activity and buildings. Secondary effects from CBRNE incidents can be damaging as well. Mass evacuations could result in congestion of roadways and possibly result in a breakdown of civil order, further exacerbating the situation. Government operations may be disrupted due to the need to displace or operate under reduced capacity. Radiation fallout, hazardous chemical introduction into the groundwater or biologic/germ agents can cause long-term environmental damage.

Cyberterrorism is becoming increasingly prevalent. Cyberterrorism can be defined as activities intended to damage or disrupt vital computer systems. These acts can range from taking control of a host website to using networked resources to directly cause destruction and harm. Protection of databases and infrastructure are the main goals for a safe cyber environment. Cyberterrorists can be difficult to identify because the internet provides a meeting place for individuals from various parts of the world. Individuals or groups planning a cyber-attack are not organized in a traditional manner, as they are able to effectively communicate over long distances without delay. The largest cyber terrorism threat to institutions comes from any processes that are networked or controlled via computers.

Ransomware continues to be the leading threat, with Maze ransomware accounting for nearly half of all known cases in 2020. Cybercriminals have increasingly begun to steal proprietary – and sometimes embarrassing – data before encrypting it. The cybercriminal will then threaten to publicly release the stolen files if the victims do not provide financial transactions.

### **4.3.23.3 Past Occurrence**

In February of 2024 Pennsylvania was hit with a statewide court agency cyberattack that resulted in the online systems being disabled. The federal government lead cyber security agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the F.B.I. investigated the attack and it was ruled a “denial of service attack.” Cyberterrorism events are becoming more common in areas of local government, and these include counties near Forest County, PA.

Significant international terrorism incidents in the United States include the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, and the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. One of the aircrafts

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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hijacked in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks crash landed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania before it reached its intended target. While fatalities and destruction at the intended target were avoided, all passengers on the flight perished.

While the largest scale terrorist incidents have often had international stimuli, many other incidents are caused by home grown actors who may have become radicalized through hate groups either in person or via the internet, and who may struggle with mental health issues. Hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Aryan Nation, the New Black Panther Party, and more recently, the Alt-Right, Antifa, anarcho-communists, Proud Boys, plus conspiracy theorist believers/promoters such as QAnon, have been part of domestic terrorism in different forms. During the May 2020 George Floyd protests, anti-police individuals associated with one or more of the groups created incendiary devices to burn down the Minneapolis Third Precinct. On January 6, 2021, individuals associated with one or more of the groups, stormed the United States Capitol to disrupt the certification of the 2020 presidential election, resulting in five deaths and evacuation of Congress.

### Active Shooters

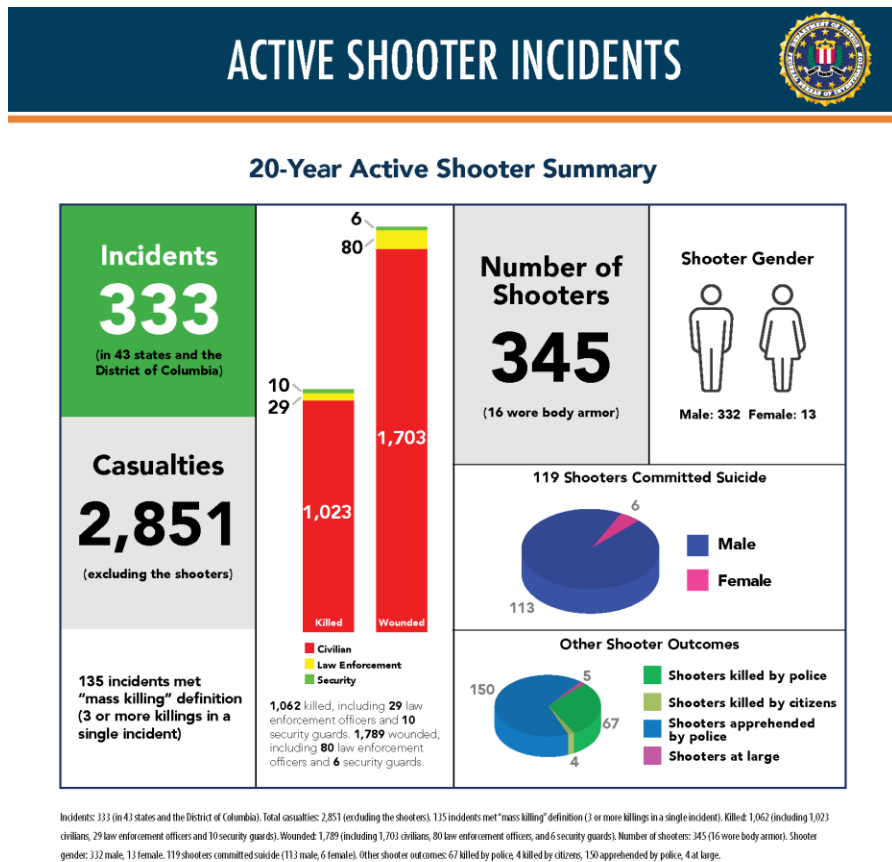
An active assailant (shooter), as defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined area, in most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is not necessarily a pattern or method to their selection of victims. Throughout the year in 2023, there were a total of at least 656 mass shooting incidents in the United States according to the Gun Violence Archive. Often these shooters are Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE). Two significant events have occurred in Pennsylvania in recent history: one occurred on October 27, 2018, when eleven people were killed by a gunman in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill; the gunman was a homegrown violent extremist and attacked the congregation of the Tree of Life Synagogue in a shooting that targeted the Jewish population and was fueled by the gunman's anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and anti-refugee sentiments. Another event occurred in January of 2019, where a gunman killed two people and permanently injured one inside P.J. Harrigan's bar in State College and later killed a homeowner and himself. One of the most tragic recent active shooters occurred in Uvalde, Texas, where an armored and masked gunman entered the Robb Elementary School on May 24, 2022 and killed nineteen students and two teachers. Another active shooter event occurred on November 22, 2022 when an employee at a Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia entered the breakroom of the Chesapeake Walmart and killed six individuals before taking his own life.

Other active shooter events in the United States in recent years include Virginia Tech (April 2007), Sandy Hook Elementary School (December 2012), San Bernardino, California (December 2015), an Aurora, Colorado movie theater (July 2012) and a church in Charleston, South

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Carolina (June 2015). An *Active Shooter Incidents 20-Year Review* by the FBI concluded that there has been a significant recent increase in frequency of active shooter incidents, and that most shooters were male. The report documents data from all the incidents, including location, commercial environments, educational environments, open spaces, military and other government properties, residential locations, houses of worship, and health care facilities (FBI, 2021). *Figure 53 – Active Shooter Incidents – 20 Year Active Shooter Summary* is one page from the report that illustrates a numerical breakdown of shooting events for those twenty years. *Figure 54 – Education Environments* shows two more summary pages from the report that detail active shooter statistics in educational environments.

Figure 53 - Active Shooter Incidents - 20 Year Active Shooter Summary





# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 54 - Education Environments

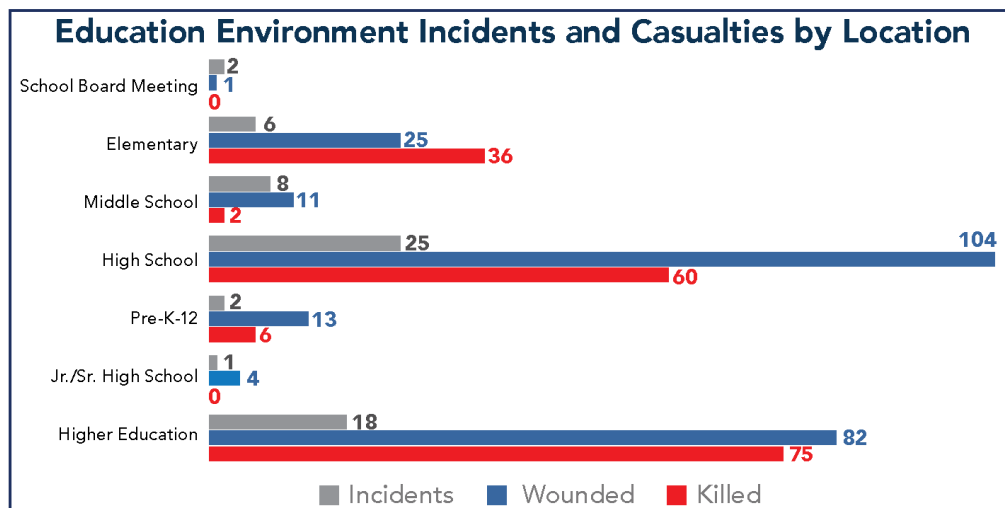
## ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENTS



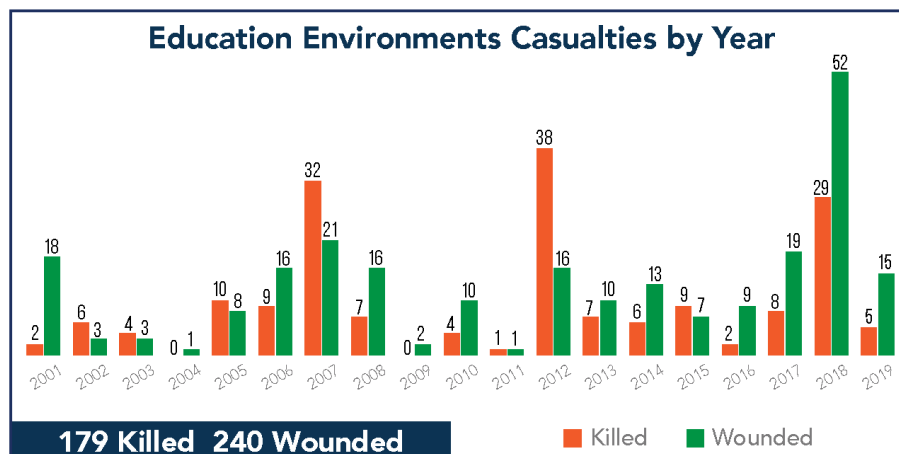
### Education Environments

#### Quick Look:

Sixty-two incidents occurred in public and private educational settings, defined as schools covering pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, institutes of higher education, and school board meetings.



Education Environment Incidents and Casualties by Location: School Board Meeting (2 incidents, 1 wounded, 0 killed); Elementary (6 incidents, 25 wounded, 36 killed); Middle School (8 incidents, 11 wounded, 2 killed); High School (25 incidents, 104 wounded, 60 killed); Pre-K-12 (2 incidents, 13 wounded, 6 killed); Jr./Sr. High School (1 incident, 4 wounded, 0 killed); Higher Education (18 incidents, 82 wounded, 75 killed)



Education Environments Casualties by Year: 2001 (2 killed, 18 wounded); 2002 (6 killed, 3 wounded); 2003 (4 killed, 3 wounded); 2004 (0 killed, 1 wounded); 2005 (10 killed, 8 wounded); 2006 (9 killed, 16 wounded); 2007 (32 killed, 21 wounded); 2008 (7 killed, 16 wounded); 2009 (0 killed, 2 wounded); 2010 (4 killed, 10 wounded); 2011 (1 killed, 1 wounded); 2012 (38 killed, 16 wounded); 2013 (7 killed, 10 wounded); 2014 (6 killed, 13 wounded); 2015 (9 killed, 7 wounded); 2016 (2 killed, 9 wounded); 2017 (8 killed, 19 wounded); 2018 (29 killed, 52 wounded); 2019 (5 killed, 16 wounded)

Active Shooter Incidents 20-Year Review, 2000-2019

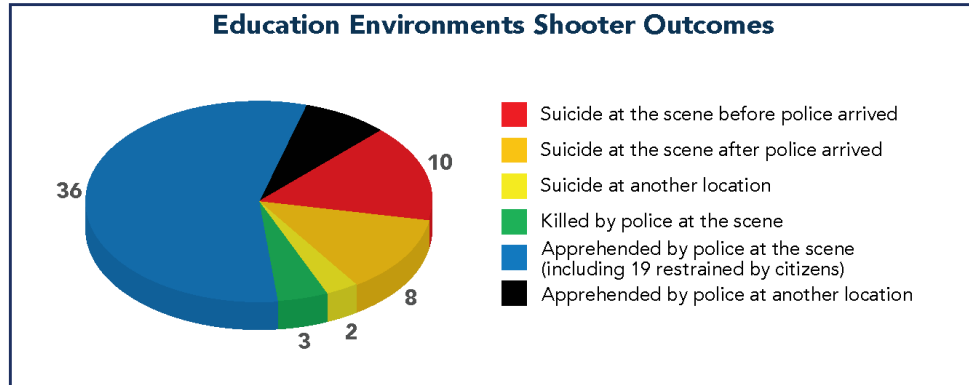
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# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

## ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENTS

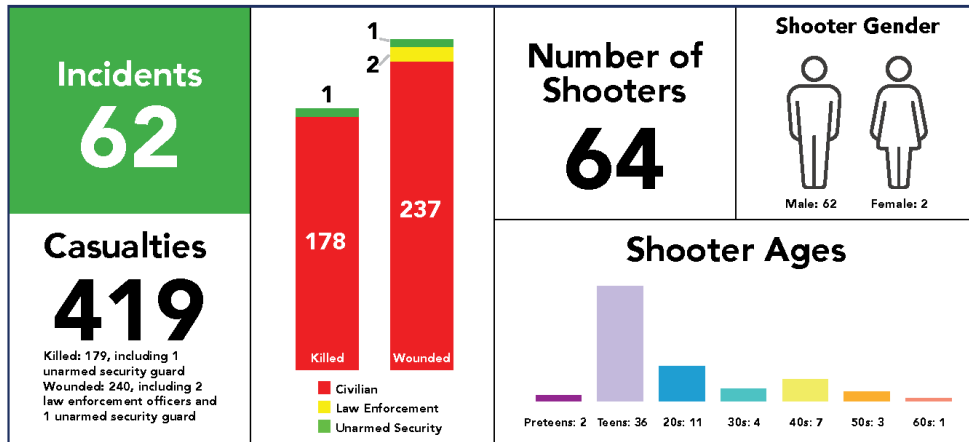


### Education Environments



Education Environments Shooter Outcomes: Suicide at the scene before police arrived (10); Suicide at the scene after police arrived (8); Suicide at another location (2); Killed by police at the scene (3); Apprehended by police at the scene (including 19 restrained by citizens) (36); Apprehended by police at another location (5); Killed by police at another location (1).

### Key Findings:



Incidents: 62. Total casualties: 419. Killed: 179 (including 178 civilians and 1 unarmed security guard). Wounded: 240 (including 237 civilians, 2 law enforcement officers, and 1 unarmed security guard). Number of shooters: 64. Shooter gender: 62 male, 2 female. Shooter ages: Preteens (2); Teens (36); 20s (11); 30s (4); 40s (7); 50s (3); 60s (1).

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The complete report may be found here: <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-20-year-review-2000-2019-060121.pdf/view>.

### Cyber-Threats

While Forest County has not been the target of any critical cyber terrorist events, the county has seen multiple security breaches due to online phishing and other scams.

One hack attack took down the largest fuel pipeline in the U.S. and led to massive gasoline shortages; it was the result of a single compromised password. Hackers gained entry into the networks of Colonial Pipeline Company on April 29, 2021 through a virtual private network account, which allowed employees to remotely access the company's computer network. On May 7, 2021, a ransom of \$4.4 million was demanded by the hackers, causing Colonial to shut down the entire supply line, immediately prompting temporary gasoline shortages and panic buying up and down the East Coast. The hackers, who were an affiliate of a Russian-linked cybercrime group known as *DarkSide*, were paid the ransom. The hackers also stole nearly 100 gigabytes of data from Colonial Pipeline and threatened to leak it if the ransom was not paid, according to Bloomberg News.

Then, in early June 2021, JBS, the world's largest meat company by sales, paid an \$11 million ransom to cybercriminals who temporarily knocked out plants that process roughly one-fifth of the nation's meat supply. The ransom payment, in bitcoin, was made to shield JBS meat plants from further disruption and to limit the potential impact on restaurants, grocery stores and farmers that rely on JBS, according to the company.

The attack on JBS was part of a wave of incursions using ransomware, in which companies are hit with demands for multimillion-dollar payments to regain control of their operating systems. The attacks show how hackers have shifted from targeting data-rich companies such as retailers, banks and insurers to essential-service providers such as hospitals, transport operators and food companies.

#### **4.3.23.4 Future Occurrence**

The likelihood of Forest County being a primary target for a major international terrorist attack is small and unlikely. More likely terrorist activity in Forest County includes bomb threats or other incidents at schools. Forest County has one school district consisting of two public schools. Several private schools and colleges are also located in Forest County. These locations are considered soft targets and may be vulnerable, especially to domestic incidents.

#### **4.3.23.4 Vulnerability Assessment**

Forest County should stay prepared for terroristic events. The existence of industrial commerce, interstate highways and freight railroad activity create soft targets that could be used to interfere

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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with the focus of day-to-day life that the county experiences. It is important to note that the use of and exposure to biological agents can remain unknown for several days until the infected person(s), livestock, or crops begin to experience symptoms or show damages. Often such agents are contagious, and the infected person(s) must be quarantined, livestock culled, and/or crops destroyed.

Although previous events have not resulted in what are considered to be significant terrorist attacks, the severity of a future incident cannot be predicted with a total level of certainty. One of the major concerns with agroterrorism is that acts can be carried out with minimal planning, effort, or expense.

Acronis, a global technology company that develops on-premises and cloud software for backup, disaster recovery, and secure file sync and share and data access, issues an annual threat scape report on cybercrime. Entitled *The Acronis Cyberthreats Report*, it contains an in-depth review of the current threat landscape and projections for the coming year. Based on the protection and security challenges that were amplified by the shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic, Acronis warns aggressive cybercrime activities will continue as criminals pivot their attacks from data encryption to data exfiltration.

The major points illustrated in the report are as follows:

- Attacks against remote workers will increase due to the movement of workers to less secure working areas.
- Ransomware will look for new victims and will become more automated.
- Legacy IT and technical solutions will struggle to keep pace with ransomware and cybercrime attacks.

According to a study carried out on the data sourced from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Pennsylvania is ranked second worst among states when it comes to handling cyber-attacks. The study made by Information Network Associates – an international security consulting company – says an increase of 25% was witnessed in cyber-attacks between 2016 and 2017. This illustrates the amount of preparation that must occur in the commonwealth so that it can better respond to potential cybercrime attacks.

The probability of terrorist activity is more difficult to quantify than some other hazards. Instead of considering the likelihood of occurrence, vulnerability is assessed in terms of specific assets. By identifying potentially at-risk terrorist targets in communities, planning efforts can be put in place to reduce the risk of attack. Planning should work towards identifying potentially at-risk critical infrastructure and functional needs facilities in the community, prioritizing those assets and locations, and identifying their vulnerabilities relative to known potential threats.

