

SECTION 3

COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the Plan provides a general overview of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) District 9 Region. It consists of the following four subsections:

- 3.1 Geography and the Environment
- 3.2 Population and Demographics
- 3.3 Housing, Infrastructure, and Land Use
- 3.4 Employment and Industry

The county-specific annexes provide more detailed community profile information about each county.

3.1 GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The MEMA District 9 Region was named based on the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency districts lines and is one of nine MEMA regions throughout the state. The region comprises the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It is bounded by the Mississippi/Alabama State Line to the east, the Mississippi/Louisiana State Line to the west, and the Gulf of Mexico to the south. The MEMA District 9 Region includes the counties of George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, and Stone. An orientation map is provided as **Figure 3.1**.

MEMA District 9 is situated in the East Gulf Coastal Plain. It is made up of the gently rolling Pine Belt, also known as the “Piney Woods,” and the coastal area called the Coastal Meadows or Terrace. The region has generally low topographic elevations and extensive tracts of marshy land. There are many rivers, creeks, bayous, and other natural drainage networks in the region which empty into the Gulf of Mexico.

The total area of each of the participating counties is presented in **Table 3.1**.

TABLE 3.1: TOTAL AREA OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

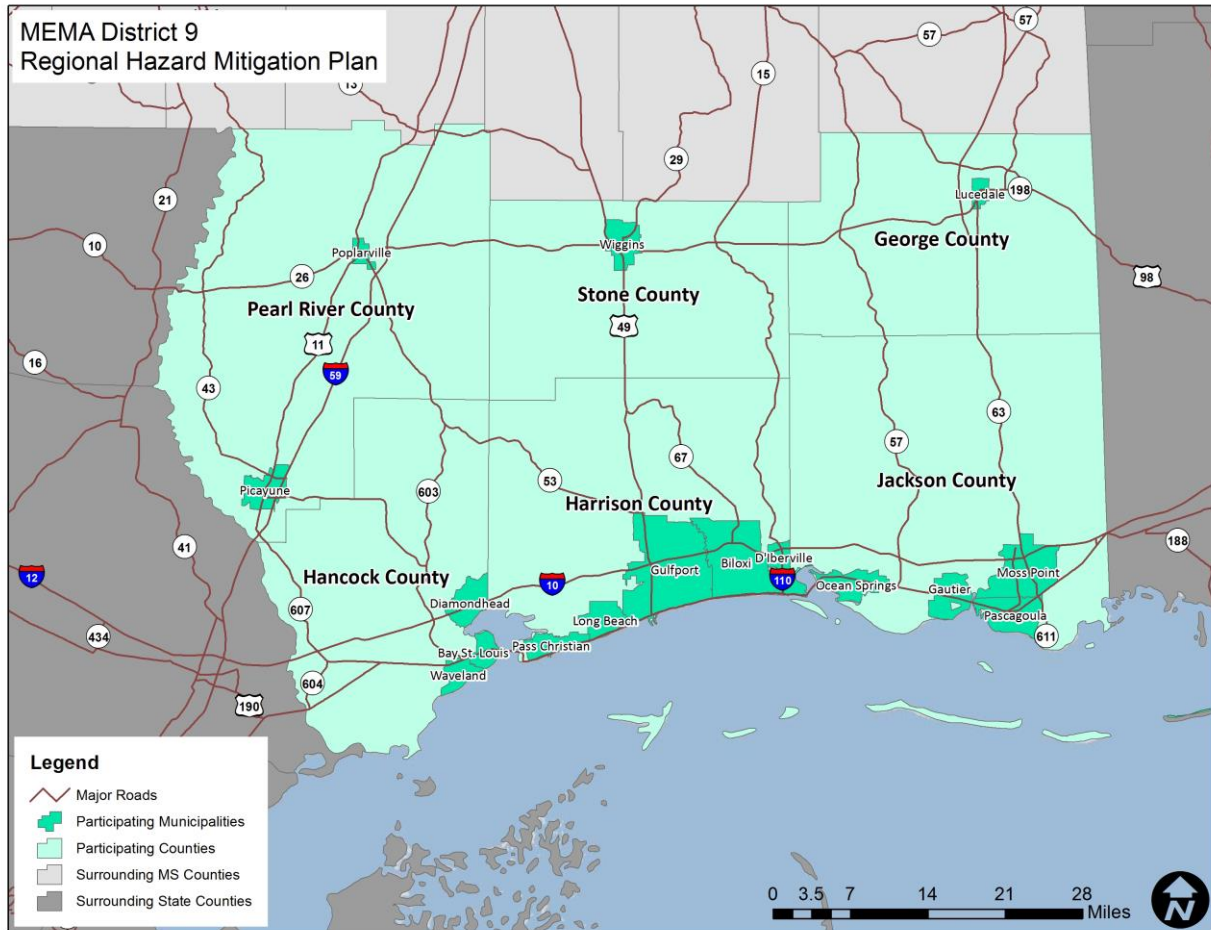
County	Land Area (sq. mi.)	Water Area (sq. mi.)	Total Area (sq. mi.)
George County	478.71	4.94	483.65
Hancock County	473.75	78.75	552.50
Harrison County	573.99	402.18	976.17
Jackson County	722.75	320.64	1,043.40
Pearl River County	810.86	8.05	818.91
Stone County	445.48	2.59	448.08

