



# County of Santa Cruz

## Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 [www.scceh.com](http://www.scceh.com)

[EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us)



### AGENDA

#### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

**Wednesday October 1, 2025, 4pm**

This meeting will be held in hybrid format. Commissioners are expected to attend in person.

In-Person: 701 Ocean Street; **5<sup>th</sup> Floor Redwood Room**

Remote via Teams: [Join the meeting now](#) Meeting ID: 244 731 451 202 4 Passcode: ud6s47X2

**Dial in by phone** +1 831-454-2222 Phone conference ID: 831 427 584#

**A. OPENING**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call. Welcome new Commissioner Sarah Easley Perez.

**B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Opportunity for the public to comment on items under the purview of the Water Advisory Commission but not on today's agenda.

**C. CONSENT AGENDA**

Items on the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature and will be acted upon in one motion. Specific items may be removed by members of the advisory body or public for separate consideration and discussion. Routine items that will be found on the consent agenda are meeting minutes, drought response updates, and Groundwater Sustainability Agency updates.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for August 6, 2025
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
3. Drought Response Updates

**D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

**E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

**G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES**

1. Update on Measure Q Planning and Implementation  
Office of Response, Recovery, and Resiliency (OR3) Director David Reid will discuss the status of Measure Q, the Vision Plan, and the Grants program.
  - i. Attachments: The Draft Vision Plan is available at:  
[https://parks.santacruzcountyca.gov/Portals/12/pdfs/Measure%20Q/Measure\\_Q\\_Vision%20Plan\\_COAB\\_Packet\\_DRAFT.docx?ver=Dxd6PfAy3L0JZfutDZ73PQ%3d%3d](https://parks.santacruzcountyca.gov/Portals/12/pdfs/Measure%20Q/Measure_Q_Vision%20Plan_COAB_Packet_DRAFT.docx?ver=Dxd6PfAy3L0JZfutDZ73PQ%3d%3d)
2. Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning Process  
Clare Peabody from OR3 will discuss the results of the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning process.
  - i. Attachments: The website has a lot of content, and the draft MJHMP will be publicly posted there by September 29<sup>th</sup>:  
<https://mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp/>
  - ii. Powerpoint presentation

**H. CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:**

None

**J. ITEMS OF INTEREST**

[Santa Cruz water utility grapples with a paradox: what to do when conservation becomes bad for business – & the West](#)

[A Conversation with Paul Gosselin, Deputy Director for Sustainable Groundwater Management, DWR – YouTube](#)

**K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Annual Water Status Report

**L. ADJOURNMENT**



# County of Santa Cruz

## Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 [www.scceh.com](http://www.scceh.com)  
[EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us)



### MINUTES

#### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WATER ADVISORY COMMISSION

Wednesday August 6, 2025, 4pm

#### A. OPENING

1. Call to Order 4:02
2. Roll Call

Commissioners in attendance: Cheap, Lego, Wilson, Lockwood, Gillespie. Seats for Districts 2 and 5 are vacant.

Staff and Consultants: Sierra Ryan, Sean Abbey, Emily Donham, John Ricker

#### B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

None

#### C. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for June 4, 2025
2. Update from Groundwater Sustainability Agencies
3. Drought Response Updates

Moved by Commissioner Lego, second by Lockwood. Unanimous

#### D. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Opportunity for Commissioners to provide brief updates

Cheap: Attended Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors meeting this week, recommends public participation when possible. Has been tagged to help with a documentary on the book Chinese Gold by Sandy Lydon. There is a tunnel north of the summit that collapsed killing 30 people. On San Jose Water Company land. He's looking into whether there can be a plaque or public tours occasionally.

Lockwood: The Groundwater Resources Association meeting will be having a meeting in

Salinas at the Main Street Lounge August 14<sup>th</sup> at 5ish. Costs \$30ish. Subject is demand management.

Pleased to announce the college lake ribbon cutting is happening this month. 1800-2300 AFY. They are close to "substantial completion." He would be happy to offer the Commissioners a tour.

Lego: Continues to move ahead with intertie with Soquel Creek Water District, just waiting on LAFCO to approve the ESA. They are now working on how to pay for the connection. Currently working on an income survey as they are lumped in to the La Selva Beach census area. RCAC will do the survey, just awaiting approval from DWR.