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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All communities in Forest County are vulnerable on some level, directly or indirectly, to a terrorist attack. However, communities with schools and government infrastructure like the county seat, should be considered more likely to attract terrorist activity.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.24. Transportation Accidents**

#### **4.3.24.1 Location and Extent**

Transportation accidents are defined as accidents involving highway, air, and rail travel. These incidents are collectively the costliest of all hazards in the Commonwealth in terms of lives lost, injuries, and economic losses. The sheer number of roadways, coupled with the high volume of traffic, creates the potential for serious accidents along the roads and bridges. In Forest County there are seventy-six state-maintained and thirteen locally maintained bridges, according to PennDOT. Major transportation routes in Forest County include U.S. Route 62. Other state routes are also present in the county including PA Routes 36, 66, 127, 227, 666, and 899. *Figure 55 – Major Transportation Routes* shows the major transportation systems in Forest County.

Forest County has no public airports, but there are some in neighboring counties such as Warren, McKean, Elk, Jefferson, Clarion, and Venango. There exists a potential extent for air transportation accidents to occur due to the number of commercial air traffic that flies over the county every day.

There are no active freight or passenger rail lines in Forest County, but there is a discontinued freight service line that runs through the northeast corner of the county down to the southwest and into neighboring Clarion County. Rail transportation accidents are generally classified as one of these three types:

- Derailment – an accident on a railway in which a train leaves the rails.
- Collision – an accident in which a train strikes something such as another train or highway motor vehicle.
- Other – accidents caused by other circumstances like obstructions on rails, fire, or explosion.

Rail transportation is divided into two major categories: freight and passenger. Each category can be subdivided according to carrier type: major carrier and local/regional carriers.

There are 3,556 active oil and gas wells located in Forest County. Pipeline infrastructure is seen throughout the county. There are five major pipeline companies that transport hazardous materials in and through Forest County. Of these five major pipeline companies, four are for natural gas only and one is for natural gas and hydrogen sulfide. *Figure 57 – Utility Pipelines Vulnerability* shows the various pipelines that run through Forest County.

#### **4.3.24.2 Range of Magnitude**

Significant passenger vehicle, air, and rail transportation accidents can result in a wide range of outcomes, from damage solely to property, to serious injury or even death. Most motor vehicle crashes in Pennsylvania are non-fatal, but PennDOT estimates that every hour nine people are

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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injured in a car crash, and every seven hours someone dies because of a car crash. Most fatal crashes occur in May and June, but the highest number of crashes overall occurs in October, November, and December. Inclement weather, high traffic volumes, and high speeds increase the risk of automobile accidents.

Railway and roadway accidents have the potential to result in hazardous materials release. Railroad accidents occur with less frequency than highway accidents. However, when these types of incidents occur, they often cause extensive property damage and have the potential to cause serious injuries or deaths.

A worst-case scenario for a transportation accident impacting the county would occur if a road accident resulted in a hazardous material spill in Tionesta Borough, which is the county seat and is situated along the Allegheny River. Tionesta is home to many county offices and businesses. Since it is also situated along the Allegheny River, there exists potential for hazardous materials to spill into the waterway as well. Such an event would constitute an immediate health hazard to the population and may require evacuation.

### **4.3.24.3 Past Occurrence**

*Table 65 – PennDOT Crash Report for Forest County* shows crash statistics recorded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation between 2010 and 2023. Reports for 2024 were not available at the time of this report. The year 2012 had the most total crashes with eighty-six total crashes in Forest County while 2021 had the fewest total crashes with forty total crashes and one fatality. The number of total crashes, on average, has declined steadily since 2018 to present in Forest County.

The majority of municipalities noted, on the municipality hazard identification worksheet they received, that there has been a slight increase in transportation accidents within their municipality.

*Table 65 - PennDOT Crash Report for Forest County*

<b>PennDOT Crash Report for Forest County</b>								
<b>Year</b>	<b>Vehicle accidents for Forest County</b>				<b>Vehicle Accident Deaths for Forest County</b>			<b>Train/Trolley with Motor Vehicle Crashes/Fatalities</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Fatal Accidents</b>	<b>Injury Crashes</b>	<b>Property Damage Only</b>	<b>Total Vehicle Accident Fatalities</b>	<b>Alcohol-Related Fatalities</b>	<b>Pedestrian Fatalities</b>	
2010	85	3	48	34	4	2	0	0
2011	70	0	38	32	0	0	0	0
2012	86	1	49	36	1	0	0	0

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

PennDOT Crash Report for Forest County								
Year	Vehicle accidents for Forest County				Vehicle Accident Deaths for Forest County			Train/Trolley with Motor Vehicle Crashes/Fatalities
	Total	Fatal Accidents	Injury Crashes	Property Damage Only	Total Vehicle Accident Fatalities	Alcohol-Related Fatalities	Pedestrian Fatalities	
2013	84	3	39	42	5	1	0	0
2014	68	0	35	33	0	0	0	0
2015	55	0	35	20	0	0	0	0
2016	70	3	32	35	4	0	0	0
2017	59	2	29	28	2	0	0	0
2018	72	1	42	29	2	2	0	0
2019	68	1	35	32	1	1	0	0
2020	59	0	26	33	0	0	0	0
2021	40	1	19	20	1	0	0	0
2022	53	3	18	32	3	1	0	0
2023	53	0	17	36	0	0	0	0

#### **4.3.24.4 Future Occurrence**

Forest County's population has decreased over the last decade, so it can be assumed that local traffic has decreased slightly as well. However, there always exists the potential for transportation accidents to occur even if the traffic percentage has decreased. Hazardous material release through transportation accidents is difficult to predict but can be assumed to happen in future events as well. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the mean travel time to work for those aged 16 plus is approximately twenty-four minutes. Automobile accidents occur frequently, and typically occur more frequently than rail or aviation accidents. In the case of highway accidents, PennDOT has enacted measures to reduce the number of highway transportation accidents through programs such as the Pennsylvania Highway Safety Corridor. In this program, PennDOT designates sections of highway where traffic citation fines are doubled in the hopes that higher fines will deter unsafe driving and reduce accidents. Transportation accidents are impossible to predict accurately; however, areas prone to these hazards can be located, quantified through analysis of historical records, and plotted on countywide and municipal base maps.

#### **4.3.24.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

A transportation accident can occur anywhere in Forest County. However, severe accidents are more likely to occur on the county's major highways due to the heavier traffic volumes which make highways extremely vulnerable. The vulnerability for accidents on either highway, railway, or aviation, are directly related to the population and traffic density within the county. The

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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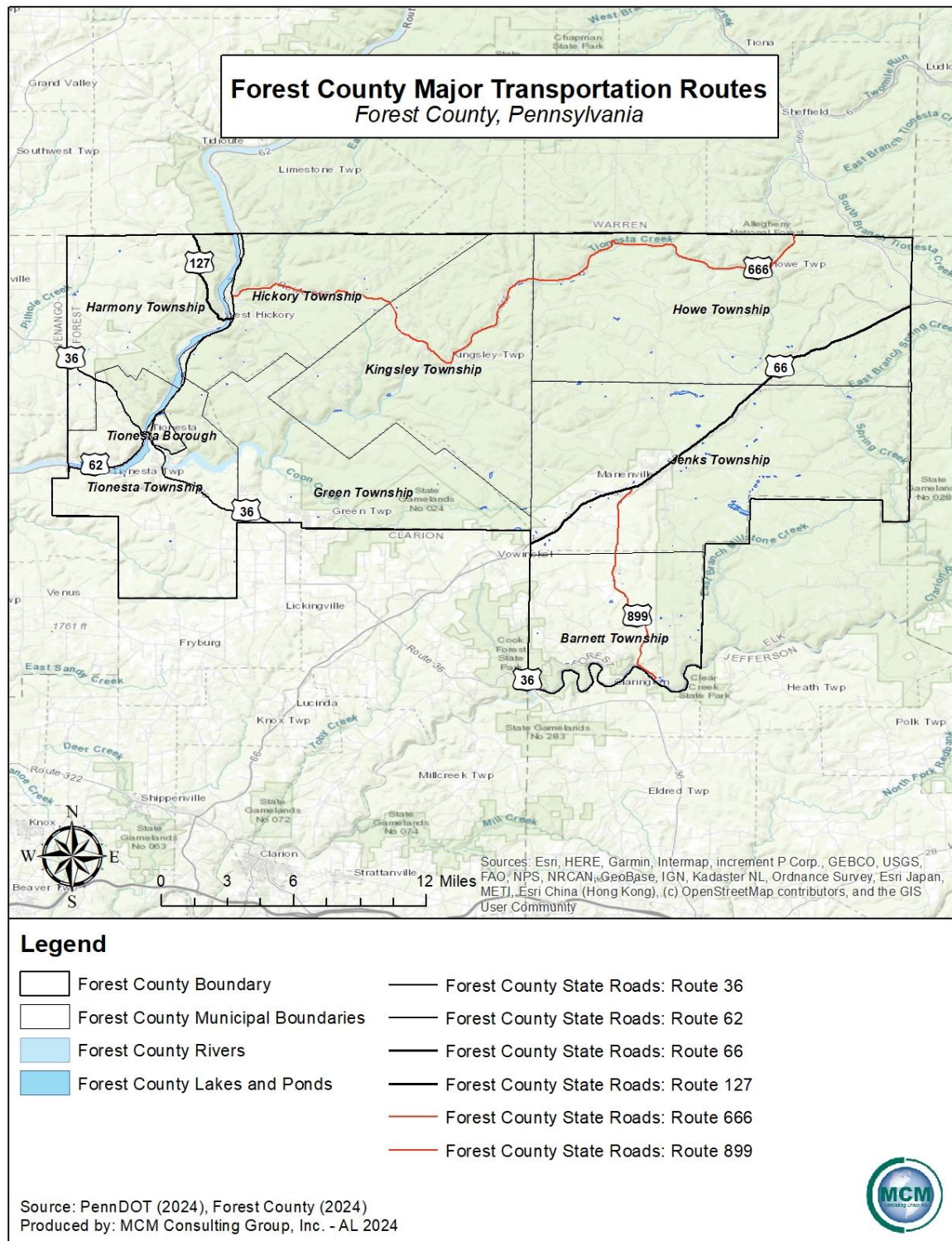
vulnerability increases if there are hazardous materials involved. Hazards associated with causing transportation accidents can include natural hazards that affect the environment, such as winter storms or heavy rains that cause slippery roadways or mud slides, to windstorms or tornadoes that cause high-profile vehicles or train cars to topple over. Loss of roadway use, and public transportation services would affect commuters, employment, delivery of critical municipal and emergency services, and day-to-day operations within the county.

With highway accidents, there is an added vulnerability that stems from the age and upkeep of bridges throughout the county. Unrepaired, deficient bridges may be more likely to break, thus leading to highway transportation damages or deaths. 11.24% of Forest County bridges are in poor condition, indicating a vulnerability to transportation accidents, while 52.81% remain in fair condition, and 35.96% remain in good condition.

Studying traffic and potential transportation accident patterns could provide information on vulnerability of specific road segments and nearby populations. Increased understanding of the types of hazardous materials transported through the county will also support mitigation efforts. Maintaining a record of these frequently transported materials can facilitate development of preparatory measures for response to a release. *Figure 56– Average Daily Traffic on Major Highway Vulnerability* identifies all major highways and railroads within Forest County.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

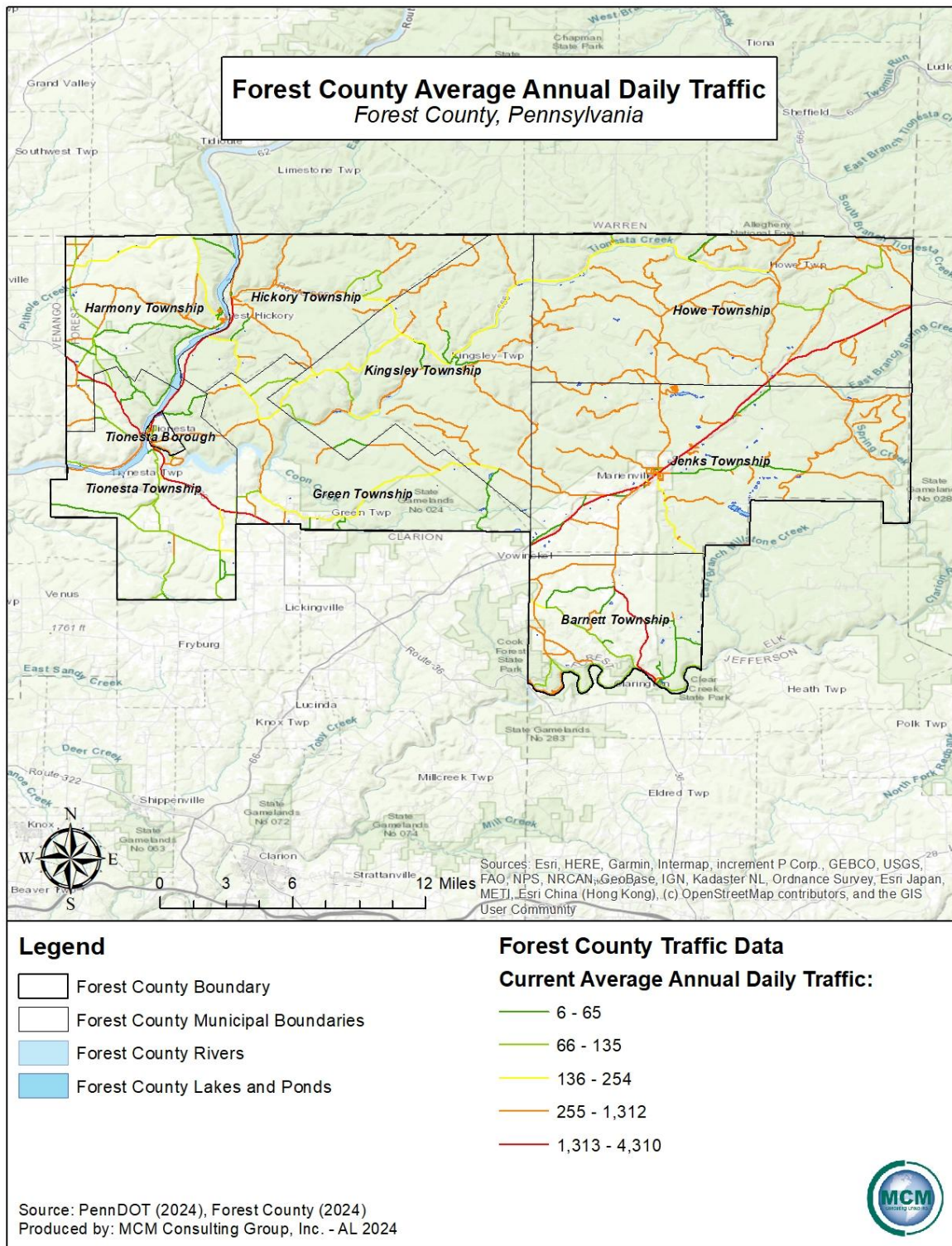
Figure 55 - Major Transportation Routes





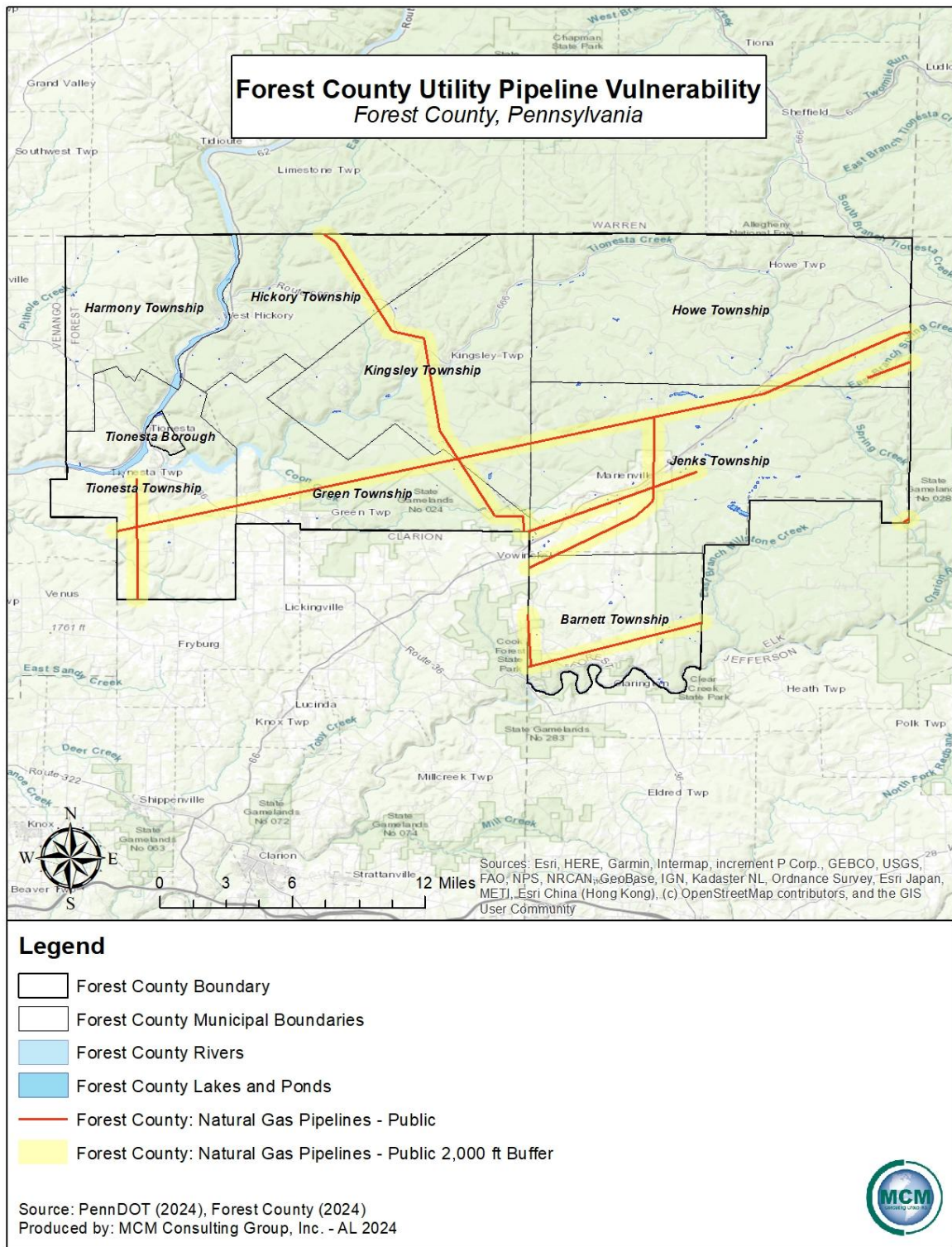
# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 56 - Average Daily Traffic on Major Highway Vulnerability



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 57 - Utility Pipelines Vulnerability





## *Forest County, Pennsylvania*

### *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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#### **4.3.25. Urban Fire and Explosion**

##### **4.3.25.1 Location and Extent**

Urban fire and explosion hazards incorporate vehicle and building/structure fires, as well as overpressure ruptures, overheat explosions, or other explosions that do not ignite. Statewide, this hazard is most problematic in the denser, and more urbanized areas, occurring most often in residential structures (US Fire Administration, 2009). Urban fires can more easily spread from building to building in denser urban areas.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 U.S. Census, Forest County has approximately 7,045 housing units. Buildings that were constructed fifty or more years ago are at a higher risk of urban fires due to improvement in fire safety engineering practices. Nearly 13.6% of all structures in Forest County were built before 1940, with a majority of housing units built before 1979.