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census

The MEMA District 9 Region enjoys four distinct seasons but the climate in the region is generally hot and humid compared to the rest of the United States given its latitude and location along the Gulf Coast. Precipitation is generally highest in winter months when the temperatures are moderately lower, but

the likelihood of precipitation remains relatively constant throughout the year. Snowfall is rare but does occur. Summers in the region can become fairly hot with average highs in the nineties and lows in the seventies. The region is also often susceptible to turbulent weather when warm, wet air from the Gulf of Mexico is pushed up into the region to mix with cooler air coming down from across the continent which can result in severe weather conditions. This is particularly true in the spring when seasons are changing and diverse weather patterns interact. The region is also subject to hurricanes and tropical storms from June to October.

FIGURE 3.1: MEMA DISTRICT 9 REGION ORIENTATION MAP



3.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Pearl River County is the largest participating county by land area but Harrison County has the largest population within the MEMA District 9 Region. Between 2000 and 2010, all but one of the participating jurisdictions experienced population growth. Stone County had the largest population growth at 30.6 percent while Harrison County experienced a decline of -1.3 percent. Population counts from the U.S. Census Bureau for 1990, 2000, and 2010 for each of the participating counties and jurisdictions are presented in **Table 3.2**.

TABLE 3.2: POPULATION COUNTS FOR PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Jurisdiction	1990 Census Population	2000 Census Population	2010 Census Population	% Change 2000-2010
George County	16,673	19,144	22,578	17.9%
Hancock County	31,760	42,967	43,929	2.2%
Harrison County	165,365	189,601	187,105	-1.3%
Jackson County	115,243	131,420	139,668	6.3%
Pearl River County	38,714	48,621	55,834	14.8%
Stone County	10,750	13,622	17,786	30.6%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010 Census

Based on the 2010 Census, the median age for residents of the participating counties ranges from 35 to 41 years with an average age of 37 years across the region. The racial characteristics of the participating counties are presented in **Table 3.3**. Whites make up the majority of the population in the region; however, there is a substantial black population in most of the counties.