Gillespie: SLVWD has a new water manager, Jason Lillion. They also have a new director of operations. The intertie project between SLVWD and CiSC is moving forward, pipeline on La Madrona drive is completed. Grant deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>. It is not limited to emergency transfers.

**E. STAFF REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Opportunity for staff to provide brief updates:

Well Ordinance went into effect on July 20. Staff are trying to advance a project to address Harmful Algal Blooms at Pinto Lake.

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Local Area Management Plan (LAMP) multi-year assessment results

Review report on the results of data analysis on the implementation of the LAMP and provide feedback before submittal to the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Attachments: LAMP Report

Nitrate trends are not consistent over time and it's hard to tell how useful they are overtime for a program like the LAMP. We see declining nitrate concentrations over a 30-year period in the upper watershed, no change in the middle, and declines in the lower.

Nitrate: Lego asks whether 0.33 mg/l is a big deal, as the drinking water standard is 10 mg/l. Sierra says that it's due to the beneficial uses. The numbers was set so low because it was based on older data, though that might be questionable due to different methods. The primary concern is biostimulation like alga growth, which can lead to declining dissolved oxygen at the lagoon and taste and odor issues for the City water department. Generally 1 mg/l is considered appropriate for biotic protection. The largest single source of nitrate in the San Lorenzo is septic systems in

sandy soil. They aren't failing, it's just that sandy soils don't remove nitrate before it gets to surface water. Newell Creek, Bean Creek, Zayante Creek are all sources.

E. coli: the probability of exceedance doesn't seem to change over time, however that may be due to problems in tracking the microbial sources that can help us understand whether the source is OWTS or other livestock or wildlife.

Permitting: People coming in to the County for repair permits has dropped by 50% since the stricter regulations required under the LAMP went into effect. Many people will go to a consultant before they come to the County. Currently all designs have to be submitted by a qualified professional, they are engaged from the beginning and will be able to say that it needs enhanced treatment. If they fail to do that, EH should catch right away that it doesn't meet standards.

EH staff argued with the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) that the changes they wanted were overly stringent in terms of the water quality benefits at the time of the LAMP being negotiated, but did not prevail.

Question: Based on water quality data, it didn't look like there were major spikes in failures. Is that because the failures are far from streams and get treated on the way?  
Answer: We have not seen a decreasing trend in nitrate over the long term. We hoped we would when we started requiring enhanced treatment for nitrate removal in sandy soils. We extended that to all repairs in sandy soils to get at the nitrate problem. However, the Regional Board tacked on more that we think is unnecessary.

Question: How many septic systems are unpermitted or failing?

John says we did a lot in the 80s and 90s in terms of upgrading old redwood tanks and cesspools. Staff also went parcel by parcel looking for failures and had a very high repair rate. Failure rate dropped from about 13% to 1-2%. Through those efforts.

Staff plan to talk to the Regional Board about opportunities to find better balance in the LAMP requirements. Lockwood recommends talking to other Regionals to see what they are doing in some of these situations. Seeing if other regions have had their standards relaxed.

## 2. Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

Introduction to the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning Process and provide feedback.

Attachments:      Staff Report  
                             Informational handouts (English and Spanish)  
                             Informational slides

Looking at impacts that affect not just one agency but multiple agencies is being done in a way it hasn't before. Looking at vulnerabilities, data gaps, relationships has been really useful.

Cheap: Huge element for public education. People need to know what to do to prepare for and respond to disasters.

Lockwood: Getting everyone in the room together to talk about this is really valuable.

Gillespie: Really good to look for opportunities to overlap and collaborate.

**G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS and UPDATES**

None

**H. CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**I. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ACTION ON ITEMS AFFECTING WATER:**

No discussion

**J. ITEMS OF INTEREST**

No discussion

**K. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

**L. ADJOURNMENT 5:47**



# County of Santa Cruz

## Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 [www.scceh.com](http://www.scceh.com)  
[EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us)



**Subject:** October 1, 2025 Water Advisory Commission Consent Agenda

**Title:** Groundwater Sustainability Agency Updates

### Background

There are three groundwater basins in the County subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The following updates come from the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies tasked with managing and monitoring those basins.

### Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency

- Grant Funded Projects
  - o Department of Conservation (DoC) Multibenefit Land Repurposing Grant, \$8.89 million: Staff and consultants continue to meet monthly with DoC staff and the Statewide Support Entity (SSE); staff, regional block grant partners, and consultants are finalizing an Outreach and Engagement Plan and planning for community meetings.
  - o Department of Water Resources Watershed Resilience Pilot Grant, \$2 million: Recent and upcoming activities include preparation for Advisory Group Meeting #6 and Workshop No. 4, scheduled for October 22, 2025; and Staff submitted Invoice No. 5 in the amount of \$414,421 to DWR on September 4, 2025.
  - o Department of Water Resources Integrated Regional Water Management Grant, \$1.8 million: Staff received payment for Invoice No. 1, in the amount of \$1,620,000 for the College Lake Project on August 25, 2025.
- College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project
  - o Construction:
    - Water Treatment Plant & Intake Facility
      - Work continues on the Intake Facility and Water Treatment Plant; commissioning meetings are ongoing. ***The week of June 9, 2025, the contractor began sending treated College Lake water to PV Water customers. In the time since, PV Water staff have been operating the facility, with oversight from the contractor.*** PV Water's Operations

Team started the 7-day operational testing phase in August, however the test did not pass due to turbidity issues. The contractor and consultants are evaluating the system, providing recommendations, and preparing to start the 7-day test again in September.

- Supplemental Well No. 3 (SW3) Improvements Project, 30-62
  - The Board, on September 17, 2025, voted in favor of directing staff to advertise for bids to construct this project; Watsonville Blue Print has the bid advertisement posted on its Bid Board and the advertisement inviting bids will be published in the Pajaronian.
- Supplemental Well No. 4 (SW4)
  - Staff SW4 is in use.
- Treated Water Pipeline
  - Meetings to discuss contract change orders due to impacts of the Differing Site Condition at Salsipuedes Creek and groundwater are ongoing; contract change orders are being issued for those items that have been resolved and agreed to.
- Environmental: Biological resource monitoring taking place monthly.
- Adaptive Management Plan (AMP): Hydrologic monitoring, waterfowl monitoring, and steelhead surveys are ongoing; staff and consultants presented the “Pre-Operations Annual Report” to the Projects and Facility Operations Committee on August 27, 2025. Items related to the AMP are on the agenda (Item 11B).
- Outreach Activities: Website and social media updates are ongoing.
- Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge & Recovery Projects
  - Permitting: Work on permit applications continues with staff and consultants corresponding with permitting agencies.
  - Environmental: The Board approved the addendum to the Environmental Impact Report on March 19, 2025.
  - Outreach: Communications are ongoing; staff and the support team continue to meet with property owners; several properties in escrow.
- Sustainable Groundwater Management Act Well Monitoring Network Expansion
  - Permitting: Staff have held preliminary discussions with the permitting agencies of Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties to identify the necessary requirements. No new activity this month.
  - Property Rights: Staff is engaged in discussions with property owners for proposed wells that would be located on privately owned land.



- Environmental: No new activity this month.

### **Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency**

- The Agency met on September 18, 2025, at 6:00 pm. At the meeting, the Board:
  - Received an update and discussed the continuing evaluation of funding options for expenses associated with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) compliance. A draft of the funding options evaluation is expected in December 2025.
  - Established a temporary subcommittee to solicit and evaluate two private well owner (PWO) representatives for consideration of a Board appointment. Two current PWO positions expire at the end of 2025.
  - Approved a policy that authorizes Agency review of well permit applications within its jurisdiction in conformance with the recently approved Santa Cruz County well ordinance.
- The Agency is continuing a study of increasing chloride concentrations in coastal monitoring wells in the Seascapes area. Results of the study are expected in early 2026.
- The next regular meeting of the Agency is on December 11, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

### **Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency**

- The Agency met on August 28, 2025, at 6:00 pm. At the meeting, the Board:
  - Received an overview of metered and estimated groundwater use in the Agency's jurisdiction.
  - Received a kickoff presentation on its SGMA-required Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Periodic Evaluation, which is due to the Department of Water Resources by January 3, 2027.
  - Established an ad hoc committee to review potential changes intended to streamline its SMGA-required GSP Annual Report
  - Approved a policy that authorizes Agency review of well permit applications within its jurisdiction in conformance with the recently approved Santa Cruz County well ordinance.
- The next regular meeting of the Agency is on October 23, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

By: Sierra Ryan, Water Resources Program Manager with information from Rob Swartz and Brian Lockwood