Fires can start from numerous causes including human errors or electrical malfunctions. Most fires are small and have little impact on the greater community other than possibly increasing insurance rates. Oftentimes large urban fires are the result of other hazards such as storms, droughts, transportation accidents, hazardous material spills, arson, or terrorism.

Natural gas exploration and extraction sites can be associated with fires and explosion events. Well flares regularly burn off excess gas, and if improperly managed, such activities can be dangerous for the surrounding areas.

##### **4.3.25.2 Range of Magnitude**

Urban fires can occur in any populated area, and fires affecting one structure happen quite often. Urban fires are most threatening when the fire can rapidly spread from one structure to another. Forest County is largely rural/semi-rural and does not have significant expanses of dense population.

Damages from fire and explosions ranges from minor smoke inhalation and/or water damage to the destruction of buildings. A worst-case scenario for any fire and or explosion would be in injuries and/or death of the occupants of the structures and the potential of injury or death of firefighters.

There are economic consequences related to a fire and explosion hazard, including:

- Loss in wages due to temporary or permanently closed businesses
- Destruction and damage to business and personal assets
- Loss of tax base
- Recovery costs
- Loss related to the ability of public, private, and non-profit entities to provide post incident relief.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The secondary effects of urban fire and explosion events relate to the ability of public, private, and non-profit entities to provide post-incident relief. Human services agencies (community support programs, health and medical services, public assistance programs and social services) can be affected by urban fire and explosion events. Effects include causing physical damage to facilities and equipment, disruption of emergency communications, loss of health and medical facilities and supplies, and an overwhelming load of victims who are suffering from the effects of the urban fire, including loss of their home or place of business.

### **4.3.25.3 Past Occurrence**

From 1910 to 1990, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania experienced thirteen major fires in suburban and urban settings, and ten of them occurred after 1980. Between 1978 and 1982, the average number of deaths per fire was 2.7. After October 1990, the average number of deaths per fire decreased. No major fires or explosions have occurred in Forest County since the year 2000. Data that was provided during the development of this report indicates that two small structure fires have occurred since 2020. A multiple structure fire occurred in Jenks Township on January 06, 2020, and a residential fire occurred on May 27, 2023.

As of September 2024, there were 3,557 active natural gas wells in Forest County (PA DEP, 2024), these locations should be closely monitored, and safety protocols should be strictly adhered to in order to avoid explosions and starting fires. Forest County utilizes a database system called WebEOC to track incidents within the county. During the development of this report two small structure fires have occurred.

### **4.3.25.4 Future Occurrence**

Small urban fires occur regularly and usually cause little damage. Areas with greater population and an increased rate of population density are at greater risk for future urban fires and explosions. The more urban areas of Forest County include Tionesta and Marienville.

Any new construction must comply with PA Department of Labor's statewide uniform construction codes. One requirement in the construction codes is automatic sprinkler requirements for buildings other than one- and two-family dwellings. In most cases, this requirement will contain fires to the point of origin.

### **4.3.25.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Fire and explosion vulnerability greatly depends on the vulnerability of other hazards. Most fires result from the secondary effect of another hazard. The probability of a fire or explosion occurring increases with population and economic growth. The natural gas industry and exploration are active and growing in Forest County, and with it comes greater risk for fire and explosion. Urban fire risk also increases as the use of wood burning and kerosene space heaters

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

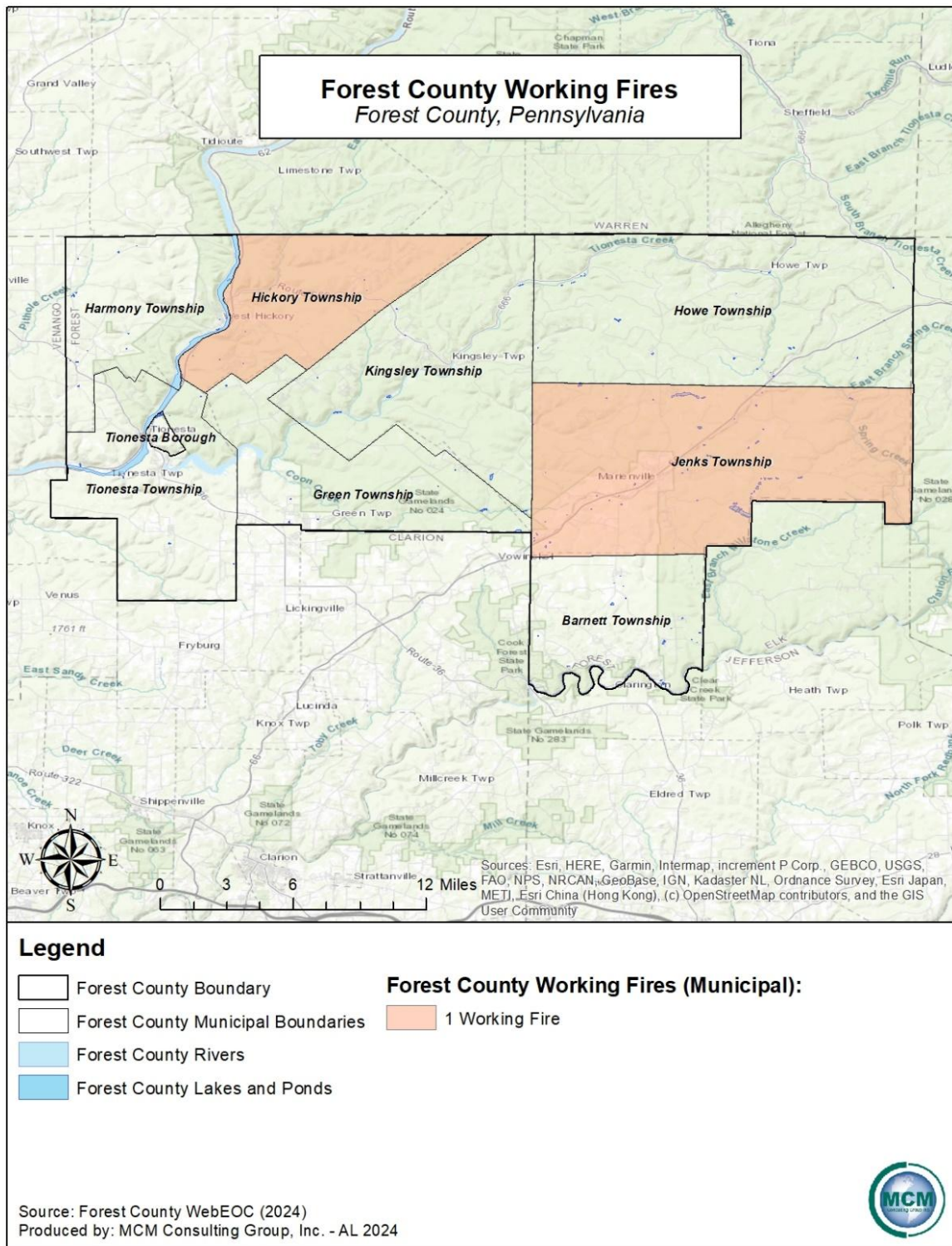
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increases. The elderly (those 65 years and older) tend to be more vulnerable to structure fires than other age groups, and often experience the highest number of deaths per fire. Older structures are more vulnerable to urban fire, and fires can spread faster to each other in areas with higher concentrations of housing. Potential secondary effects of urban fires include utility interruption and hazardous material spills. The following map (Figure 58 - Forest County Working Fires) Identifies previous fires as well as which of those resulted in fatalities.



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 58 - Forest County Working Fires



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.3.26. Utility Interruptions**

#### **4.3.26.1 Location and Extent**

Utility interruptions can occur from an internal system failure or as a secondary impact of another hazard, such as windstorm, winter storm, extreme temperatures, or a traffic accident. Strong adverse weather conditions and storms can cause widespread disruptions in electric and telecommunications service due to power lines being brought down by falling tree branches across a region. Strong heat waves may result in rolling blackouts where power may not be available for an extended period, impacting air conditioning across a region. Space weather, specifically solar flares, can also pose a threat to utility service across the globe. Although uncommon, the northeastern seaboard and the north central regions of the United States are particularly susceptible to this hazard.

The age of utility infrastructure also plays a role in interruptions, causing longer periods of outages in a larger area. Natural gas, water, telecommunications, and electric capabilities can all experience disruptions. Worker strikes at power generation facilities have also been known to cause minor and temporary power outages and failures. Other causes for minor power outages include but are not limited to vehicle accidents and wire destruction due to animals or wildlife. Outages can also be caused by blown transformers or tripped circuit breakers in the electric system. Major power outages typically occur on a regional scale and can last both short term and long term.

The list of utility providers in Forest County is shown in *Table 66 – Forest County Utility Providers*.

*Table 66 - Forest County Utility Providers*

<b>Forest County Utility Providers</b>	
<b>Utility Type</b>	<b>Name of Utility Provider</b>
Electricity	APG&E, Smart Energy, Constellation, Penelec, Public Power, Direct Energy, Energy Harbor, Clearview Energy
Telephone/9-1-1/Wireless	Verizon Pennsylvania LLC, Verizon North LLC., Windstream Pennsylvania, LLC, Venus Telephone Corporation
Natural Gas	UGI, Nacional Fuel, Columbia Gas, Popeles Natural Gas
Water	Aqua PA, North Penn Water Authority, Northwest Soil Services
Source: PA Public Utility Commission, 2022	

#### **4.3.26.2 Range of Magnitude**

Utility interruptions do not typically lead to large-scale problems by themselves. Typically, human casualties are not a direct result from outages. Many utility interruptions occur during

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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storms or other severe weather events, and they can have secondary consequences. Typical secondary effects from a power outage can include a delay in emergency response and those services arriving in a timely manner. A lack of potable drinking water can also become a major issue for areas impacted by utility interruptions.

### Electricity:

Interruptions or power failures could have the following impacts:

- Public safety concerns
- Food spoilage
- Loss of heating or air conditioning
- Basement flooding due to sump pump failure
- Loss of indoor lighting
- Loss of internet service
- Stopped and stalled elevators
- Direct economic impact from retail settings

Of all the above listed impacts, the loss of heating or air conditioning poses the greatest risk to the elderly and very young populations during times of extreme temperature. Prolonged power outages also pose a risk to residents that rely on home-based medical equipment such as home-supply oxygen units. Some of the issues that are listed above can be considered more of a nuisance than a hazard, such as food spoilage due to long-term electrical outages. However, significant damage or harm can occur depending on the population affected, the duration, and the severity of the outage.

A worst-case scenario for the utility interruptions would be a county-wide power outage during winter months, forcing the evacuation of vulnerable populations to facilities outside of the county or to warming shelters within the county.

### Fuel:

Interruptions of the transportation of gas and other products used for fuel can lead to a loss of heating and manufacturing capabilities. This can adversely affect the economic stability of a region and the production of needed products for consumption.

### Telecommunications:

Interruptions to telecommunications systems include impacts to the 9-1-1 capabilities of a region, telephone, and internet service. The greatest risk in losing this utility to interruption is the risk of an emergency not being able to be reported to a public safety answering point (PSAP). Extensive loss of telephone and internet service can be detrimental to government, businesses, and to residents. With much of the country now dependent on wireless networks, signal

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania* *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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interruptions can cause a large issue for people who are utilizing wireless telecommunications for work. There are also many concerns regarding safety and internet security due to the increase in people working over wireless networks that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. These interruptions and issues can be detrimental for the Forest County workforce.

### **4.3.26.3 Past Occurrence**

Minor utility interruptions occur annually in Forest County and occur most often in conjunction with winter weather and/or windstorms. Forest County utilizes a database system called WebEOC to track incidents within the county. However, limited data was available for reference, from 2020 through 2024, during the development of this report. *Table 67 – Utility Interruptions in Forest County* illustrates the number of interruptions to electric, natural gas, telecommunications, and water services between 2021 and 2023.

*Table 67 - Utility Interruptions in Forest County*

Utility Interruptions in Forest County		
Date	Event Type	Municipality
10/12/2023	Phone / communications outage	Jenks Township
08/30/2023	Utility Emergency	Jenks Township
06/03/2022	Water shortage / outage	Tionesta Township
04/15/2022	Water shortage /outage	Kingsley Township
06/17/2022	Phone / communications outage	Forest
07/13/2021	Power outage	Barnett Township
03/25/2021	Phone / communications outage	Barnett Township
Source: Forest County WebEOC, 2024		

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission tracks the reliability of electric distribution companies (EDC) and outages. *Table 68 – 2018 Winter Storms Riley and Quinn Power Outages* by EDC compares the customers affected by power outage in Pennsylvania during these storm events and compares them to statistics from Nika from 2014 and Sandy from 2012. Some of the EDCs were not impacted by Winter Storm Quinn. PP&L customers experienced power outages for a duration of eight days with Winter Storm Quinn and Winter Storm Riley, whereas during Sandy in 2012, the duration was nine days. Nika in 2014 had a duration of just over three days.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 68 - 2018 Winter Storms Riley and Quinn Power Outages*

<b>2018 Winter Storms Riley and Quinn Power Outages</b>			
<b>Electric Distribution Company</b>	<b>Customers affected by storms Riley and Quinn 2018 (Percentage of total customers)</b>	<b>Customers affected by Nika 2014 (Percentage of total customer)</b>	<b>Customers affected by Sandy 2012 (Percentage of total customers)</b>
Met-Ed	272,928 (49.22%)	144,000 (26.00%)	298,300 (54.00%)
PECO	794,969 (46.76%)	723,681 (42.00%)	845,703 (54.20%)
Penelec	90,856 (15.61%)	N/A	96,847 (16.40%)
PCLP	2,101 (47.44%)	N/A	4,487 (100.00%)
PP&L	261,341 (18.67%)	92,283 (7.00%)	523, 936 (37.50%)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,422,195</b>	<b>959,964</b>	<b>1,769,273</b>
Source: Winter Storm Riley and Quinn Report 2019			

Other past significant events of utility interruptions in the United States occur on a regional basis and can have varied effects related to the number of impacted customers. A large water treatment plant failure occurred in Jackson, Mississippi in August of 2022 after flooding impacted the treatment facility. The city of Jackson was left without safe drinking water for close to two months until the water was deemed safe and potable in October of 2022. This event stood out as a large scale failure of community lifelines and utilities. This event also opened discussions related to equity in infrastructure repairs, as the repairs took a significant amount of time in a vulnerable socio-economic area. An attack on an electrical grid and power substations in North Carolina in December of 2022 left almost 45,000 people without power and reliant heat during the cold temperatures of January.

#### **4.3.26.4 Future Occurrence**

Utility Interruptions are difficult to predict, and minor interruptions may occur several times a year to all utilities. Even so, utility interruptions occur more frequently as a secondary factor to severe weather events or transportation accidents.

Space weather is getting more attention as an infrastructure risk due in part to a March 2020 report by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The report noted that geomagnetic storms caused by the dynamic action of the Sun and solar wind on the space environment surrounding the Earth can generate electric fields in the Earth's crust and mantle. These electric fields can interfere with the operation of grounded electric power-grid systems. Geomagnetic storms occur only occasionally, but when sufficiently energetic they can produce blackouts on a large scale.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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As utility infrastructure ages, interruption events could occur more frequently if the maintenance of the infrastructure is not maintained. Utility providers can reduce Forest County's vulnerability to power outages by implementing improvement plans for utility infrastructure. Total replacement is not a feasible solution to the issue, but compromises can be reached to ensure that the new and old equipment along a utility line can work together efficiently.

Utility interruptions could see direct impacts based on climate change in Forest County. Prolonged heat waves caused by climate change could stress a power grid that was not specifically designed for increased heat exposure. Increased intensity of winter storms is of particular concern for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as power outages can occur from lines being brought down by ice and snow.

### **4.3.26.5 Vulnerability Assessment**

Resources such as electricity, communications, gas, and water supply are critical to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizenry. *Figure 59 – Forest County Utility Interruption Vulnerability* illustrates the approximate locations of service lines and pipelines throughout Forest County.

Power outages can cause even greater detriment to at-risk and vulnerable populations, such as elderly (e.g., supplemental oxygen power needs) or those with functional and access needs to consider. All critical infrastructure is vulnerable to the effects of a power surge. The probability of a large-scale, extended utility failure is low; however, small-scale failures lasting short periods of time occur annually.

Long-term care facilities, senior centers, hospitals, and emergency medical facilities are all vulnerable to utility interruptions. Often back-up power generators are used at these facilities to offset electrical needs during extreme hot or cold temperature events. However, these back-up power generators must be maintained, and fuel supplies must be secured in advance of the utility interruption to ensure a seamless transition from the everyday, grid power source to the emergency generator. When officials consider maintenance and supplies for a facility, long-term use of back-up generators should be planned.

#### Electricity:

Severe weather is one of the largest causes of power loss. The electric power grid infrastructure can be damaged by snow, ice, high winds, lightning, flooding, falling tree limbs, and vehicle accidents involving utility poles. Small animals can also cause minor power outages by climbing along the lines and shorting out the system.

Causes of a regional scale power outage or failure could be from infrastructure failure, sabotage, human error, or worker strikes. Community lifeline facilities are vulnerable to utility interruptions, especially the loss of power. The establishment of reliable backup power at these

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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facilities is extremely important to provide continued support of the health, safety, and well-being of Forest County residents and visitors.

The occurrence of severe weather related utility interruptions will increase due to climate change in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole. Climate change will cause weather to become more severe on a more frequent basis.

### Water:

Water distribution can be affected in three ways.

