

## Background

***NHMA is a national organization of practitioners committed to natural hazard disaster risk reduction in the context of climate adaptation and mitigation.***

Our members are joined in dedication to help our nation achieve the goal of reducing the devastating costs and impacts of natural hazards thus improving public safety, health and community well-being; while reducing government expenditures, misery and environmental harm. The Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) is a project of NHMA devised as part of our strategy to encourage peer-to-peer networking between and among professionals representing communities actively working towards reducing disaster costs, risks and consequences thus building resilience from all hazards through hazard mitigation and adaptation. This year we will begin a special FEMA funded effort focusing on supporting a revised and expanded peer-to-peer networking effort designed to leverage scarce resources in a manner to inject knowledgeable discussion of the need to reduce future losses from natural events, so as to reduce future disaster risk and loss.

The goal of this effort is to strengthen the locally based peer-to-peer networking so that we can begin to significantly contribute to the National goal of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) through a strategy of leveraging scarce resources so that local climate adaptation/hazard mitigation/floodplain management voices have the ability to be heard loudly and effectively in the ongoing national dialogue about climate change, resilience, climate adaptation and disaster loss reduction. To that end, we propose to facilitate efforts for committed community representatives to engage in the discussion of how disasters can be reduced through local action; be exposed to other local experts and technical experts so that they can effectively influence “whole community”; and to use the best-available data and analytic tools to make better risk-informed decisions before, during, and after disasters.

Background on Disaster Risk Reduction in Today’s Context

Several years ago, at the inception of the NHMA Resilient Neighbors Network program (RNN), the landscape of organizations promoting resilience was very different than it is today. At the time, fewer organizations and groups were directly involved in promoting resilience, or climate adaptation. Today there are well over 100 organizations and groups involved in what they describe as resilience. See, e.g. The Updated OARS (Organizations Addressing Resilience and Sustainability) Shortlist, created by Don Watson, FAIA, located on the NHMA website. See, OARS website address: <http://nhma.info/the-updated-oars-organizations-addressing-resilience-and-sustainability-shortlist-created-by-don-watson/>

As the landscape has expanded, NHMA has endeavored to remain engaged with various national, regional and local partners. NHMA efforts have included representation at multiple major conferences and meetings at which climate adaptation, resilience, and sustainability have been major themes. These events have included: The EPA funded Northeast Climate Change Preparedness Conference; the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy 9th annual Land Policy Conference; the Kresge Foundation and Garrison Institute sponsored Climate Adaptation Service Provider Practitioner Workshop Mapping the Local and Regional Climate Adaptation Resource and Service Landscape; the MIT Sea Grant Climate change symposium: Sustaining Coastal Cities; Kresge Foundation Advisory Committee for their Climate Based Adaptation Project; the Harvard Graduate School of Design Executive Program; and, various local workshops. [Copies of many of these presentations are available on line or on request]

The energy, passion, and commitment of the participants at these events were enormous. Yet, these events are but a sample of the enormous amount of activity, taking place around the United States and throughout the world on the subject of climate adaptation and resilience.

At these events, we have had the pleasure and honor of both introducing a whole new group of folks to NHMA, and our mission as well as getting to know about multiple local folks and national organizations which are working on incredible resilience efforts at the local level. These include:

efforts of the Urban Land Institute in Boston, the City of Baltimore, and the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

Generally speaking, the organizations and groups who are working on resilience, come at the topic from a water quality, climate change and/or environmental perspective. Generally speaking, these groups have little experience with natural hazard mitigation, floodplain management, disaster relief, or land-use and building codes designed to reduce the ever mounting toll caused by improper and unsafe development in areas subject to foreseeable natural hazard. Our goal should be to bring a “Safe Development” message and expertise into these discussions, as this is a fabulous opportunity for those of us who care about a safe and resilient future.

As we consider how best to build upon the concept of a peer-to-peer network designed to encourage and promote local efforts to build a safer more resilient future for our nation, we believe we can best to leverage our limited resources in such a way to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the enormous energies being channeled into climate change adaptation through the development a curriculum of study on what we are calling a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Ambassador.

### **What is the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Ambassador Study Program?**

We plan to design the DRR Ambassador Curriculum so as to offer a *unique contribution*, not met by other curriculum and training programs.

The DRR Ambassador Curriculum will be the “flagship” initiative of NHMA. The unique focus of the DRR Ambassador Curriculum is to support community leaders from the private and public sector to engage and lead community-level DRR dialogue by providing educational resources, self-study curricula, and training workshops (to be pilot-tested in 2015).

### **The DRR Ambassador Curriculum will be CROSS-CUTTING**

- Multihazards are addressed. The curriculum addresses the broad set of DRR natural hazards and risks, and best mitigation practices to

- improve economic, social, and environmental quality of life, and to protect public health and safety.
- Multidisciplinary. The curriculum provides an overview of many expert disciplines, to show connections gained through collaborative teamwork.
  - Part of the larger national and international efforts to support Community Resilience. The curriculum recognizes the need to connect across the separate sectors of those engaged in the larger scope of climate science, emergency management, and comprehensive planning, to coordinate with others committed to build a more resilient future.

### **The DRR Ambassador Curriculum will FOCUS ON THE “WHOLE COMMUNITY”**

- Building local capacities and resources. The learning objectives of the Ambassador Curriculum is to build local community preparedness and DRR, utilizing voluntary and combined private-, business- and public-sector resources inherent in communities that work together.
- Guided by economic prosperity, social equity, and community safety and health, addressing needs and opportunities based on sound economics, non-partisan, and building a strong legal, moral and equitable basis of safe and proper development, redevelopment and governance.

### **The DRR Ambassador Curriculum Will FACILITATE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & LEARNING**

- With measurable outcomes. The focus of the DRR Ambassador Curriculum is to support local leaders (Ambassadors) to support effective grass-roots action in Disaster Risk and Reduction (DRR). This outcome can be measured by indices of community participation defined by the FEMA “Whole Community” approach.
- Adaptive to rapidly changing needs and opportunities. The curriculum modules and study plans can be custom-tailored and updated to local needs, to facilitate community progress over time.

- DRR Community Ambassador Curriculum. As the “flagship initiative” of NHMA, the DRR Community Ambassador Curriculum is focused on the measurable outcome *to provide resources and curriculum via webinars and instructional media, accessible documents, and PPT modules to build confidence and capacity of community leaders (DRR Ambassadors) to effectively engage their local communities in DRR.*

### **How Do We Define Disaster Risk and Reduction (DRR)?**

**A: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce vulnerabilities to disaster, utilizing knowledge and experience developed by the natural hazard community of professionals and practitioners. There are DRR initiatives in every sector of emergency management, planning and development and humanitarian work. A common definition of DRR is: The conceptual framework of elements considered with the possibilities to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of natural hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development. SOURCE: adapted from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster\\_risk\\_reduction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster_risk_reduction)