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### **Gloucester Officials Address Revised FEMA Mitigation Guidelines**

At a special meeting in Gloucester on March 25, 2009, Gloucester County staff and officials met with federal and state emergency management officials to review and discuss the new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Guidelines that were received by the county in January 2009. Over the last four years, Gloucester County has received a total of \$5,918,810 to acquire or elevate more than 60 properties in the county through this grant program.

Initially the new guidelines raised questions and concerns by county staff about how the guidelines might adversely impact homes currently being elevated. York District Board of Supervisors member Teresa Altemus, in whose district the majority of the properties are located, helped initiate discussions with FEMA, Virginia Department of Emergency Management officials, Congressman Rob Wittman and Senator Mark Warner on issues related to the new guidelines. The discussions were not only directed at resolving Gloucester's concerns but helped bring awareness to staff at FEMA's national headquarters about the need for consistency within the different FEMA regions in the implementation of home elevation guidelines.

To help facilitate an understanding of Gloucester's concerns, federal and state emergency management grant officials joined Gloucester staff on site visits to project homes in the Jenkins Neck area on March 25<sup>th</sup> and then convened into a formal meeting. Participating in the meeting, with the members of Gloucester Count's Hazard Mitigation Grant Management Committee, were

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representatives from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, officials from the FEMA-Region III and national offices, and a representative from Senator Warner's office. Discussions during the meeting led to helpful feedback on the revised guidelines, specifically relating to local building codes and state procurement laws.

Working together, federal, state and county officials were able to reach common understanding and agreement to ensure that the revised guidelines would not adversely impact projects currently under construction. FEMA officials cited Gloucester County as a model for other localities participating in mitigation programs by fulfilling the intent of the program guidelines.

For more information concerning Gloucester's participation in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, please contact Michael Dodson, FEMA Flood Mitigation Coordinator, at 693-1390.

*## End of Announcement*