- The amount of water available (depends on nature)
- The quality of the water (depends on human responsibility)
- The viability of the physical components of the distribution system

Well contamination or water shortages due to drought could pose a high vulnerability to local water distribution. Drought events will continue to occur more frequently as climate change alters that available amount of ground water for consumption. This will result in greater well shortages and water utility interruptions for citizens that have well water.

Water contamination can occur naturally, by human error, or intentionally. Releases of manure and milk into the water supply can cause contamination. Overflows from sewage systems and lagoons on farms can also cause contamination of groundwater and drinking water. There are times when accidental spills and releases of hazardous materials contaminate water supplies, thereby, water supplies along transportation routes may be affected.

### Gas and Liquid Pipelines:

Interruptions to natural gas distribution lines could be affected by:

- Deterioration of line and facilities
- Puncturing the distribution lines by humans (either intentional or accidental)
- Coastal or winter storms
- Extreme heat or cold events
- Transportation accidents

### Communications:

Interruptions in communications could be caused as a secondary effect of storms or high winds, infrastructure failure, or by humans (intentional or accidental). A loss of communications by emergency services would be devastating to the population of Forest County if 9-1-1 calls could not be received, or if emergency units could not be dispatched properly and/or timely.

No data regarding economic impacts from utility interruptions in Forest County were available. However, utility interruptions can cause economic impacts stemming from lost income, spoiled

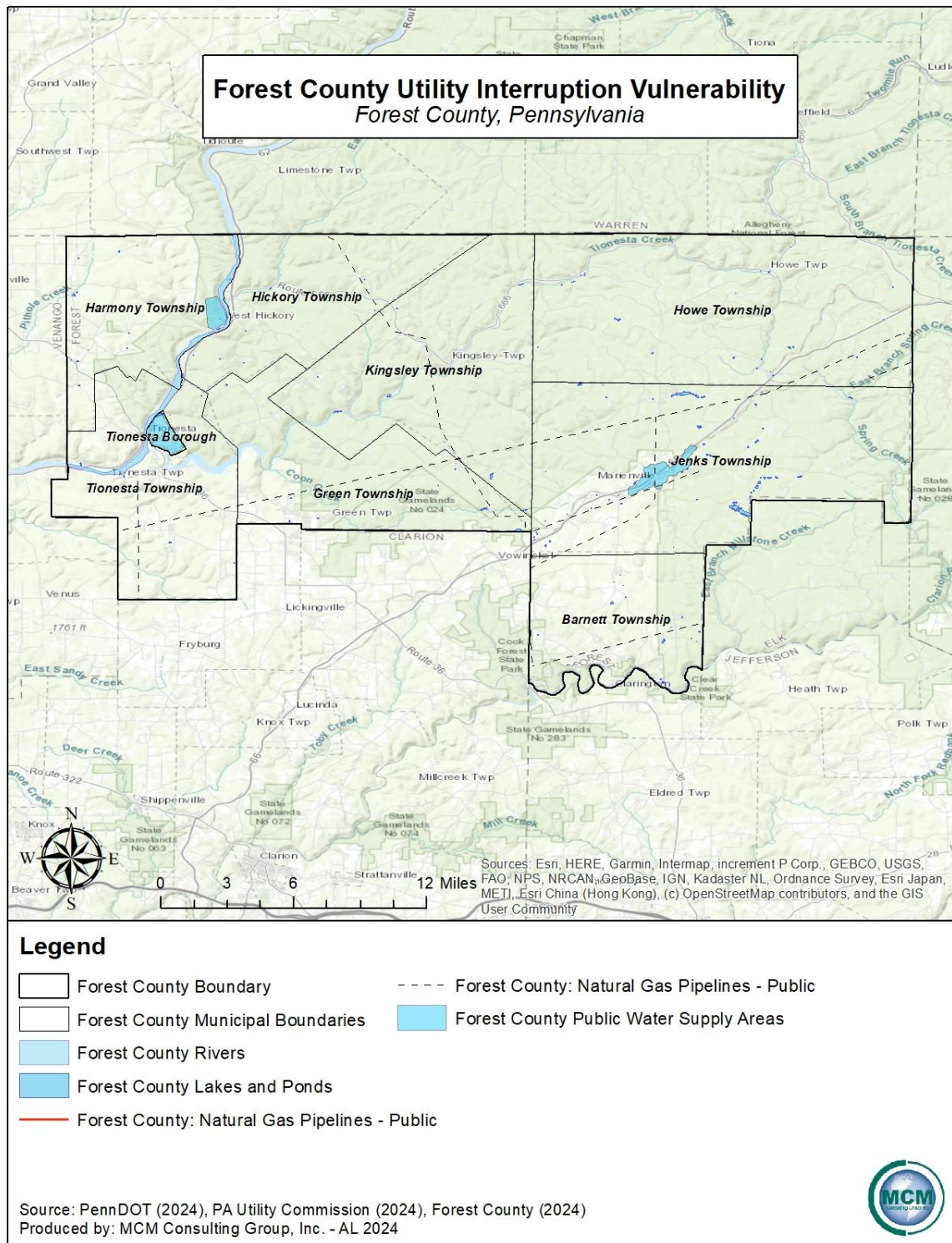
***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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food and other goods, costs to the owners or operators of the utility facilities, and costs to government and community service groups.

# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Figure 59 - Forest County Utility Interruption Vulnerability



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **4.4. Hazard Vulnerability Summary**

#### **4.4.1. Methodology**

Ranking hazards helps communities set goals and priorities for mitigation based on their vulnerabilities. A risk factor (RF) is a tool used to measure the degree of risk for identified hazards in a particular planning area. The RF can also assist local community officials in ranking and prioritizing hazards that pose the most significant threat to a planning area based on a variety of factors deemed important by the planning team and other stakeholders involved in the hazard mitigation planning process. The RF system relies mainly on historical data, local knowledge, general consensus from the planning team and information collected through development of the hazard profiles included in Section 4.3. The RF approach produces numerical values that allow identified hazards to be ranked against one another; the higher the RF value, the greater the hazard risk.

RF values were obtained by assigning varying degrees of risk to five categories for each of the hazards profiled in the HMP update. Those categories include *probability, impact, spatial extent, warning time and duration*. Each degree of risk was assigned a value ranging from one to four. The weighting factor agreed upon by the planning team is shown in *Table 69 – Risk Factor Value*. To calculate the RF value for a given hazard, the assigned risk value for each category was multiplied by the weighting factor. The sum of all five categories equals the final RF value, as demonstrated in the following example equation:

*Table 69 - Risk Factor Value*

<p>Risk Factor Value =</p> $[(\text{Probability} \times .30) + (\text{Impact} \times .30) + (\text{Spatial Extent} \times .20) + (\text{Warning Time} \times .10) + (\text{Duration} \times .10)]$
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*Table 70 – Risk Factor Approach Summary* summarizes each of the five categories used for calculating a RF for each hazard. According to the weighting scheme applied, the highest possible RF value is 4.0



# Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Table 70 - Risk Factor Approach Summary

Summary of Risk Factor Approach Used to Rank Hazard Risk.					
RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY	DEGREE OF RISK			WEIGHT VALUE	
	LEVEL	CRITERIA	INDEX		
<b>PROBABILITY</b> <i>What is the likelihood of a hazard event occurring in a given year?</i>	UNLIKELY	LESS THAN 1% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	1	30%	
	POSSIBLE	BETWEEN 1 & 10% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	2		
	LIKELY	BETWEEN 10 & 100% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	3		
	HIGHLY LIKELY	100% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	4		
<b>IMPACT</b> <i>In terms of injuries, damage, or death, would you anticipate impacts to be minor, limited, critical, or catastrophic when a significant hazard event occurs?</i>	MINOR	VERY FEW INJURIES, IF ANY. ONLY MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE & MINIMAL DISRUPTION ON QUALITY OF LIFE. TEMPORARY SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES.	1	30%	
	LIMITED	MINOR INJURIES ONLY. MORE THAN 10% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR MORE THAN ONE DAY.	2		
	CRITICAL	MULTIPLE DEATHS/INJURIES POSSIBLE. MORE THAN 25% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR MORE THAN ONE WEEK.	3		
	CATASTROPHIC	HIGH NUMBER OF DEATHS/INJURIES POSSIBLE. MORE THAN 50% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR 30 DAYS OR MORE.	4		
<b>SPATIAL EXTENT</b> <i>How large of an area could be impacted by a hazard event? Are impacts localized or regional?</i>	NEGLIGIBLE	LESS THAN 1% OF AREA AFFECTED	1	20%	
	SMALL	BETWEEN 1 & 10% OF AREA AFFECTED	2		
	MODERATE	BETWEEN 10 & 50% OF AREA AFFECTED	3		
	LARGE	BETWEEN 50 & 100% OF AREA AFFECTED	4		
<b>WARNING TIME</b> <i>Is there usually some lead time associated with the hazard event? Have warning measures been implemented?</i>	MORE THAN 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED		1	10%
	12 TO 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	(NOTE: Levels of warning time and criteria that define them may be adjusted based on hazard addressed.)	2	
	6 TO 12 HRS	SELF-DEFINED		3	
	LESS THAN 6 HRS	SELF-DEFINED		4	
<b>DURATION</b> <i>How long does the hazard event usually last?</i>	LESS THAN 6 HRS	SELF-DEFINED		1	10%
	LESS THAN 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	(NOTE: Levels of warning time and criteria that define them may be adjusted based on hazard addressed.)	2	
	LESS THAN 1 WEEK	SELF-DEFINED		3	
	MORE THAN 1 WEEK	SELF-DEFINED		4	

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

### 4.4.2. Ranking Results

Using the methodology described in Section 4.4.1, *Table 71 – Risk Factor Assessment* lists the risk factor calculated for each of the twenty-six potential hazards identified in the 2025 HMP. Hazards identified as *high* risk have risk factors greater than 2.5. Risk factors ranging from 2.0 to 2.4 were deemed *moderate* risk hazards. Hazards with risk factors 1.9 and less are considered *low* risk.

Table 71 - Risk Factor Assessment

Forest County Hazard Ranking Based on Risk Factor Assessment Methodology							
Hazard Risk	Hazard Natural (N) or Human Caused (H)	RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY					RISK FACTOR (RF)
		Probability	Impact	Spatial Extent	Warning Time	Duration	
<b>HIGH</b>	Pandemic and Infectious Diseases	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Utility Interruption	4	3	4	4	3	3.6
	Invasive Species	4	3	4	1	4	3.4
	Cyberterrorism	3	3	3	4	4	3.2
	Hurricane and Tropical Storm	3	3	3	3	4	3.1
	Tornado and Windstorm	3	3	3	3	4	3.1
	Dam Failure	1	4	4	3	4	3
	Wildfire	3	3	2	4	4	3
	Hailstorms	3	3	3	3	2	2.9
	Transportation Accidents	4	3	1	4	2	2.9
	Earthquake	1	3	4	4	4	2.8
	Radon Exposure	4	1	4	1	4	2.8
	Substance Use Disorder	4	3	1	4	1	2.8
	Flash Flood	4	2	1	4	3	2.7
	Winter storm	3	2	4	1	3	2.7
	Urban Fire and Explosion	2	3	2	4	4	2.7
	Flood	2	3	3	2	3	2.6
	Environmental Hazards (Transportation)	3	2	1	4	4	2.5
	Extreme Temperatures	3	1	4	1	4	2.5
<b>MODERATE</b>	Disorientation	4	1	1	4	2	2.3
	Ice Jam Flood	3	2	2	2	2	2.3
	Lighting Strike	2	2	2	4	3	2.3
	Drought	2	1	4	1	4	2.2
	Landslide	4	1	1	4	1	2.2
	Terrorism (Suggested 2025)	3	1	1	4	2	2

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County Hazard Ranking Based on Risk Factor Assessment Methodology							
Hazard Risk	Hazard Natural (N) or Human Caused (H)	RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY					RISK FACTOR (RF)
		Probability	Impact	Spatial Extent	Warning Time	Duration	
<b>LOW</b>	Blighted Properties (Suggested Option 2025)	3	1	1	1	4	1.9
	Environmental Hazards (Fixed Facility)	1	2	1	4	3	1.8
	Civil Disturbance	1	2	1	4	1	1.6
	Subsidence, Sinkhole (Suggested 2025)	1	1	1	4	4	1.6
	Drowning	1	1	1	1	2	1.1

Based on these results, there are sixteen high risk hazards, five moderate risk hazards, and five low risk hazards in Forest County. Mitigation actions were developed for all high, moderate, and low risk hazards (see section 6.4). The threat posed to life and property for moderate and high-risk hazards is considered significant enough to warrant the need for establishing hazard-specific mitigation actions. Mitigation actions related to future public outreach and emergency service activities are identified to address low risk hazard events.

A risk assessment result for the entire county does not mean that each municipality is at the same amount of risk to each hazard. *Table 72 – Countywide Risk Factor Assessment* shows the different municipalities in Forest County and whether their risk is greater than (>), less than (<), or equal to (=) the risk factor assigned to the county as a whole. This table was developed by the consultant based on the findings in the hazard profiles located in sections 4.3.1 through 4.3.26.

*Table 72 - Countywide Risk Factor*

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Calculated Countywide Risk Factor by Hazard and Comparative Jurisdictional Risk									
IDENTIFIED HAZARD AND CORRESPONDING COUNTYWIDE RISK FACTOR									
JURISDICTION	Pandemic and Infectious Diseases	Utility Interruption	Invasive Species	Cyberterrorism	Hurricane and Tropical Storm	Tornado and Windstorm	Dam Failure	Wildfire	Hailstorms
	4.0	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9
Barnett Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Green Township	2.3	2.3	1.6	2.7	2.4	2.2	1.3	1.6	2.1
Harmony Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Hickory Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Howe Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Jenks Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Kingsley Township	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.9	2.1	1.9	3.2	2.5	1.2
Tionesta Borough	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Tionesta Township	2.4	2.1	1.9	1.3	2.1	2.5	2.6	1.9	1.2

Calculated Countywide Risk Factor by Hazard and Comparative Jurisdictional Risk									
IDENTIFIED HAZARD AND CORRESPONDING COUNTYWIDE RISK FACTOR									
JURISDICTION	Transportation Accidents	Earthquake	Radon Exposure	Substance Use Disorder	Flash Flood	Winter storm	Urban Fire and Explosion	Flood	Environmental Hazards (Transportation )
	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5
Barnett Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Green Township	1.6	2.3	1.0	1.6	2.4	1.8	2.3	1.9	2.3
Harmony Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Hickory Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Howe Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Calculated Countywide Risk Factor by Hazard and Comparative Jurisdictional Risk									
IDENTIFIED HAZARD AND CORRESPONDING COUNTYWIDE RISK FACTOR									
JURISDICTION	Transportation Accidents	Earthquake	Radon Exposure	Substance Use Disorder	Flash Flood	Winter storm	Urban Fire and Explosion	Flood	Environmental Hazards (Transportation )
	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5
Jenks Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Kingsley Township	2.2	1.3	2.1	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.3
Tionesta Borough	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Tionesta Township	2.2	1.3	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.1	1.6	2.1	2.3

Calculated Countywide Risk Factor by Hazard and Comparative Jurisdictional Risk									
IDENTIFIED HAZARD AND CORRESPONDING COUNTYWIDE RISK FACTOR									
JURISDICTION	Extreme Temperature	Disorientation	Ice Jam Flood	Lighting Strike	Drought	Landslide	Terrorism	Blighted Properties	Environmental Hazards (Fixed Facility)
	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.2	2	1.9	1.8
Barnett Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Green Township	2.5	1.3	2.1	1.6	2.1	1.8	2.4	1.6	2.3
Harmony Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Hickory Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Howe Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Jenks Township	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Kingsley Township	1.5	1.9	2.7	1.9	2.8	2.6	3.1	2.2	1.2
Tionesta Borough	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Tionesta Township	1.5	1.4	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.6	2.1	1.6	1.8



## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Calculated Countywide Risk Factor by Hazard and Comparative Jurisdictional Risk									
IDENTIFIED HAZARD AND CORRESPONDING COUNTYWIDE RISK FACTOR									
JURISDICTION	Civil Disturbance	Subsidence and Sinkhole							
	1.6	1.6							
Barnett Township	=	=							
Green Township	1.0	1.0							
Harmony Township	=	=							
Hickory Township	=	=							
Howe Township	=	=							
Jenks Township	=	=							
Kingsley Township	1.5	2.2							
Tionesta Borough	=	=							
Tionesta Township	1.3	2.2							

### 4.4.3. Potential Loss Estimates

Based on various kinds of available data, potential loss estimates were established for flooding. Estimates provided in this section are based on HAZUS-MH, version MR4, geospatial analysis, and previous events. Estimates are considered *potential* in that they generally represent losses that could occur in a countywide hazard scenario. In events that are localized, losses may be lower, while regional events could yield higher losses.

Potential loss estimates have four basic components, including:

Replacement Value: Current cost of returning an asset to its pre-damaged condition, using present-day cost of labor and materials.

Content Loss: Value of building's contents, typically measured as a percentage of the building replacement value.

Functional Loss: The value of a building's use or function that would be lost if it were damaged or closed.

Displacement Cost: The dollar amount required for relocation of the function (business or service) to another structure following a hazard event.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Flooding Loss Estimation:**

Flooding is a high-risk natural hazard in Forest County. The estimation of potential loss in this assessment focuses on the monetary damage that could result from flooding. The potential property loss was determined for each municipality and for the entire county. The quantity of commercial and residential structures in each Forest County municipality is outlined in section 4.3.4 of the flooding hazard profile.

MCM Consulting Group, Inc. conducted a countywide flood study using the Hazards U.S. Multi-Hazard (HAZUS-MH) software that is provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This software is a standardized loss estimation software deriving economic loss, building damage, content damage and other economic impacts that can be used in local flood mitigation planning activities.

Using HAZUS-MH, total building-related losses from a 1%-annual-chance flood in Forest County are estimated to equal \$31.58 million with 80.26% of that coming from residential homes. Total economic loss, including replacement value, content loss, functional loss, and displacement cost, from a countywide 1%-annual-chance flood are estimated to equal \$47.71 million.

#### **4.4.4. Future Development and Vulnerability**

The 2020 census population for Forest County is 6,973 which is 743 fewer than the 2010 census. There was an overall decrease of 9.63% in population based on the data. One municipality has seen population increases while the remaining eight had decreases in the period between 2010 and the 2020, as identified in *Table 3 – 2010 – 2020 Population Change*.