# County of Santa Cruz

## Water Advisory Commission

701 Ocean Street, Room 312, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY -Call 711 [www.scceh.com](http://www.scceh.com)  
[EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@santacruzcounty.us)



**Subject:** October 1, 2025, Water Advisory Commission

**Title:** Drought Response & Outreach Plan (DROP) Update

### **Background:**

On September 23, 2021, Senate Bill (SB) 552 was signed into law. SB 552 requires that “a county shall establish a standing county drought and water shortage task force to facilitate drought and water shortage preparedness for state small water systems and domestic wells within the county’s jurisdiction”. The Water Advisory Commission voted to adopt the responsibility for implementing [SB 552](#) and receives regular updates on the progress of implementation.

### **Updates:**

- There are currently 190 applicants that have enrolled in the Regional Waterboards free well testing program. 108 wells have been tested and 82 are on the waiting list to be tested.
- Since the August 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, results were received for 25 wells and 2 had an exceedance of a drinking water standard. Neither of the two well owners enrolled in county services. However, county staff provided guidance to one well owner with an E. coli exceedance.
- County staff is working to install POU treatment systems at the Rountree Facility in South County, which is in exceedance for PFOA. Staff hope to have the units installed before the end of 2025.
- Sierra Ryan will be presenting at the CalMutuals annual conference on 9/30 on the work of the County to support water systems.
- Sierra Ryan continues to represent interests of local government at the State [Drought Response Interagency Partnership \(DRIP\) Collaborative](#).

By: Sean Abbey  
Water Quality Specialist III

# Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP)

**OR3 Staff Presentation to the Santa Cruz County Board of  
Supervisors**

September 9, 2025



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

Photo : County of Santa Cruz



# Project Background

Funded by FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Award:  
**\$250,000**

Requirement (update every 5 yrs) to **maintain eligibility** for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grants: BRIC, HMGP, FMA

Our County's first **Multi-Jurisdictional** HMP with 10 participating jurisdictions! (cities, water districts / special districts)

Photo: County of Santa Cruz



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE



## Hazard Mitigation is...

- Reducing risks to **life, property, and infrastructure** from future disasters
- **Long-term** projects like fuel reduction, flood control, or seismic retrofit
- Reducing or eliminating **repetitive damages** over time



## Hazard Mitigation is NOT...

- Emergency **response** or **recovery** for past damages
- Short-term fixes or **routine maintenance**

Photos: County of Santa Cruz

# Intended Outcomes



Reduced duplication of efforts **and lowered costs** for ongoing HMP update cycles



**Shared awareness** of hazards and vulnerabilities, leveraging comprehensive stakeholder and community outreach



**Coordinated planning** to secure mitigation and resilience funding (FEMA, State Prop 4, Measure Q / WWPA, etc...)



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

# Consultant Team

---

[mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp](https://mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp)





# Participating Jurisdictions

## **County of Santa Cruz\***

City of Scotts Valley

## **City of Capitola\***

## **City of Watsonville\***

## **Cabrillo College\***

RCD of Santa Cruz County

Scotts Valley Water District

Soquel Creek Water District

Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency

Santa Cruz Port District

**\*existing HMP's**

Photo: Clare Peabody



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE



# Planning Process Overview



# Planning Committee Membership

## Participating Jurisdiction Staff

- Public Works
- Flood and Stormwater Control
- Sanitation
- Transportation
- Planning
- County/City Administration
- Water Resources
- Vegetation Management
- Human Services

## Other Stakeholder Groups

- Fire / Law
- Education
- Utilities
- Med Health
- Community Based Organizations
- Neighbor Agencies
- ...Leverage existing partnerships (RWG, CAAP, IRWM)