TABLE 3.3: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Jurisdiction	White, Percent (2010)	Black or African American, Percent (2010)	American Indian or Alaska Native, Percent (2010)	Asian, Percent (2010)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Percent (2010)	Other Race, Percent (2010)	Two or More Races, percent (2010)	Persons of Hispanic Origin, Percent (2010)*
George County	89.8%	8.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%	2.0%
Hancock County	88.4%	7.1%	0.5%	1.0%	0.0%	0.8%	2.1%	3.3%
Harrison County	69.7%	22.1%	0.5%	2.8%	0.1%	2.1%	2.7%	5.3%
Jackson County	72.1%	21.5%	0.4%	2.2%	0.1%	1.9%	1.9%	4.6%
Pearl River County	84.0%	12.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.9%	1.7%	2.9%
Stone County	78.6%	19.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	1.1%	1.3%

*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census

3.3 HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LAND USE

3.3.1 Housing

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are 207,547 housing units in the MEMA District 9 Region, the majority of which are single family or mobile homes. Housing information for the six participating counties is presented in **Table 3.4**. As shown in the table, the region has a low percentage of seasonal housing units but Hancock County has a higher percentage compared to the rest of the region.

TABLE 3.4: HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Jurisdiction	Housing Units (2000)	Housing Units (2010)	Seasonal Units, Percent (2010)	Median Home Value (2011-2015)
George County	7,513	9,330	3.7%	\$101,300
Hancock County	21,072	21,840	6.6%	\$133,000
Harrison County	79,636	85,181	1.9%	\$137,700
Jackson County	51,678	60,067	1.7%	\$121,200
Pearl River County	20,610	23,968	3.6%	\$114,100
Stone County	5,343	7,161	3.8%	\$111,800

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

3.3.2 Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION

There are several major thoroughfares that traverse the MEMA District 9 Region. Interstate 10 runs east to west through Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock Counties, connecting the region to neighboring Alabama and Louisiana. Interstate 59 runs northeast to southwest through Pearl River County, U.S. 49 runs north to south through Stone and Harrison Counties, and U.S. 98 runs northwest to southwest through George County, all linking the region to central Mississippi.

The Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, located in Harrison County, serves the region. This airport is served by three major airlines with direct flights to Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas/Ft. Worth, and Houston as well as connections to hundreds of locations in the U.S. and worldwide. There are also several small general aviation airports within the MEMA District 9 Region, including one in nearly every county.

In terms of other transportation services, Port Bienville, Port of Gulfport, and Port of Pascagoula operate within the region, connecting it to national and global markets. Several Class-I Major and Class-III Local railways also serve the region.

UTILITIES

Electric power in the MEMA District 9 Region is mainly provided by municipal and electric power associations. Mississippi Power Company also provides power to small areas in each county across the region.

There are several private and municipal natural gas suppliers that serve the MEMA District 9 Region. These include CenterPoint Energy Resources and the cities of Waveland, Pascagoula, and Picayune.

Water and sewer service is provided by a number of different sources including many of the participating cities and counties, but unincorporated areas often rely on septic systems and wells in the MEMA District 9 Region.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There are a number of public buildings and community facilities located throughout the MEMA District 9 Region. According to the data collected for the vulnerability assessment (Section 6.4.1), there are 21 communications facilities, 10 emergency operations centers (EOCs), 130 fire stations, 27 medical facilities, 37 police stations, 101 power/gas facilities, 53 private/non-profit facilities, 170 public facilities, 175 schools, 20 shelters, 109 special populations facilities, 44 transportation facilities, and 128 water/wastewater facilities located within the study area.

There are 14 hospitals and medical centers located in the MEMA District 9 Region. These include George Regional Hospital – Lucedale in George County; Hancock Medical Center – Bay St. Louis in Hancock County; VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System – Biloxi, Merit Health Biloxi – Biloxi, U.S. Air Force Medical Center Keesler – Biloxi, Garden Park Medical Center – Gulfport, Memorial Hospital – Gulfport, and Select Specialty – Gulfport Hospital in Harrison County; Singing River Hospital – Pascagoula and Ocean Springs Hospital – Ocean Springs in Jackson County; Crosby Memorial Hospital – Picayune, Highland Community Hospital – Picayune, and Pearl River County Hospital – Poplarville in Pearl River County; and Stone County Hospital – Wiggins in Stone County. There are also several additional medical care facilities located throughout the region as outlined in the vulnerability assessment (Section 6.4.1).