The 2020 census estimates indicates that there are approximately 6,969 housing units in Forest County, Pennsylvania. Of those, 1,944 structures are occupied-housing units. The county-wide population changes indicate a potential alteration to overall hazard vulnerability. Municipalities that undergo widespread population reductions may have more difficulty meeting personnel demands than would expanding jurisdictions. However, certain municipalities experienced significant resident increases and, thus, may be more vulnerable to certain hazards due to development and residential growth. Although expanding population zones may be especially vulnerable to hazards outlined in section 4.3 of this hazard mitigation plan update, natural and human caused hazards could potentially occur at any time regardless of population change. The Forest County Hazard Mitigation Local Planning Team will conduct annual reviews of this plan and the impacts all hazards have on the county and new development every year and within a time frame after a disaster or major emergency.

## **5. Capability Assessment**

### **5.1. Update Process Summary**

The capability assessment is an evaluation of Forest County’s governmental structure, political framework, legal jurisdiction, fiscal status, policies and programs, regulations, ordinances, and resource availability. Each category is evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses in responding to, preparing for, and mitigating the effects of the profiled hazards. A capability assessment is an integral part of the hazard mitigation planning process. Here, the county and municipalities identify, review, and analyze what they are currently doing to reduce losses and identify the framework necessary to implement new mitigation actions. This information will help the county and municipalities evaluate alternative mitigation actions and address shortfalls in the mitigation plan.

A capabilities assessment survey was provided to the municipalities during the planning process at meetings held with Forest County officials. These meetings were designed to seek input from the key county and municipal stakeholders on legal, fiscal, technical, and administrative capabilities of all jurisdictions. As such, the capabilities assessment help guide the implementation of mitigation projects and will help evaluate the effectiveness of existing mitigation measures, policies, plans, practices, and programs.

Throughout the planning process, the mitigation local planning team considered the county’s nine municipalities. Pennsylvania municipalities have their own governing bodies, pass, and enforce their own ordinances and regulations, purchase equipment and manage their own resources, including critical infrastructure. Therefore, these capability assessments consider the various characteristics and capabilities of municipalities under study.

The evaluation of the following categories – political framework, legal jurisdictions, fiscal status, policies and programs and regulations and ordinances – allows the mitigation planning team to determine the viability of certain mitigation actions. The capability assessment analyzes what Forest County, and its municipalities have the capacity to do and provides an understanding of what must be changed to mitigate loss.

Forest County has several resources it can access to implement hazard mitigation initiatives including emergency response measures, local planning and regulatory tools, administrative assistance and technical expertise, fiscal capabilities, and participation in local, regional, state, and federal programs. The presence of these resources enables community resiliency through actions taken before, during, and after a hazardous event. While the capability assessment serves as a good instrument for identifying local capabilities, it also provides a means for recognizing

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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gaps and weaknesses that can be resolved through future mitigation actions. The results of this assessment lend critical information for developing an effective mitigation strategy.

### **5.2. Capability Assessment Findings**

Six of the nine municipalities in Forest County completed and submitted a capability assessment survey. The results of the survey were collected, aggregated, and analyzed.

Each plan participant has some ability to expand and improve upon their administrative and technical capabilities following this plan update and during an update process. The municipalities of Forest County could improve upon these capabilities by first reviewing the capability assessment forms submitted during this update process and identifying areas of growth based off of these forms. A comprehensive review is within the power of each municipality of Forest County to see what departments, commissions, boards, and staff they have available to assist in each aspect of capability assessments. Each municipality, as a plan participant, should assess if they have the ability to improve in these areas during an annual review process or during the next hazard mitigation plan update. The plan participants should also review their ability to improve the financial capabilities by reviewing funding and funding sources, and researching other funding sources for hazard mitigation processes. Each plan participant can improve their education and outreach capabilities by increasing public event participation and education events that they attend in the county.

#### **5.2.1. Planning and Regulatory Capability**

Municipalities have the authority to govern more restrictively than state and county minimum requirements as long as they are compliant with all criteria established in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and their respective municipal codes. Municipalities can develop their own policies and programs and implement their own rules and regulations to protect and serve their residents. Local policies and programs are typically identified in a comprehensive plan, implemented through a local ordinance, and enforced by the governmental body or its appointee.

Municipalities regulate land use via the adoption and enforcement of zoning, subdivision, land development, building codes, building permits, floodplain management and/or stormwater management ordinances. When effectively prepared and administered, these regulations can lead to an opportunity for hazard mitigation. For example, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) established minimum floodplain management criteria, and adoption of the Pennsylvania Floodplain Management Act (Act 166 of 1978) established even higher floodplain management standards. A municipality must adopt and enforce these minimum criteria to be eligible for participation in the NFIP. Municipalities have the option of adopting a single-purpose ordinance or incorporating these provisions into their zoning, subdivision, and land development, or building codes; thereby mitigating the potential impacts of local flooding. This capability

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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assessment details the existing Forest County and municipal legal capabilities to mitigate the profiled hazards. It identifies the county and the municipal existing planning documents and their hazard mitigation potential. Hazard mitigation recommendations are, in part, based on the information contained in the assessment.

### **Building Codes**

Building codes are important in mitigation because they are developed for a region of the country in respect to the hazards that exist in that area. Consequently, structures that are built according to applicable codes are inherently resistant to many hazards, such as intense winds, floods, and earthquakes; and can help mitigate regional hazards, such as wildfires. In 2003, Pennsylvania implemented the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) (Act 45), a comprehensive building code that establishes minimum regulations for most new construction, including additions and renovations to existing structures.

The code applies to almost all buildings, excluding manufactured and industrialized housing (which are covered by other laws), agricultural buildings, and certain utility and miscellaneous buildings. The UCC requires builders to use materials and methods that have been professionally evaluated for quality and safety, as well as inspections to ensure compliance.

The initial election period, during which all of Pennsylvania's 2,565 municipalities were allowed to decide whether the UCC would be administered and enforced locally, officially closed on August 7, 2004. The codes adopted for use under the UCC are the 2003 International Codes issued by the International Code Council (ICC). Supplements to the 2003 codes have been adopted for use over the years since.

If a municipality has "opted in," all UCC enforcement is local, except where municipal (or third party) code officials lack the certification necessary to approve plans and inspect commercial construction for compliance with UCC accessibility requirements. If a municipality has "opted-out," the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is responsible for all commercial code enforcement in that municipality; and all residential construction is inspected by independent third-party agencies selected by the owner. The department also has sole jurisdiction for all state-owned buildings no matter where they are located. Historical buildings may be exempt from such inspections and Act 45 provides quasi-exclusion from UCC requirements.

The municipalities in Forest County adhere to the standards of the Pennsylvania Uniform Code (Act 45). All municipalities in Forest County have opted-in on building code enforcement, although all municipalities enforce their own code enforcement.



## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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### **Zoning Ordinance**

Article VI of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) authorizes municipalities to prepare and enact zoning to regulate land use. Its regulations can apply to the permitted use of land, the height and bulk of structures, the percentage of a lot that may be occupied by buildings and other impervious surfaces, yard setbacks, the density of development, the height and size of signs, and the parking regulations. A zoning ordinance has two parts, including the zoning map that delineates zoning districts and the text that sets forth the regulations that apply to each district.

### **Subdivision Ordinance**

Subdivision and land development ordinances include regulations to control the layout of streets, the planning lots and the provision of utilities and other site improvements. The objectives of subdivision and land development ordinance are to coordinate street patterns, to assure adequate utilities and other improvements are provided in a manner that will not pollute streams, wells, and/or soils, to reduce traffic congestions, and to provide sound design standards as a guide to developers, the elected officials, planning commissions, and other municipal officials. Article V of the Municipality Planning Code authorizes municipalities to prepare and enact a subdivision and land development ordinance. Subdivision and land development ordinances provide for the division and improvement of land. All municipalities in Forest County are covered under the Counties SALDO. Tionesta Borough has their own zoning ordinance.

### **Stormwater Management Plan/Stormwater Ordinance**

The proper management of storm water runoff can improve conditions and decrease the chance of flooding. Pennsylvania's Storm Water Management Act (Act 167) confers on counties the responsibility for development of watershed plans. The Act specifies that counties must complete their watershed storm water plans within two years following the promulgation of these guidelines by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), which may grant an extension of time for any county for the preparation and adoption of plans. Counties must prepare the watershed plans in consultation with municipalities and residents. This is to be accomplished through the establishment of a watershed plan advisory committee. The counties must also establish a mechanism to periodically review and revise watershed plans. Plan revisions must be done every five years or sooner, if necessary.

Municipalities have an obligation to implement the criteria and standards developed in each watershed storm water management plan by amending or adopting laws and regulation for land use and development. The implementation of storm water management criteria and standards at the local level are necessary since municipalities are responsible for local land use decisions and planning. The degree of detail in the ordinance depends on the extent of existing and projected land development. The watershed storm water management plan is designed to aid the

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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municipality in setting standards for the land uses it has proposed. Municipalities within rapidly developing watersheds will benefit from the watershed storm water management plan and will use the information for sound land use considerations. A major goal of the watershed plan and the attendant municipal regulations is to prevent future drainage problems and avoid the aggravation of existing problems. All municipalities in Forest County have adopted the county's stormwater management plan.

### **Comprehensive Plan**

A comprehensive plan is a policy document that states objectives and guides the future growth and physical development of a municipality. The comprehensive plan is a blueprint for housing, transportation, community facilities, utilities, and land use. It examines how the past led to the present and charts the community's future path. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC Act 247 of 1968, as reauthorized and amended) requires counties to prepare and maintain a county comprehensive plan. In addition, the MPC requires counties to update the comprehensive plan every ten years.

Regarding hazard mitigation planning, Section 301.a(2) of the Municipality Planning Code requires comprehensive plans to include a plan for land use, which, among other provisions, suggests that the plan consider floodplains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses. The MPC also requires comprehensive plans to include a plan for community facilities and services that recommends considering storm drainage and floodplain management.

Forest County last updated its comprehensive plan in 2013.

Article III of the MPC enables municipalities to prepare a comprehensive plan: however, development of a comprehensive plan is voluntary. All nine municipalities in Forest County have adopted the county comprehensive plans.

### **Capital Improvements Plan**

The capital improvements plan is a multi-year policy guide that identifies needed capital projects and is used to coordinate the financing and timing of public improvements. Capital improvements relate to streets, storm water systems, water distribution, sewage treatment, and other major public facilities. A capital improvements plan should be prepared by the respective county's planning department and should include a capital budget. This budget identifies the highest priority projects recommended for funding in the next annual budget. The capital improvements plan is dynamic and can be tailored to specific circumstances.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**

Floodplain management is the operation of programs or activities that may consist of both corrective and preventative measures for reducing flood damage, including but not limited to such things as emergency preparedness plans, flood control works, and flood plain management regulations. The Pennsylvania Floodplain Management Act (Act 166) require every municipality identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program and permits all municipalities to adopt floodplain management regulations. It is in the interest of all property owners in the floodplain to keep development and land usage within the scope of the floodplain regulations for their community. This helps keep insurance rates low and ensures that the risk of flood damage is not increased by property development.

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) was appointed by legislation in September 2021 to coordinate the Commonwealth NFIP and employ the State NFIP Coordinator. For many years prior, these roles were held by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), which still offers support to communities through its Floodplain Mitigation Program. PEMA provides communities, based on CFR Title 44, Section 60.3 level of regulations, with a suggested ordinance document to assist municipalities in meeting the minimum requirements of the NFIP along with the Pennsylvania Flood Plain Management Act (Act 166). These suggested or model ordinances contain provisions that are more restrictive than state and federal requirements. Suggested provisions include, but are not limited to, the below.

1. Prohibiting manufactured homes in the floodway
2. Prohibiting manufactured homes within the area measured fifty feet landward from the top-of-bank of any watercourse within a special flood hazard area
3. Special requirements for recreational vehicles within the special flood hazard area
4. Special requirement for accessory structure
5. Prohibiting new construction and development within the area measured fifty feet landward from the top-of-bank of any watercourse within a special flood hazard area
6. Providing the county conservation district an opportunity to review and comment on all applications and plans for any proposed construction or development in any identified floodplain area

Act 166 mandates municipal participation in, and compliance with, the NFIP. It also establishes higher regulatory standards for new or substantially improved structures which are used for the production or storage of dangerous materials (as defined by Act 166) by prohibiting them in the floodway. Additionally, Act 166 established the requirement that a special permit be obtained

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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prior to any construction or expansion of any manufactured home park, hospital, nursing home, jail and prison if said structure is located within a special flood hazard area.

The NFIP's Community Rating System (CRS) provides discounts on flood insurance premiums in those communities that establish floodplain management programs that go beyond NFIP minimum requirements. Under the CRS, communities receive credit for more restrictive regulations, acquisition, relocation, or flood-proofing of flood prone buildings, preservation of open space, and other measures that reduce flood damages or protect the natural resources and functions of floodplains.

The CRS was implemented in 1990 to recognize and encourage community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. Section 541 of the 1994 Act amends Section 1315 of the 1968 Act to codify the Community Rating System in the NFIP. The section also expands the CRS goals to specifically include incentives to reduce the risk of flood-related erosion and to encourage measures that protect natural and beneficial floodplain functions. These goals have been incorporated into the CRS and communities now receive credit toward premium reductions for activities that contribute to them.

Under the Community Rating System, flood insurance premium rates are adjusted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from community activities that meet a minimum of three of the following CRS goals.

1. Reduce flood losses
2. Protect public health and safety
3. Reduce damage to property
4. Prevent increases in flood damage from new construction
5. Reduce the risk of erosion damage
6. Protect natural and beneficial floodplain functions
7. Facilitate accurate insurance rating
8. Promote the awareness of flood insurance

There are ten Community Rating System classes. Class 1 requires the most credit points and gives the largest premium reduction; class 10 receives no premium reduction. CRS premium discounts on flood insurance range from 5% for Class 9 communities up to 45% for Class 1 communities. The CRS recognizes eighteen credible activities, organized under four categories: Public Information, Mapping and Regulations, Flood Damage Reduction, and Flood Preparedness.

FEMA Region III makes available to communities an ordinance review checklist which lists required provisions for floodplain management ordinances. This checklist helps communities develop an effective floodplain management ordinance that meets federal requirements for

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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participation in the NFIP. PEMA provides communities, based on their 44 CFR 60.3 level of regulations, with a suggested ordinance document to assist municipalities in meeting the minimum requirements of the NFIP and the Pennsylvania Flood Plain Management Act (Act 166). Act 166 mandates municipal participation in and compliance with the NFIP. It also established higher regulatory standards for hazardous materials and high-risk land uses. As new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) are published, the Pennsylvania State NFIP Coordinator at DCED works with communities to ensure the timely and successful adoption of an updated floodplain management ordinance by reviewing and providing feedback on existing and draft ordinances.

According to the State NFIP Coordinator, all of Forest County's nine municipalities have floodplain regulations in place that meet requirements set forth by the NFIP. Currently, no municipalities have completed or started to complete the CRS program. Additional research will be conducted on the CRS program and mitigation actions will be developed in support of the CRS.

To spread awareness as well as capture participation levels, all municipalities were instructed to complete an NFIP survey provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In total, four municipalities submitted an NFIP survey. These surveys can be found in Appendix C of this plan.

The following information outlines floodplain ordinances from jurisdictions in Forest County that have not submitted NFIP surveys during this hazard mitigation planning process.

### **Additional National Flood Insurance Program and Floodplain Management Information:**

#### **Barnett Township**

The floodplain management ordinance for Barnett Township was not available to the local planning team or submitted as part of the hazard mitigation planning process.

#### **Harmony Township**

The floodplain management ordinance for Harmony Township was not available to the local planning team or submitted as part of the hazard mitigation planning process.

#### **Hickory Township**

The floodplain management ordinance for Hickory Township was not available to the local planning team or submitted as part of the hazard mitigation planning process.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Tionesta Borough**

The floodplain management ordinance for Tionesta Borough was not available to the local planning team or submitted as part of the hazard mitigation planning process.

### **Tionesta Township**

The floodplain management ordinance for Tionesta Township was not available to the local planning team or submitted as part of the hazard mitigation planning process.

Each community within Forest County should identify their procedures for substantial improvement and substantial damage implementation in their floodplain management ordinance. This is a concern for local municipalities and plan participants if those locations are not aware of where their floodplain management ordinance is located, or what is in the ordinance. Each municipality may have different processes and procedures in place for substantial improvement and substantial damage following an event. Floodplain management ordinance maintenance, access, and implementation can be a challenge for municipalities and local governments, and this also relates to the availability of information on SI/SD.

The following table outlines the Forest County municipality floodplain administrator designees or representative. This information was retrieved from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development at the following website: <https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/municipal-statistics/municipalities/> or <https://apps.dced.pa.gov/munstats-public/ReportInformation2.aspx?report=LocalOfficial> [Excel](#)

<b>Forest County Municipal Floodplain Administrator Designees</b>		
<b>Municipality Name</b>	<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Name or Agency</b>
Barnett Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Vacant
Green Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Green Township
Harmony Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Derrick Beach
Hickory Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Cynthia Crytzer
Howe Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Unknown at this time.
Jenks Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Misty D. Dittman
Kingsley Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Jacqui Blose
Tionesta Borough	Flood Plain Administrator	Cynthia Crytzer
Tionesta Township	Flood Plain Administrator	Todd Allio

This information was retrieved on 02/20/2025.

### **5.2.2. Administrative and Technical Capability**

There is one borough and eight townships, within Forest County. Each of these municipalities conducts its daily operations and provides various community services according to local needs

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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and limitations. Some of these municipalities have formed cooperative agreements and work jointly with their neighboring municipalities to provide services such as police protection, fire and emergency response, infrastructure maintenance, and water supply management. Other municipalities choose to operate independently and provide such services internally.

Municipalities vary in staff size, resource availability, fiscal status, service provision, constituent population, overall size, and vulnerability to the profile hazards. Technical capability relates to an adequacy of knowledge and technical expertise of local government employees or the ability to contract resources for this expertise in order to effectively execute mitigation activities.

Common examples of skill sets, and technical personnel needed for hazard mitigation include: planners with knowledge of land development and management practices, engineers or professionals trained in construction practices related to buildings and/or infrastructure (e.g. building inspectors), planners or engineers with an understanding of natural and/or human caused hazards, emergency managers, floodplain managers, land surveyors, scientists familiar with hazards in the community, staff with education or expertise to assess community vulnerability to hazards, personnel skilled in geographic information systems, resource development staff or grant writers, fiscal staff to handle complex grant application processes.

### **County Planning Commission**

In Pennsylvania, planning responsibilities traditionally have been delegated to each county and local municipality through the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). A planning agency acts as an advisor to the governing body on matters of community growth and development. A governing body may appoint individuals to serve as legal or engineering advisors to the planning agency. In addition to the duties and responsibilities authorized by Article II of the MPC, a governing body may, by ordinance, delegate approval authority to a planning agency for subdivision and land development applications. A governing body has considerable flexibility, not only as to which powers and duties are assigned to a planning agency, but also what form an agency will possess. A governing body can create a planning commission, a planning department, or both. The Forest County Planning Commission assists all municipalities in the county as needed.