# Public & Stakeholder Engagement

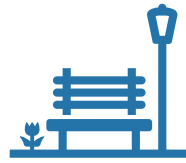


## Purpose

Identify Unmitigated Risks

Refine Hazard Profiles

Shape Actionable Strategy to Align with Public Priorities



## Multi-Channel Input

(*through 9/12*) Public Survey

(4) County-Wide Large Group Meetings

(10) Jurisdictional Breakout Meetings

(8) 1:1 Stakeholder Interviews



## Wide Participation

100+ Key Stakeholders

Multi-Sector Representation

400+ Survey Responses



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

# County-Wide Priority Hazards

**Wildfire**



**Flood**  
(incl. Levee Failure)



**Earthquake**  
(incl. Liquefaction)



**Severe Weather**  
(incl. High Wind, Heavy Rain)



**Coastal Hazards**  
(incl. Coastal Storm, Erosion, Wave Run-Up, Surge & Tsunami)



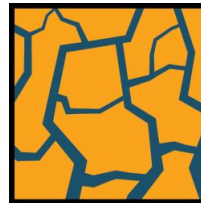
**Slope Failure**



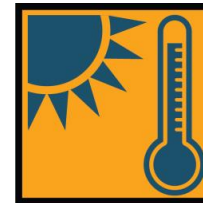
**Dam Failure**



**Drought**



**Extreme Temperatures**  
(incl. Extreme Heat & Cold)



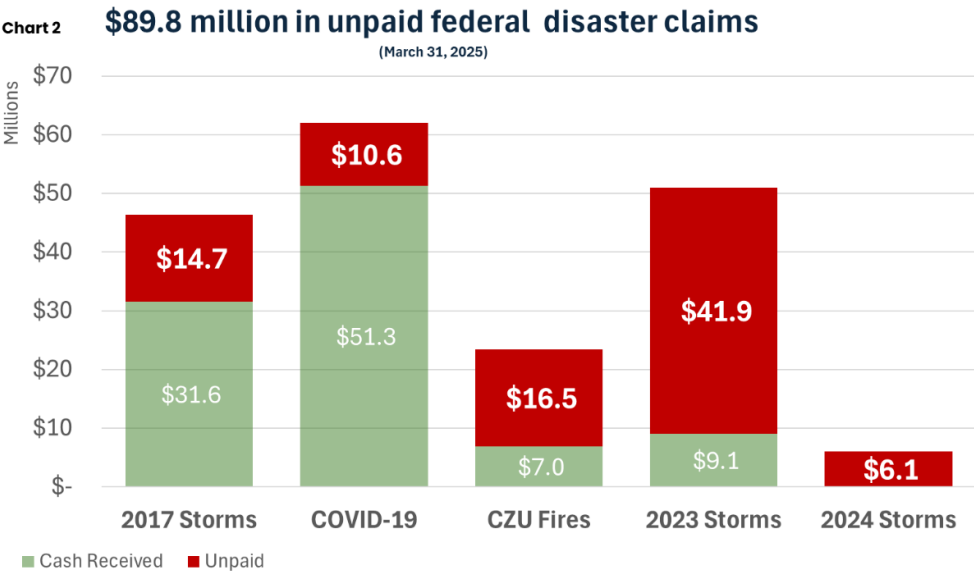
**Climate Change**  
(incl. Sea Level Rise)



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

# What's changed since the last update?

## County Disaster Financing



Source: County Budget Presentation (May 2025)

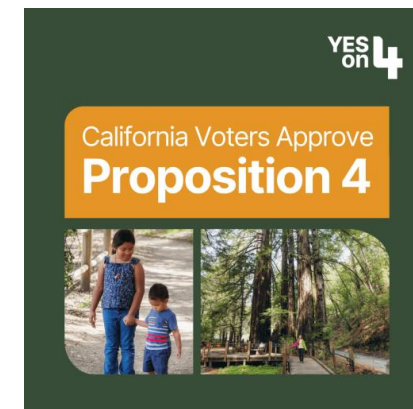
# What's changed since the last update?

## *HMA Funding Landscape*

---



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY  
**MEASURE Q**



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

# Next Steps / Milestones

---

- Continue attending public events to promote survey and educational materials (***through September 12<sup>th</sup>***)
- Public Review Draft Plan Released (***September 29<sup>th</sup>***)
- Submission to CalOES/FEMA (***October 31<sup>st</sup>***)
- Formal adoption proceedings by each participating jurisdiction (***early 2026***)
- Plan implementation and maintenance (***5 year cycle***)





# Thank you!

## Questions

[clare.peabody@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:clare.peabody@santacruzcountyca.gov)

## Project Website

[mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp](https://mitigatehazards.com/santacruzmjhmp)

**SURVEY LINK:**



*Left: Prescribed burn,  
Wilder Ranch State Park  
(2022)*

*Right: PRFMA Pajaro Levee  
Project – Reach 6 (Dec  
2023)*



Photos: California State Parks, County of Santa Cruz



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF  
RESPONSE, RECOVERY & RESILIENCE