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## County Seeks Community Input for Disaster Planning

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Natural disasters and climate change impacts are increasing in both frequency and impact nationwide. To meet this challenge, Coconino County is updating its Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) – a plan that guides county-wide efforts to reduce the risk of hazards such as fires and floods. However, for this planning effort to be successful, the county needs input from the people who work and live within its boundaries. To start collecting this input, the county has released a Hazard Mitigation Planning Survey on its website, which can be accessed at <https://coconino.az.gov/2474/Hazard-Mitigation-Plan>.

Public participation is a key part of hazard mitigation planning. It provides planners insight into public preferences and access to community knowledge about the county. It also allows planners to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations, those who may be disproportionately affected by disasters, are accounted for. For these reasons, Coconino County will be providing several opportunities for public participation.

Investing in the creation of quality hazard mitigation plans provides communities with multiple benefits. First, they allow the county to take a comprehensive approach towards reducing the likelihood and impact of disaster events. Second, these plans are the principal qualification for localities to receive state and federal hazard mitigation and disaster relief funds. Hazard mitigation funds can be applied to risk management projects such as brush or drainage clearing to reduce wildfire and flooding risk. Meanwhile, disaster relief funding helps communities pay the immense costs inherent in responding to, and recovering from, disasters. Ultimately, these reduce the likelihood and impact of disasters while minimizing the disruption and suffering that they cause.

To lead these efforts, the county has hired Constant Associates, an emergency management consulting firm. The project is expected to be complete by March 2021.

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