### **Municipal Engineer**

A municipal engineer performs duties as directed in the areas of construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of streets, roads, pavements, sanitary sewers, bridges, culverts, and other engineering work. The municipal engineer prepares plans, specifications and estimates of the work undertaken by the township. Most municipalities in Forest County have a municipal engineer under contract to perform these duties.

### **Personnel Skilled in GIS or FEMA HAZUS Software**

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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A geographic information system (GIS) is an integrated, computer-based system designed to capture, store, edit, analyze, and display geographic information. Some examples of uses for GIS technology in local government are land records management, land use planning, infrastructure management, and natural resources planning. A GIS automates existing operations such as map production and maintenance, saving a great deal of time and money. The GIS also includes information about map features such as the capacity of a municipal water supply or the acres of public land. GIS data is managed, maintained, and developed by a Forest County. GIS data is an important tool to use in hazard mitigation planning and is instrumental in assessing the risk of municipalities to various hazards.

### **Emergency Management Coordinator**

Emergency management is a comprehensive, integrated program of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery for emergencies/disasters of any kind. No public or private entity is immune to disasters and no single segment of society can meet the complex needs of a major emergency or disaster on its own. Hence, the National Preparedness Goal of 2011 also defines what it means for the whole community to be prepared for all types of disasters and emergencies and lists five mission areas which support preparedness: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery – doubling the emphasis on mitigation activities in an emergency management program.

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code (PA Title 35) requires Forest County and its municipalities to have an emergency management coordinator.

The Forest County Department of Emergency Management coordinates countywide emergency management efforts. Each municipality has a designated local emergency management coordinator who possesses a unique knowledge of the impact hazardous events have on their community.

A municipal emergency management coordinator is responsible for emergency management – preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation within his/her respective authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). The responsibilities of the emergency management coordinator are outlined in PA Title 35 §7633.

- Prepare and maintain a current disaster emergency management plan
- Establish, equip, and staff an emergency operations center
- Provide individual and organizational training programs
- Organize and coordinate all locally available manpower, materials, supplies, equipment, and services necessary for disaster emergency readiness, response, and recovery

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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- Adopt and implement precautionary measures to mitigate the anticipated effects of a disaster
- Cooperate and coordinate with any public and private agency or entity
- Provide prompt information regarding local disaster emergencies to appropriate commonwealth and local officials or agencies and the public
- Participate in all tests, drills, and exercises, including remedial drills and exercises scheduled by the agency or by the federal government

PA Title 35 requires that all municipalities in the Commonwealth have a local emergency operations plan (EOP) which is updated every two years. A majority of Forest County municipalities have adopted the county EOP. The notification and resource section of the plan was developed individually by each municipality.

### **Federal Agency Assistance**

There are many federal agencies that can provide technical assistance for mitigation activities, and these include, but are not limited to:

- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Department of Agriculture (DOA)
- Economic Development Administration
- Emergency Management Institute (EMI)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)

### **State Agency Assistance**

There are many commonwealth agencies that can provide technical assistance for mitigation activities, and these include but are not limited to:

- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

### **Existing Limitations**

Funding has been identified as the largest limitation for a municipality to complete mitigation activities. The acquisition of grants is the best way to augment this process for the municipalities.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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The county and municipality representatives will need to rely on regional, state, and federal partnerships for future financial assistance. Development of intra-county regional partnerships and intra-municipality regional partnerships will bolster this process.

### **5.2.3. Financial Capability**

Fiscal capability is significant to the implementation of hazard mitigation activities. Every jurisdiction must operate within the constraints of limited financial resources. The decision and capacity to implement mitigation-related activities is often strongly dependent on the presence of financial resources. While some mitigation actions are less costly than others, it is important that money is available locally to implement policies and projects. Financial resources are particularly important if communities are trying to take advantage of state or federal mitigation grant funding opportunities that require local-match contributions. Based on survey results, a few municipalities within the county perceive fiscal capability to be moderate. The following information pertains to various financial assistance programs relevant to hazard mitigation.



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **State and Federal Grants**

During the 1960s and 1970s state and federal grants-in-aid were available to finance many municipal programs, including streets, water and sewer facilities, airports, parks, and playgrounds. During the early 1980s, there was a significant change in federal policy, based on rising deficits and a political philosophy that encouraged states and local governments to raise their own revenues for capital programs. The result has been a growing interest in “creative financing.”

Grant programs that may be utilized to accomplish hazard mitigation objectives include the: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance (LUPTAP); Shared Municipal Services (SMS); Community Revitalization (CR) and Floodplain Land Use Assistance Programs; the PA DEP’s Growing Greener; Act 167 Stormwater Management; Source Water Protection; and Flood Protection Programs. The Flood Protection Programs include the PA DCNR’s Community Conservation Partnership Program, PEMA’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant, Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Programs (FMA), and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Below are some of the other state programs that may provide financial support for mitigation activities:

- DCED Flood Mitigation Program
- DCED H2O PA Flood Control Projects
- DCED H2O PA High Hazard Unsafe Dam Projects
- DCED H2O PA Water Supply, Sanitary Sewer, and Storm Water Projects
- DCED PA Small Water and Sewer
- DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program
- DCNR Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program
- DCNR Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program
- DCNR Land and Water Conservation Fund

Below are some of the federal programs that may provide financial support for mitigation activities:

- FEMA Community Assistance Program – State Support Services Element (CAP-SSSE)
- FEMA Community Disaster Loan Program
- FEMA Community Rating System
- FEMA Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)
- FEMA Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Program (EHP)

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Program
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)
- FEMA Individuals and Households Program (IHAP)
- FEMA National Dam Safety Program
- FEMA National Flood Insurance Program
- FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program
- FEMA Public Assistance Program (PA)
- FEMA Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program
- FEMA Repetitive Flood Claims Program (RFC)
- FEMA Severe Repetitive Loss Grant Program
- USACE Continuing Authorities Program
- USACE Flood Plain Management Services Program (FPMS)
- USACE Inspection of Completed Works Program (ICW)
- USACE National Levee Safety Program
- USACE Planning Assistance to States
- USACE Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (RIP)

### **Capital Improvement Financing**

Because most of the capital investments involve the outlay of substantial funds, local governments can seldom pay for these facilities through annual appropriations in the annual operating budget. Therefore, numerous techniques have evolved to enable local government to pay for capital improvements over a time period exceeding one year. Public finance literature and state laws governing local government finance classify techniques that are used to finance capital improvements. The techniques include revenue bonds, lease-purchase, authorities and special district, current revenue (pay-as-you-go); reserve funds; and tax increment financing. Most municipalities have very limited local tax funds for capital projects. Grants and other funding are always priorities.

### **Indebtedness through General Obligation Bonds**

Some projects may be financed with general obligation bonds. With this method, the jurisdiction's taxing power is pledged to pay interest and principal to retire debt. General obligation bonds can be sold to finance permanent types of improvements, such as schools, municipal buildings, parks, and recreational facilities. Voter approval for this may be required.

### **Municipal Authorities**

Municipal authorities are most often used when major capital investments are required. In addition to sewage treatment, municipal authorities have been formed for water supply, airports,

## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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bus transit systems, swimming pools, and other purposes. Joint authorities have the power to receive grants, borrow money, and operate revenue generating programs. Municipal authorities are authorized to sell bonds, acquire property, sign contracts, and take similar actions. Authorities are governed by authority board members, who are appointed by the elected officials of the member municipalities.

### **Sewer Authorities**

Sewer authorities include multi-purpose authorities with sewer projects. They sell bonds to finance acquisition of existing systems for construction, extension, or system improvement. Sewer authority operating revenues originate from user fees. The fee frequently is based on the amount of water consumed and payment is enforced by the ability to terminate service by the imposition of liens against real estate. In areas with no public water supply, flat rate charges are calculated on average use per dwelling unit.

### **Water Authorities**

Water authorities are multi-purpose authorities with water projects, many of which operate both water and sewer systems. The financing of water systems for lease back to the municipality is one of the principal activities of the local government facilities' financing authorities. An operating water authority issues bonds to purchase existing facilities to construct, extend, or improve a system. The primary source of revenue is user fees based on metered usage. The cost of construction or extending water supply lines can be funded by special assessments against abutting property owners. Tapping fees also help fund water system capital costs. Water utilities are also directly operated by municipal governments and by privately owned public utilities regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has a program to assist with consolidating small water systems to make system upgrades more cost effective.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture Circuit Riding Program (Engineer)**

The Circuit Riding Program is an example of intergovernmental cooperation. This program offers municipalities the ability to join to accomplish a common goal. The circuit rider is a municipal engineer who serves several small municipalities simultaneously. These are municipalities that may be too small to hire a professional engineer for their own operations yet need the skills and expertise the engineer offers. Municipalities can jointly obtain what no one municipality could obtain on its own.

#### **5.2.4. Education and Outreach**

Education activities that directly impact hazard mitigation in Forest County predominantly revolve around the first responders. Providing fire, medical, search and rescue training, and

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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education enhances the response and recovery capabilities of response agencies in the county. Newly appointed emergency management coordinators are trained in both duties and responsibilities and damage assessment – which includes a discussion on mitigation; this training can be translated into teaching municipal employees or local emergency services to assist them during a disaster.

The county also has several websites and social media accounts that can educate residents about hazard mitigation and risk while also communicating information in the event of a disaster.

The Forest County GIS Department website has an education and outreach capability, particularly with the county map viewer, which could be updated to include hazard mitigation data. The websites of the Forest County Emergency Management Agency and the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department also post information to educate residents, particularly in disaster preparedness, floodplain management, and zoning requirements. The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department currently provides access to planning documents and educational brochures about the benefits of planning and helpful guides. The Forest County Department of Emergency Services also holds quarterly Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meetings that are open to the public, which serve as another means to conduct outreach and educate the public about hazard mitigation.

Education and outreach on the NFIP are necessary. With new regulations in flood-plain management, updated digital flood insurance rate maps and new rates for insurance policies, education, and outreach on the NFIP would assist the program. The Forest County Local Planning Team will identify actions necessary to complete this.

### **5.2.5. Plan Integration**

Plan integration recognizes that hazard mitigation is most effective when it works in efficient coordination with other plans, regulations, and programs. Plan integration promotes safe, resilient growth, effective management, and an overall reduction of risk, by ensuring that the goals and actions established in the Hazard Mitigation Plan are included in the comprehensive planning efforts so they can affect future land use and development. Some of the most important areas of planning and regulatory capabilities which hazard mitigation goals and actions should be integrated include comprehensive plans, the hazard mitigation plans from all surrounding or encompassing areas, EOPs, building codes, floodplain ordinances, subdivision, land development ordinances, stormwater management plans and ordinances, and zoning ordinances. All of these tools provide mechanisms for the implementation of adopted mitigation strategies.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **Forest County Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Overview**

Comprehensive plans establish the overall vision, goals, and objectives for a community's growth. The Forest County Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Forest County Commissioners on February 7, 2013. The plan establishes countywide goals and objectives, describes environmental and demographic characteristics, identifies potential capital improvement projects, and inventories existing planning initiatives and tools in the county.

As part of the update process, the goals, and objectives in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan were reviewed, and those that are currently supportive of hazard mitigation goals and principles were identified. The plan also identified opportunities to integrate goals and objectives from the 2025 HMP Update into the next update of the comprehensive plan.

#### **Recommendations for Continued and Future Integration**

As discussed, many of the goals and objectives outlined in the Forest County Comprehensive Plan are related to the hazard mitigation risks and goals established in the HMP. Several could be revised to include updated information from this HMP. Additionally, the comprehensive plan can identify the places of higher vulnerability that are identified in this plan for all the high-risk hazards, and include objectives aimed at reducing the risk to these vulnerable areas. For example, an objective of the comprehensive plan could be to encourage elevation and flood proofing of structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) by seeking Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grants and strictly enforcing floodplain management ordinances in certain communities (See Section 4.3.3 for Flooding and Flash Flooding information). Similarly, an objective for communities that are most vulnerable to subsidence and land failure could be to educate property owners about mine subsidence, associated risks, and actions to take in the event of an emergency. These types of objectives could also be created for medium-risk hazards when appropriate.

Another key opportunity for further integration of hazard mitigation into planning and regulatory tools is to incorporate hazard mitigation goals and objectives into the future Forest County Comprehensive Plan update. The Forest County Comprehensive Plan also ties into the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan when mitigation strategy is considered. The mitigation principles outlined in this hazard mitigation plan are used and reviewed in long-range planning throughout Forest County.

#### **Recommendations for Continued and Future Integration**

There are several opportunities to integrate hazard mitigation into the county's long range transportation plan (LRTP). The plan could discuss hazards that may potentially impact the



## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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county's transportation system, such as extreme weather and other natural hazards. The plan could also inventory vulnerable assets, identify evacuation routes, and discuss the need for redundancy in the transportation network in the event of hazard or hazard event. The goals and objectives highlighted above could also be revised to address additional goals and objectives related to mitigation and added to the next update of the plan. Additionally, hazard mitigation could be discussed in more detail in the environmental mitigation chapter of the plan. Instead of solely discussing mitigation of environmental impacts of transportation projects in this section, this section could also describe how reducing impacts on the environment can mitigate hazards. For example, integrating stormwater management improvements into roadway projects not only reduces pollution in nearby waterways, but it can also alleviate the impacts of floods. Likewise, mitigating hazard impacts will help preserve transportation infrastructure throughout Forest County.

### **Integration of Hazard Mitigation into Local Mechanisms**

Integration of hazard mitigation principles into local mechanisms can be efficient for Forest County. With nine municipalities, local mitigation mechanisms can directly interface with the Forest County HMP. These potential integration items include municipal comprehensive plans, municipal flood plans, or development plans for transportation and community resources. The municipalities should review the completed HMP and utilize items identified in the risk assessment, mitigation strategy, and capability assessment sections. Previously, hazard mitigation information from the Forest County plans has been integrated into other planning mechanisms. All municipalities can also utilize portions of the hazard mitigation plan into their planning mechanisms, but this can be completed under the authority of Forest County. These planning mechanisms could include comprehensive plans, flood plans, or development plans for transportation. Previous successful mitigation and plan integration has occurred in the development of comprehensive plans at the local level and this information and integration should continue through the formal update process of all plans in Forest County.

Further discussion on plan integration can be found in section 7.3 of this hazard mitigation plan.

# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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## **6. Mitigation Strategy**

### **6.1. Update Process Summary**

Mitigation goals are general guidelines that explain what the county wants to achieve. Goals are usually expressed as broad policy statements representing desired long-term results. Mitigation objectives describe strategies or implementation steps to attain the identified goals. Objectives are more specific statements than goals; the described steps are usually measurable and can have a defined completion date. There were five goals and twenty-one objectives identified in the 2020 hazard mitigation plan. The 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update has six goals and twenty objectives. Objectives have been added and arranged in order to associate them with the most appropriate goal. These changes are noted in *Table 73 – 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives Review*. These reviews are based on the five-year hazard mitigation plan review worksheet, which includes a survey on existing goals and objectives completed by the local planning team. Municipal officials then provided feedback on the changes to the goals and objectives via a mitigation strategy update meeting. Copies of these meetings and all documentation associated with the meetings are located in Appendix C.

Actions provide more detailed descriptions of specific work tasks to help the county and its municipalities achieve prescribed goals and objectives. There were forty-one actions identified in the 2020 mitigation strategy. A review of the 2020 mitigation actions was completed by the local planning team. The results of this review are identified in *Table 73 – 2020 Mitigation Actions Review*. Actions were evaluated by the local planning team with the intent of carrying over any actions that were not started or continuous for the next five years.

*Table 73 - 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives Review*

<b>Forest County 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives</b>		
<b>Goal and Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>No Goal Stated</b>	2025 Review: Increase awareness of all hazards through public education, outreach, and training.
1.1	Develop brochures, pamphlets, and other handouts to high and moderate risk hazards	2025 Review: Add verbiage to include all hazards, rather than just high and moderate ones.
1.2	Utilize public service announcements and local newspapers	2025 Review: Add social media to this objective.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives		
Goal and Objective	Description	Comment
1.3	Coordinate workshops to increase awareness	2025 Review: No comment.
1.4	Utilize websites and other multimedia resources to disseminate public information in reference to hazard mitigation	2025 Review: No comment.
1.5	Publicize the hazard mitigation plan and encourage participation	2025 Review: No comment.
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Integrate hazard mitigation concepts into local planning efforts.</b>	2025 Review: No comments
2.1	Incorporate risk assessment and hazard mitigation principles into the county comprehensive plan	2025 Review: Make the plan call-out into an action, but keep the objective in terms of incorporating risk assessments into county plans.
2.2	Increase working relationships with county, state and other government agencies that are dedicated to the preservation and restoration of natural areas and their natural functions	2025 Review: Consider changing “agencies” to “stakeholders.”
2.3	Review county or municipal plans to incorporate hazard mitigation principles	2025 Review: This objective is to be integrated into objective 2.1.
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Protect public health and safety by increasing public warning and communication capabilities.</b>	2025 Review: Amend to: Protect public health and safety by increasing public warning, communication, and emergency response.
3.1	Review and enhance effectiveness of warning systems in Forest County	2025 Review: No comment.
3.2	Explore emergency notification systems and research grant opportunities	2025 Review: No comment.
3.3	Review cellular phone coverage in the county	2025 Review: Consider amending to: Review cellular phone coverage and internet connectivity in the county.
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Reduce the potential impact of identified natural and man-made hazards.</b>	2025 Review: Change to “human caused”
4.1	Enhance mapping capabilities with hazard mitigation concepts and data	2025 Review: Add verbiage to include GIS

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

<b>Forest County 2020 Mitigation Goals and Objectives</b>		
<b>Goal and Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Comment</b>
4.2	Enhance and enforce uniformed construction codes at the municipal level	2025 Review: Add verbiage to focus on encouraging municipal enforcement of the code.
4.3	Identify special needs citizens and facilities	2025 Review: Add unserved, underserved, and socially vulnerable populations to this objective and its actions.
4.4	Protect infrastructure and critical facilities from identified hazards	2025 Review: “Protect, and increase resiliency of, community lifelines...”
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Reduce current and future risk from flooding and flash flooding</b>	2025 Review:
5.1	Update floodplain regulations in accordance with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Pennsylvania State Floodplain model ordinance	2025 Review: Move to action only.
5.2	Encourage municipal participation in the national flood insurance program (NFIP)	2025 Review: Move to action only.
5.3	Research possible mitigation projects to reduce flooding and flash flooding	2025 Review: New: Research, and complete, mitigation projects to reduce flooding and flash flooding
5.4	Remove or relocate existing structures in the flood hazard areas	2025 Review: Complete project opportunities to acquire, elevate, demolish, or demolish/reconstruct, properties, repetitive loss properties, and severe repetitive loss properties.
5.5	Implement project opportunities and other structural projects to reduce flooding risk	2025 Review: Consider integrating into objective 5.3.
5.6	Develop, implement, and enforce a county stormwater management plan	2025 Review: Change to: Maintain and update the county stormwater management plan.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Table 74 - 2020 Mitigation Actions Review

<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i>	<i>Status</i>					<i>Review Comments</i>
	<i>No Progress/ Unknown</i>	<i>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</i>	<i>Continuous</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Discontinued</i>	
<b>1.1.1</b> Conduct outreach to educate the public to report suspicious activities around gas well sites and transmission gas lines	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>1.1.2</b> Develop a brochure to educate the public about the dangers of radon and the impacts in Forest County.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Change action call-outs to brochures to social media.
<b>1.1.3</b> Ensure maps are available at key tourist and recreational areas for public access to decrease disorientation.			X			<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>1.1.4</b> Develop a brochure to encourage farmers to implement soil and water conservation practices that foster soil health and improve soil quality to help increase resiliency and mitigate the impacts of droughts.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b> Transfer to social media.
<b>1.1.5</b> Develop a brochure to educate the public about identifying and reporting the presence of invasive species.				X		<b>2025 Comment</b> Integrate social media.



