

Chickahominy Tribe Adopts Its First Hazard Mitigation Plan

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PHILADELPHIA – On August 4th, FEMA Region 3 approved its first tribal-only Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) after more than a year of work and collaboration between the Chickahominy Tribe and FEMA. The nine-member Chickahominy Tribal Hazard Mitigation Committee and Chief Stephen Adkins formally adopted the Tribe's plan, which allows for the community to receive non-emergency disaster aid funding.

The Tribe received federal recognition in 2018 through the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2017. The Tribe's citizens mostly live along the Chickahominy River near Richmond and Williamsburg in Charles City County and New Kent County Virginia.

During periods of heavy rain, flooded roads prevent access to the Tribal Center and roadways become impassable due to inadequate drainage infrastructure. The Tribe's plan contains actions to address this, including feasibility studies of stormwater drainage solutions. Additional actions identified by the Tribe include developing Natural Hazards Pamphlets to inform residents of evacuation routes and shelters, encouraging construction and usage of safe rooms, and expanding their website to promote Hazard Mitigation/Disaster Preparedness for Tribal citizens.

The Chickahominy Tribe was proactive in developing their plan. The hazard mitigation committee met in four working sessions and held interviews with neighboring communities. The committee also held two online public participation workshops and had an online survey. The survey received 60 replies—a remarkable response rate. "The collaboration and shared learning between the Chickahominy Tribe and FEMA Region 3 resulted in a Hazard Mitigation Plan that meets FEMA's requirements and the Tribe's unique needs," says FEMA Region 3, Regional Administrator MaryAnn Tierney. "The plan lays the groundwork for the Chickahominy to take advantage of mitigation funding and build a more sustainable future."



The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 allowed federally recognized tribal governments to receive their own major disaster declaration for the first time. The Act lets tribes apply directly to FEMA for disaster aid, and the Chickahominy Tribe plans to utilize this policy with their newly approved Hazard Mitigation Plan.

An approved plan helps tribes prepare before a disaster and can address the significant risks of flash floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes on tribal lands. The plan also readies them to recover more quickly, because the hazards, capabilities and mitigation actions are recorded. This helps tribes act on them throughout the disaster cycle. Hazard mitigation planning leads to actions that will reduce long-term risk from natural hazards and protect tribal citizens.

“This approval represents a signal event in the Chickahominy Tribe which put us in a better position to work directly with FEMA,” says Chief Stephen Adkins, Chief, Chickahominy Indian Tribe. “We look forward to continuing our great relationship with FEMA and working toward a more resilient tribe.”

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FEMA’s mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. FEMA Region 3’s jurisdiction includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

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