The MEMA District 9 Region contains numerous local, state, and national parks and recreation areas, including the Gulf Islands National Seashore, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, DeSoto National Forest, Buccaneer State Park, and Shepard State Park. Golf courses and resorts, recreational and sports fishing, gambling and casinos, and sand beaches are abundant in the region. These facilities and recreational opportunities attract millions of visitors each year.

3.3.3 Land Use

Many areas of the MEMA District 9 Region are undeveloped or sparsely developed. As shown in **Figure 3.1** above, there are several small incorporated municipalities located throughout the study area, with a few larger clusters along the coast. Coastal land use patterns radiate from city centers and commercial land uses are located in central business districts and highway strips, with surrounding housing that becomes progressively large in lot size and floor area with distance from the central business districts. Residential and non-residential densities are generally low, and concentrated mix of uses are infrequent, creating an auto-oriented land use pattern along the coast. Upland land use patterns differ markedly from the coastal plain. There are only a few municipalities and unincorporated rural centers. There is a mix of protected lands, such as the DeSoto National Forest and several National Wildlife Refuges. Private lands are used for exurban housing, agriculture, and forestry. Consistent with its rural character, densities are very low and uses are not mixed, making motor vehicles the only viable mode for virtually all travel.

Local land use and associated regulations are further discussed in *Section 7: Capability Assessment*.

3.4 EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY

Like other areas of the Gulf Coast, the MEMA District 9 Region’s economy is dominated by industries related to manufacturing, energy, petrochemicals, fishing, agriculture, and tourism. There have been efforts to diversify the local economies in recent years, especially following Hurricane Katrina when

many residents were temporarily without work. The region has chosen to leverage recovery efforts for greater regional economic renewal.

According to the 2011 to 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, in 2015, George County had an average annual employment of 8,260 workers and an average unemployment rate of 9.0 percent (compared to 10.3 percent for the state). In 2015, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed 21.7 percent of the county's workforce followed by Manufacturing (19.2%) and Construction (13.2%); and Retail Trade (10.9%). In 2015, the average annual median household income in George County was \$44,258 compared to \$39,665 in the state of Mississippi.

In 2015, Hancock County had an average annual employment of 18,482 workers and an average unemployment rate of 10.1 percent. According to the ASC, in 2015, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed the most people, with 16.2 percent of the workforce, followed by Retail Trade (13.0%); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (12.7%); and Construction (12.2%). The average annual median household income in Hancock County was \$43,355.

Harrison County had an average annual employment of 82,911 workers and an average unemployment rate of 9.7 percent in 2015. According to the ACS, in 2015, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed 19.1 percent of the workforce followed by Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (17.8%); Retail Trade (12.8%); and Public Administration (9.4%). The average annual median household income in Harrison County was \$41,722.

In 2015, Jackson County had an average annual employment of 58,824 workers and an average unemployment rate of 9.1 percent. In 2015, according to the ACS, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed 20.2 percent of the workforce. Manufacturing was the second largest industry, employing 18.8 percent of workers, followed by Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (15.4%) and Retail Trade (10.6%). The average annual median household income in Jackson County was \$48,406.

Pearl River County had an average annual employment of 20,219 workers and an average unemployment rate of 12.1 percent in 2015. According to the ACS, in 2015, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed 21.9 percent of the workforce followed by Retail Trade (13.3%); Construction (10.0%); and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (9.5%). The average annual median household income in Pearl River County was \$40,976.

In 2015, Stone County had an average annual employment of 6,920 workers and an average unemployment rate of 9.7 percent. According to the ACS, in 2015, the Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance industry employed the most people, with 27.5 percent of the workforce, followed by Manufacturing (12.0%) and Retail Trade (9.8%). The average annual median household income in Stone County was \$45,025.