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b>No Progress/ Unknown</b>	<b>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	
<b>1.2.1</b> Develop public service announcements to utilize prior to winter storms that identify risks and how to prepare for storms.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Integrate social media.
<b>1.2.2</b> Contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health to assist with public service announcements that identify how individuals and families can be immunized against communicable diseases like the flu.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b> Amend action to include identifying resources that available to the county – not directly “assist” in public service announcements.
<b>1.3.1</b> Work with insurance companies to conduct free workshops on how to protect residential components from the impact of lightning strikes.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>1.4.1</b> Develop a hazard mitigation education section on the Forest County website to educate viewers on natural and manmade hazards/risk in the county.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b> Change to “human-caused.”
<b>1.5.1</b> Place the county hazard mitigation education section on the Forest County website and provide outreach identifying how to access the plan.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b>

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b><i>No Progress/ Unknown</i></b>	<b><i>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</i></b>	<b><i>Continuous</i></b>	<b><i>Completed</i></b>	<b><i>Discontinued</i></b>	
<b>2.1.1</b> Complete a review of the current county comprehensive plan to identify hazard mitigation concepts and strategies from the 2020 mitigation plan and then place them in the comprehensive plan through an addendum.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b> Change to 2025 HMP, as county is updating comp plan.
<b>2.2.1</b> Develop a workgroup with representation from Forest County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Allegheny National Forest to identify and develop strategies to reduce the impact of specific invasive species that could impact the private and public forests of Forest County.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b> Transition action to maintenance.
<b>2.2.2</b> Explore the creation of memorandums of understanding between the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Allegheny National Forest to establish a working relationship between all entities.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>2.3.1</b> Conduct a commodity flow study to determine hazardous materials that are transported through Forest County.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Moved to action 2.1.2

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b>No Progress/ Unknown</b>	<b>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	
<b>2.3.2</b> Incorporate Stormwater Management BMPs into the next update of the County Stormwater Plan that support a comprehensive approach to collecting, treating, and even reusing water to help mitigate drought.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b> Moved to action 2.1.3
<b>2.3.3</b> Ensure any zoning ordinances encourage higher densities outside of known hazard areas.			X			<b>2025 Comment:</b> Moved to action 2.1.4
<b>2.3.4</b> Expand the Emergency Action Plan to include responses to threats of Civil Disturbance.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Moved to action 2.1.5
<b>3.1.1</b> Encourage NOAA alert radio use by homeowners, businesses, and special needs facilities	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Transition to social media.
<b>3.1.2</b> Educate the citizens and visitors of Forest County to what the audible siren alerts mean.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b> Integrate social media into alerts.
<b>3.2.1</b> Research grant opportunities to purchase an emergency notification plan.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>3.2.2</b> Improve hazard warnings and evacuation notices to residents/business owners with an emergency notification system.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b>No Progress/ Unknown</b>	<b>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	
<b>3.3.1</b> Review cellular coverage and emergency services access in the Cooks Forest Area and contact cellular companies to champion improvement in this high tourist area.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>3.3.2</b> Identify areas of the county that have increased tourist or hunting activities and require cellular coverage.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>3.3.3</b> Conduct meetings with the landline telephone companies to ensure all backup solutions and technologies receive maintenance to ensure operations during emergencies and utility outages.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.1.1</b> Develop and maintain a database to track community vulnerability to landslides.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.1.2</b> Perform an analysis of potentially affected areas for the Tionesta Dam.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.2.1</b> Encourage municipalities to adopt and enforce updated building code provisions to reduce Earthquake, and Hurricane and Tropical Storm damage to structures.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.3.1</b> Identify special needs groups and individuals for planning and emergency response by contacting human service agencies and other agencies that can assist with this task.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Integrate socially vulnerable language.

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b>No Progress/ Unknown</b>	<b>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</b>	<b>Continuous</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>	
<b>4.3.2</b> Develop an outreach program to identify special needs population and then develop a system to document individuals throughout the county by municipality.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.4.1</b> Review high risk dam emergency plans annually.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.4.2</b> Provide emergency alert radios to critical facilities and identified special needs individuals.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>4.4.3</b> Encourage continuity of operations planning for businesses in the county by providing brochures outlining requirements.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Transfer to digital.
<b>4.4.4</b> Update the countywide Firewise Plan.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>5.1.1</b> Assure that adoption of the updated floodplain regulations through a municipal ordinance is complete.				X		<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>5.2.1</b> Encourage municipalities to participate in the national flood insurance program.			X			<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>5.2.2</b> Conduct outreach to municipalities upon the issuance of updated digital flood insurance rate maps to encourage review, comment, and adoption of maps.			X			<b>2025 Comment:</b>



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Forest County Mitigation Actions Review Worksheet</b>						
<b><i>Existing Mitigation Actions (2020 HMP)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>					<b><i>Review Comments</i></b>
	<b><i>No Progress/ Unknown</i></b>	<b><i>In Progress/Not Yet Complete</i></b>	<b><i>Continuous</i></b>	<b><i>Completed</i></b>	<b><i>Discontinued</i></b>	
<b>5.2.3</b> Conduct National Flood Insurance Program community workshops and provide brochures that provide information and incentives for property owners to acquire flood insurance.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Integrate digital element.
<b>5.3.1</b> Research grant funding opportunities to assist the municipalities with the implementation of project opportunities.		X				<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>5.4.1</b> Acquire land with structures that repetitively flood or are designated as repetitive loss properties and deed the property to the municipality, raise Elevations and Demolition/Reconstruction of affected properties.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b> Update verbiage.
<b>5.4.2</b> Support and assist municipal governments with the protection or the removal of repetitive loss properties.	X					<b>2025 Comment:</b>
<b>5.5.1</b> Continue to implement and revise as necessary the Forest County Storm Water Management Plan which covers all municipalities.			X			<b>2025 Comment:</b>

## **6.2. Mitigation Goals and Objectives**

Based on results of the goals and objectives evaluation exercise and input from the local planning team, a list of six goals and twenty corresponding objectives were developed. *Table 75*

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania* *2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

– 2025 Goals and Objectives details the mitigation goals and objectives established for the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

*Table 75 - 2025 Goals and Objectives*

<b>Forest County 2025 Goals and Objectives</b>	
<b>Goal Objective</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Increase awareness of all hazards through public education, outreach, and training.</b>
Objective 1.1	Develop brochures, pamphlets, and other handouts for all hazards that were identified in the 2025 Forest County HMP.
Objective 1.2	Utilize public service announcements, social media, and local newspapers to disseminate information to the public.
Objective 1.3	Coordinate workshops to increase awareness
Objective 1.4	Utilize websites and other multimedia resources to disseminate public information in reference to hazard mitigation
Objective 1.5	Publicize the hazard mitigation plan and encourage participation
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Integrate hazard mitigation concepts into local planning efforts.</b>
Objective 2.1	Review county or municipal plans to incorporate risk assessment and hazard mitigation principles into the county comprehensive plan.
Objective 2.2	Increase working relationships with county, state and other government agencies that are dedicated to the preservation and restoration of natural areas and their natural functions.
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Protect public health and safety by increasing public warning, communication, and emergency response.</b>
Objective 3.1	Review, and enhance the effectiveness and community awareness of, warning systems in Forest County.
Objective 3.2	Explore emergency notification systems and research grant opportunities.
Objective 3.3	Review cellular phone coverage and internet connectivity in the county.
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Reduce the potential impact of identified natural and human caused hazards.</b>
Objective 4.1	Enhance mapping and GIS capabilities with hazard mitigation concepts and data.
Objective 4.2	Encourage municipal enforcement of the uniformed construction code.
Objective 4.3	Identify citizens with functional needs, as well as unserved, underserved and socially vulnerable populations and critical facilities.
Objective 4.4	Protect, and increase resiliency of, community lifelines.
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Reduce current and future risk from flooding and flash flooding.</b>
Objective 5.1	Research, and complete, mitigation projects to reduce flooding and flash flooding.
Objective 5.2	Complete project opportunities to acquire, elevate, demolish, or demolish/reconstruct, properties, repetitive loss properties, and severe repetitive loss properties.
Objective 5.3	Maintain and update the county stormwater management plan.
<b>Goal 6</b>	<b>Participate in FEMA's High-Hazard Potential Dam Program (HHPD).</b>
Objective 6.1	Educate Forest County municipalities, property owners, and businesses about FEMA's HHPD program.
Objective 6.2	Reduce long-term vulnerabilities from eligible high-hazard potential dams that pose an unacceptable risk to the public.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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Forest County 2025 Goals and Objectives	
Goal Objective	Description
Objective 6.3	Identify, by area, locations in Forest County that could potentially be impacted by FEMA's HHPD program.

Goal 6 and Objective 6.1, Objective 6.2, and Objective 6.3 relate to multiple mitigation actions in *Table 77 – 2025 Mitigation Action Plan*. Action 6.1.1 relates to Objective 6.1, Action 6.2.1 relates to Objective 6.2, and Action 6.3.1 relates to Objective 6.3. All three of the mitigation actions are covered by Goal 6 of the goals and objectives for the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan. These mitigation actions reduce the vulnerability of county populations and structures by educating the public on the HHPD program, enhancing local policies and procedures for HHPD planning, and digitizing dam inundation areas for future analysis and prevention of losses.

### **6.3. Identification and Analysis of Mitigation Techniques**

This section includes an overview of alternative mitigation actions based on the goals and objectives identified in Section 6.2. There are four general mitigation strategy techniques to reducing hazard risks:

- Planning and regulations
- Structure and infrastructure
- Natural systems protection
- Education and awareness

**Planning and Regulations:** These actions include government authorities, policies or codes that influence the way land and buildings are developed and built. The following are some examples:

- Comprehensive plans
- Land use ordinances
- Subdivision regulations
- Development review
- Building codes and enforcement
- National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System
- Capital improvement programs
- Open space preservation
- Stormwater management regulations and master plans

The planning and regulations technique will protect and reduce the impact of specific hazards on new and existing buildings by improving building code standards and regulating new and renovation construction. The improved building codes will decrease the impact of risk hazards. Subdivision and land development enhancements will also augment this process. Ensuring that

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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municipalities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program and encourage participation in the Community Rating System will decrease the impact as well.

**Structure and infrastructure implementation:** These actions involve modifying existing structures and infrastructure or constructing new structures to reduce hazard vulnerability. The following are examples:

- Acquisitions and elevations of structures in flood prone areas
- Utility undergrounding
- Structural retrofits
- Floodwalls and retaining walls
- Detention and retention structures
- Culverts
- Safe rooms

Structure and infrastructure implementation is a technique that removes or diverts the hazard from structure or protects the structure from a specific hazard. The new or renovated structures are therefore protected or have a reduced impact of hazards.

**Natural Systems Protection:** These are actions that minimize damage and losses and also preserve or restore the functions of natural systems. They include the following:

- Erosion and sediment control
- Stream corridor restoration
- Forest management
- Conservation easements
- Wetland restoration and preservation

Natural resource protection techniques allow for the natural resource to be used to protect or lessen the impact on new or renovated structures through the management of these resources. Utilization and implementation of the examples above will protect new and existing buildings and infrastructure.

**Education and Awareness:** These are actions to inform and educate citizens, elected officials and property owners about hazards and potential ways to mitigate them and may also include participation in national programs. Examples of these techniques include the following:

- Radio and television spots
- Websites with maps and information
- Real estate disclosure
- Provide information and training
- NFIP outreach
- StormReady
- Firewise communities

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

The education and awareness technique will protect and reduce the impact of specific hazards on new and existing buildings through education of citizens and property owners on the impacts that specific hazards could have on new or renovated structures. This information will allow the owner to make appropriate changes or enhancements that will lessen or eliminate the impacts of hazards.

*Table 76 – Mitigation Strategy Technique Matrix* provides a matrix identifying the mitigation techniques used for all low, moderate, and high-risk hazards in the county. The specific actions associated with these techniques are included in *Table 77 – 2025 Mitigation Action Plan*.

*Table 76 - Mitigation Strategy Technique Matrix*

<b>Forest County Mitigation Strategy Technique Matrix</b>				
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>MITIGATION TECHNIQUE</b>			
	<b>Planning and Regulations</b>	<b>Structure and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Natural Systems Protection</b>	<b>Education and Awareness</b>
Blighted Properties	X			X
Civil Disturbance	X			X
Dam Failure	X	X	X	X
Disorientation	X			X
Drought	X			X
Earthquake	X			X
Environmental Hazards	X			X
Extreme Temperature	X			X
Fire and Explosion	X			X
Flood, Flash Flood, and Ice Jam Flood	X	X		X
Hurricane and Tropical Storms	X			X
Invasive Species	X			X
Landslides	X			X
Pandemic, Epidemic, Endemic, and Infectious Disease	X			X
Radon Exposure	X			X
Subsidence and Sinkhole	X			X
Substance Use Disorder	X			X
Terrorism and Cyber Terrorism	X			X
Tornado and Windstorm	X			X
Transportation Accidents	X			X
Utility Interruptions	X			X
Wildfire	X			X
Winter Storm	X			X



## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### **6.4. Mitigation Action Plan**

The Forest County Hazard Mitigation Local Planning Team (LPT) immediately began work on the mitigation strategy section of the 2025 hazard mitigation plan (HMP) update after the risk assessment section was completed. The LPT started this section by reviewing the 2020 HMP mitigation strategy section. A review of the previous goals, objectives, actions, and project opportunities documented in the 2020 HMP was conducted. The next step the LPT completed was the brainstorming of possible new actions based on new identified risks. The LPT compiled all this information for presentations to the municipalities.

MCM Consulting Group, Inc. completed municipality meetings at various time periods via virtual platforms or in-person meetings. During all these meetings, an overview of mitigation strategy was presented, and the municipalities were informed that they needed to have at least one hazard-related mitigation action for their municipality. All municipalities were invited to attend these meetings. Municipalities that were not able to join conference calls were contacted individually.

The municipalities were notified of draft mitigation actions and encouraged to provide new mitigation actions that could be incorporated into the plan. Municipalities were provided copies of their previously submitted mitigation opportunity forms and asked to determine if the projects were still valid. Municipalities were solicited for new project opportunities as well. All agendas, sign in sheets, and other support information from these meetings is included in Appendix C.

Mitigation measures for the 2025 Forest County HMP are listed in the mitigation action plan. *Table 77 – 2025 Mitigation Action Plan* is the 2025 Forest County Mitigation Action Plan. This plan outlines mitigation actions and projects that comprise a strategy for Forest County. The action plan includes actions, a benefit and cost prioritization, a schedule for implementation, any funding sources to complete the action, a responsible agency or department and an estimated cost. All benefit and cost analysis were completed using the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency recommended analysis tool. The completed analysis is located in Appendix H. *Table 77 – 2025 Mitigation Action Plan* is a matrix that identifies the county and/or municipalities responsible for mitigation actions in the new mitigation action plan. *Table 78 – Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist* shows which actions tie to specific municipalities for responsibilities. *Table 79 – Objective to Action Checklist* shows that each mitigation objective has a mitigation action item related to it. *Table 80 – Actions Tied to Hazards* illustrates the specific actions that are tied to each hazard outlined in the hazard mitigation plan.

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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### Funding acronym definitions:

FMA:	Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
HMGP:	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
BRIC:	Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
EMPG:	Emergency Management Performance Grant, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
HSGP:	Homeland Security Grant Program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
HMEP:	Hazardous Material Emergency Planning Grant, administered by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
HMRF:	Hazardous Material Response Fund, administered by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
HMERP:	Hazard Mitigation Emergency Response Program administered by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
HHPD:	Rehabilitation of High-Hazard Potential Dams Grant Program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

### **Evaluate and Prioritize Mitigation Actions**

#### **Mitigation Action Evaluation:**

Evaluating mitigation actions involves judging each action against certain criteria to determine whether or not it can be executed. The feasibility of each mitigation action is evaluated using the ten evaluation criteria set forth in the Mitigation Action Evaluation methodology as outlined in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's All-Hazard Mitigation Planning, Standard Operating Guide. The methodology solicits input on whether each action is highly effective or feasible or ineffective or not feasible for the criteria. These criteria are listed below and aid in determining the feasibility of implementing one action over another:

- Life Safety: Will the action be effective in promoting public safety?
- Property Protection: Will the action be effective in protecting public or private property?
- Technical: How effective will the action be in avoiding or reducing future losses?
- Political: Does the action have public and political support?

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Legal: Does the community have the authority to implement the proposed measure?
- Environmental: Will the action provide environmental benefits, and will it comply with local, state, and federal environmental regulations?
- Social: Will the action be acceptable by the community, or will it cause any one segment of the population to be treated unfairly?
- Administrative: Is there adequate staffing and funding available to implement the action in a timely manner?
- Local Champion: Is there local support for the action to help ensure its completion?
- Other Community Objectives: Does the action address any current or future community objectives either through municipal planning or community goals?

To evaluate the mitigation actions, each action is identified as highly effective or feasible, ineffective, or not favorable and has no cost or benefit. For each criterion, the prioritization methodology assigns a “+” if the action is highly effective or feasible, a “-” if the action was ineffective or not feasible, and a “N” if no cost of benefit could be associated with the suggested action or the action was not applicable to the criteria.

### **Mitigation Action Prioritization:**

Actions should be compared with one another to determine a ranking or priority by applying the multi-objective mitigation action prioritization criteria. Scores are assigned to each criterion using the following weighted, multi-objective mitigation action prioritization criteria:

- Effectiveness (weight: 20% of score): The extent to which an action reduces the vulnerability of people and property.
- Efficiency (weight: 30% of score): The extent to which time, effort, and cost is well used as a means of reducing vulnerability.
- Multi-Hazard Mitigation (weight: 20% of score): The action reduces vulnerability for more than one hazard.
- Address High Risk Hazard (weight: 15% of score): The action reduces vulnerability for people and property from a hazard identified as high risk.
- Address Critical Communications/Critical Infrastructure (weight: 15% of score): The action pertains to the maintenance of critical functions and structures such as transportation, supply chain management, and data circuits, etc.

Scores of 1, 2, or 3 are assigned for each multi-objective mitigation action prioritization criterion where 1 is a low score and 3 is a high score. Actions are prioritized using the cumulative score

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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assigned to each. Each mitigation action is given a priority ranking (Low, Medium, and High) based on the following:

- Low Priority: 1.0 – 1.8
- Medium Priority: 1.9 – 2.4
- High Priority: 2.5 – 3.0

The cumulative results of the prioritization of mitigation actions are identified in the mitigation action evaluation and prioritization tool. The results for the mitigation action evaluation and prioritization are located in Appendix H of this plan.

## Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Table 77 - 2025 Mitigation Action Plan

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
1.1.1	Education and Awareness	Conduct outreach to educate the public to report suspicious activities around gas well sites and transmission gas lines	Terrorism			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
1.1.2	Education and Awareness	Develop a social media page to educate the public about the dangers of radon and the impacts in Forest County.	Radon Exposure		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
1.1.3	Education and Awareness	Ensure maps are available at key tourist and recreational areas for public access to decrease disorientation.	Disorientation			X	2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
1.2.1	Education and Awareness	Develop public service announcements via social media to inform the public prior to winter storms that will identify the risks and how to prepare for storms.	Winter Storm		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
1.3.1	Education and Awareness	Work with insurance companies to conduct free workshops on how to protect residential components from the impact of lightning strikes.	Lightning Strike			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
1.4.1	Education and Awareness	Develop a hazard mitigation education section on the Forest County website to educate viewers on natural and human caused hazard/risk in the county.	All Hazards	X			2025-2030	HMGP, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
1.5.1	Education and Awareness	Maintain the county hazard mitigation education section on the Forest County website.	All Hazards	X			2025-2030	HMGP, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
2.1.1	Planning and Regulation	Complete a review of the current county comprehensive plan to identify hazard mitigation concepts and strategies from the 2025 mitigation plan and then place them in the comprehensive plan through an addendum.	All Hazards		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
2.1.2	Planning and Regulation	Conduct a commodity flow study to determine hazardous materials that are transported through Forest County.	Environmental Hazards  Transportation Accidents	X			2025-2030	HMGP, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
2.1.3	Planning and Regulation	Incorporate Stormwater Management BMPs into the next update of the County Stormwater Plan that support a comprehensive approach to collecting, treating, and even reusing water to help mitigate drought.	Drought			X	2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
2.1.4	Planning and Regulation	Ensure any zoning ordinances encourage higher densities outside of known hazard areas.	All Natural Hazards	X			2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
2.1.5	Planning and Regulation	Expand the Emergency Action Plan to include responses to threats of Civil Disturbance	Civil Disturbance			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
2.2.1	Planning and Regulation	Explore the creation of memorandums of understanding between the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Allegheny National Forest to establish a working relationship between all entities.	Wildfire		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
3.1.1	Education and Awareness	Encourage NOAA alert radio use, and social media notifications, by homeowners, businesses, and special needs facilities	Hurricane and Tropical Storm, Tornado and Windstorm, Hailstorm, Flash Flood, Flood, Ice Jam Flood, Extreme Temperature, lightning Strike, Drought	X			2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
3.1.2	Education and Awareness	Educate the citizens and visitors of Forest County to what the audible siren alerts mean via social media.	All Hazards			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
3.2.1	Planning and Regulation	Research grant opportunities to purchase an emergency notification plan.	All Hazards	X			2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
3.2.2	Education and Awareness	Improve hazard warnings and evacuation notices to residents/business owners with an emergency notification system.	All Hazards	X			2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
3.3.1	Planning and Regulation	Review cellular coverage and emergency services access in the Cooks Forest Area and contact cellular companies to champion improvement in this high tourist area.	All Hazards			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
3.3.2	Planning and Regulation	Identify areas of the county that have increased tourist or hunting activities and require cellular coverage.	All Hazards			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
4.1.1	Planning and Regulation	Develop and maintain a database to track community vulnerability to landslides.	Landslide			X	2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
4.1.2	Planning and Regulation	Perform an analysis of potentially affected areas for the Tionesta Dam.	Dam Failure	X			2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
4.2.1	Planning and Regulation	Encourage municipalities to adopt and enforce updated building code provisions to reduce Earthquake, and Hurricane and Tropical Storm damage to structures.	Earthquake, Hurricane, and Tropical Storm			X	2025-2030	BRIC, FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
4.3.1	Education and Awareness	Identify unserved, underserved and socially vulnerable populations for planning and emergency response by contacting human service agencies and other agencies that can assist with this task.	All Hazards			X	2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
4.3.2	Education and Awareness	Develop an outreach program to identify special needs population and then develop a system to document individuals throughout the county by municipality.	All Hazards			X	2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
4.4.1	Planning and Regulation	Review high risk dam emergency plans annually.	Dam Failure	X			2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
4.4.2	Education and Awareness	Provide emergency alert radios to critical facilities and identified special needs individuals.	All Hazards		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
4.4.3	Planning and Regulation	Encourage continuity of operations planning for businesses in the county by outlining requirements via social media or other digital formats.	All Hazards		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager
4.4.4	Planning and Regulation	Update the countywide Firewise Plan.	Fire and Explosion		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
5.1.1	Planning and Regulation	Research grant funding opportunities to assist the municipalities with the implementation of project opportunities.	All Hazards		X		2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
5.2.1	Education and Awareness	Conduct outreach to municipalities upon the issuance of updated digital flood insurance rate maps to encourage review, comment, and adoption of maps.	Flood and Flash Flood	X			2025-2030	HMGP, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
5.2.2	Education and Awareness	Conduct National Flood Insurance Program community workshops and provide brochures that provide information and incentives for property owners to acquire flood insurance.	Flood and Flash Flood	X			2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
5.3.1	Structure and Infrastructure	Acquire land with structures that repetitively flood or are designated as repetitive loss properties and deed the property to the municipality, raise Elevations and Demolition/Reconstruction of affected properties.	Flood and Flash Flood		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators



***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
5.3.2	Structure and Infrastructure	Support and assist municipal governments with the protection or the removal of repetitive loss properties.	Flood and Flash Flood		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
5.3.3	Planning and Regulation	Update floodplain regulations in accordance with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Pennsylvania State Floodplain model ordinance	Flood and Flash Flood		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
5.3.4	Planning and Regulation	Encourage municipal participation in the national flood insurance program (NFIP)	Flood and Flash Flood		X		2025-2030	FEMA, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
5.3.5	Planning and Regulation	Continue to implement and revise as necessary the Forest County Storm Water Management Plan which covers all municipalities.	Flood and Flash Flood	X			2025-2030	Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
6.1.1	Education and Awareness	Distribute educational materials about the HHPD program to municipalities, communities, and county residents.	Dam Failure		X		2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
6.2.1	Education and Awareness	Provide education on local mitigation policies and programs that address high-hazard potential dams to municipalities and county residents.	Dam Failure		X		2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
6.2.2	Planning and Regulation	Ensure continued collaboration with both private and public dam owners, to ensure that their input is included in the local planning team, and the planning process for continued hazard mitigation planning.	Dam Failure	X			2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
6.2.3	Natural System Protections	Research the feasibility of installing flood protection measures in areas around Forest County that would be adversely impacted by flooding from a high-hazard potential dam failure, including natural spaces, local parks, and outdoor areas.	Dam Failure		X		2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Forest County 2025 Mitigation Action Plan									
Action Number	Mitigation Actions		Hazard Vulnerability	Prioritization			Implementation		
	Category	Description/ Action Items		High	Medium	Low	Schedule	Funding	Local Champion
6.2.4	Structure and Infrastructure	If funding becomes available, perform acquisitions, elevations, relocations, and foundation stabilization on homes and structures within areas of potential impact from a failure of a high-hazard potential dam in Forest County.	Dam Failure	X			2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators
6.3.1	Education and Awareness	Acquire or maintain digitized dam inundation GIS polygons to determine at risk populations for dams designated high-hazard potential dams by FEMA.	Dam Failure	X			2025-2030	HHPD, Local	Forest County EMA Coordinator  Forest County Conservation District & Planning Manager  Forest County Municipality Coordinators

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Table 78 - Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.2.1	1.3.1	1.4.1	1.5.1
Barnett Township					X		
Green Township					X		
Harmony Township					X		
Hickory Township					X		
Howe Township					X		
Jenks Township					X		
Kingsley Township					X		
Tionesta Borough					X		
Tionesta Township					X		
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	2.1.1	2.1.2	2.1.3	2.1.4	2.1.5	2.2.1	3.1.1
Barnett Township			X	X			
Green Township			X	X			
Harmony Township			X	X			
Hickory Township			X	X			
Howe Township			X	X			
Jenks Township			X	X			
Kingsley Township			X	X			
Tionesta Borough			X	X			
Tionesta Township			X	X			
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	3.1.2	3.2.1	3.2.2	3.3.1	3.3.2	4.1.1	4.1.2
Barnett Township			X	X	X		
Green Township			X	X	X		
Harmony Township			X	X	X		
Hickory Township			X	X	X		
Howe Township			X	X	X		
Jenks Township			X	X	X		
Kingsley Township			X	X	X		
Tionesta Borough			X	X	X		
Tionesta Township			X	X	X		
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X



# *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	4.2.1	4.3.1	4.3.2	4.4.1	4.4.2	4.4.3	4.4.4
Barnett Township	X	X	X		X		
Green Township	X	X	X		X		
Harmony Township	X	X	X		X		
Hickory Township	X	X	X		X		
Howe Township	X	X	X		X		
Jenks Township	X	X	X		X		
Kingsley Township	X	X	X		X		
Tionesta Borough	X	X	X		X		
Tionesta Township	X	X	X		X		
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	5.1.1	5.2.1	5.2.2	5.3.1	5.3.2	5.3.3	5.3.4
Barnett Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Green Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harmony Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hickory Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Howe Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jenks Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kingsley Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tionesta Borough	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tionesta Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Municipal Hazard Mitigation Actions Checklist							
Municipality	5.3.5	6.1.1	6.2.1	6.2.2	6.2.3	6.2.4	6.3.1
Barnett Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Green Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harmony Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hickory Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Howe Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jenks Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kingsley Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tionesta Borough	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tionesta Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Forest County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

*Table 79 - Objectives to Action Checklist*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Number of Actions</b>
Objective 1.1	3
Objective 1.2	1
Objective 1.3	1
Objective 1.4	1
Objective 1.5	1
Objective 2.1	5
Objective 2.2	1
Objective 3.1	2
Objective 3.2	2
Objective 3.3	2
Objective 4.1	2
Objective 4.2	1
Objective 4.3	2
Objective 4.4	4
Objective 5.1	1
Objective 5.2	2
Objective 5.3	5
Objective 6.1	1
Objective 6.2	4
Objective 6.3	1

*Table 80 - Actions Tied to Hazard*

<b>Actions Tied to Hazard</b>	
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Actions Related</b>
<b>Natural Hazards</b>	
Drought	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Earthquake	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Extreme Temperature	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Flood	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5
Flash Flood	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

<b>Actions Tied to Hazard</b>	
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Actions Related</b>
Hailstorm	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Hurricane, Tropical Storm	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Ice Jam Flood	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Invasive Species	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Landslide	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.1.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Lighting Strike	1.3.1, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Pandemic and Infectious Disease	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Radon Exposure	1.1.2, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.2, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Subsidence, Sinkhole	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Tornado, Windstorm	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Wildfire	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Winter Storm	1.2.1, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
<b>Human-Caused Hazards</b>	
Blighted Properties	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Civil Disturbance	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.5, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Cyber Terrorism	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Dam Failure	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.1.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1, 6.1.1, 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4, 6.3.1
Disorientation	1.1.3, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Drowning	1.1.3, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1

***Forest County, Pennsylvania  
2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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<b>Actions Tied to Hazard</b>	
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Actions Related</b>
Environmental Hazards (Fixed Facility)	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Environmental Hazards (Transportation)	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Substance Use Disorder	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Terrorism	1.1.1, 1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Transportation Accidents	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.3, 5.1.1
Urban Fire and Explosion	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.2, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4, 5.1.1
Utility Interruption	1.4.1, 1.5.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.1.1

## **7. Plan Maintenance**

### **7.1. Update Process Summary**

Monitoring, evaluating, and updating this plan is critical to maintaining its value and success in Forest County's hazard mitigation efforts. Ensuring effective implementation of mitigation activities paves the way for continued momentum in the planning process and gives direction for the future. This section explains who will be responsible for maintenance activities and what those responsibilities entail. It also provides a methodology and schedule of maintenance activities including a description of how the public will be involved on a continued basis. This HMP update also defines the municipalities' role in updating and evaluating the plan. Finally, the 2025 HMP update encourages continued public involvement and how this plan may be integrated into other planning mechanisms in the county.

### **7.2. Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating the Plan**

Hazard mitigation planning in Forest County is the responsibility of all levels of government (i.e., county, and local), as well as the citizens of the county. The Forest County Local Planning Team will be responsible for maintaining this multi-jurisdictional HMP. The local planning team will meet annually and follow each emergency declaration to review the plan. The Executive Director and the EMC with the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department and the Forest County Emergency Management Agency will be the primary individuals responsible for reviewing and updating the plan at least once every five years. Every municipality that has adopted this plan will also be afforded the opportunity to provide updated information or information specific to hazards encountered during an emergency or disaster. Each review process will ensure that the hazard vulnerability and risk analysis reflect the current conditions of the county, that the capabilities assessment accurately reflects local circumstances and that the hazard mitigation strategies are updated based on the county's damage assessment reports and local mitigation project priorities. The HMP must be updated on a five-year cycle. An updated HMP must be completed and approved by the end of the five-year period. The monitoring, evaluating, and updating of the plan every five years will rely heavily on the outcomes of the annual HMP planning team meetings.

The Forest County Local Planning Team will complete a hazard mitigation progress report to evaluate the status and accuracy of the multi-jurisdictional HMP and record the local planning team's review process. The annual plan review will be distributed to appropriate representatives at both PEMA and FEMA. The following items will be completed during the annual review and reporting process:

## *Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

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- Review the risk assessment section and identify occurrences of hazards within the last year. Identify date, time, damage, fatalities, and other specific information of the events. Also identify any new hazards that have occurred or increased risk with the county.
- Complete a review and update of the capability assessment section. Identify any capability weaknesses since the last review. The capability assessment surveys from the previous hazard mitigation plan will be reviewed and new capability assessment forms can be distributed to the municipalities during the annual review process.
- Complete a review of the mitigation strategy section. Review the goals and objectives identified in the 2025 HMP and determine if any updates are needed. Provide all mitigation actions and opportunities to the county and municipalities that are applicable. Have all entities complete an action review matrix and document all results in the report. Also, add any new actions that are identified. Complete a review of each mitigation opportunity and identify the status of each opportunity on the opportunity review spreadsheet. All information will be included in the annual review report.

The Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department will maintain a copy of these records and place them in Appendix I of this plan. Forest County will continue to work with all municipalities regarding hazard mitigation projects, especially those municipalities that did not submit projects for inclusion in this plan.

The Forest County local planning team should also be reviewed annually to address any changes to the membership that may have occurred over the past calendar year. The LPT can be expanded and updated with new stakeholders to address potential changes in guidance by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

### **7.3. Continued Public Involvement**

The Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department will ensure that the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan is posted and maintained on the Forest County website. Forest County will continue to encourage the public to review and comment on the plan. The Forest County website that the plan will be located at is as follows:

[https://www.co.forest.pa.us/departments/conservation\\_district\\_and\\_planning.php](https://www.co.forest.pa.us/departments/conservation_district_and_planning.php)

The public will have access to the 2025 Forest County HMP through their local municipal office, the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department. Information on upcoming events related to the HMP or solicitation for comments will be announced via newsletters, newspapers, mailings, and the county website.

The citizens of Forest County are encouraged to submit their comments to elected officials and/or members of the Forest County HMP Local Planning Team. To promote public participation, the Forest County Local Planning Team will post a public comment form as well



## ***Forest County, Pennsylvania 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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as the Hazard Mitigation Project Opportunity Form on the county's website. These forms will offer the public various opportunities to supply their comments and observations. All comments received will be maintained and considered by the Forest County Hazard Mitigation Planning Team.

Once the Forest County 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan is adopted by the Forest County Board of County Commissioners, the plan will be disseminated to various county agencies and local municipalities that develop and implement specific plans and ordinances. Each participating municipality will be responsible for implementing the specific recommendations in section 5.2.5, plan integration, of the capability assessment into their local planning documents including comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, land development, and subdivision regulations. Whenever possible, the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department will serve as a liaison to assist with these integrations and updates. As discussed above in section 7.2, progress on multi-jurisdictional plan integration will be addressed as part of the annual review conducted by the Forest County Local Planning Team.

## **8. Plan Adoption**

### **8.1. Resolutions**

In accordance with federal and state requirements, the governing bodies of each participating jurisdiction must review and adopt by resolution, the 2025 Forest County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Copies of the adopting resolutions are included in this plan in Appendix J. FEMA Region III in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is the final approval authority for the Hazard Mitigation Plan. PEMA also reviews the plan before submission to FEMA.

## **9. Appendices**

<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	<b>FEMA Local Mitigation Review Tool</b>
<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	<b>Meetings and Support Documents</b>
<b>APPENDIX D:</b>	<b>Municipal Flood Maps</b>
<b>APPENDIX E:</b>	<b>Critical and Community Lifeline Facilities</b>
<b>APPENDIX F:</b>	<b>2025 HAZUS Reports</b>
<b>APPENDIX G:</b>	<b>2025 Mitigation Project Opportunities</b>
<b>APPENDIX H:</b>	<b>2025 Mitigation Action Evaluation &amp; Prioritization</b>
<b>APPENDIX I:</b>	<b>Annual Review Documentation</b>
<b>APPENDIX J:</b>	<b>Forest County &amp; Municipal Adoption Resolutions</b>