

From: [Natural Hazard Mitigation Association](#)
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August 2016

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Natural Hazard Mitigation Association



A Few Words From Our President

Welcome to the August edition of our member newsletter!

I. Current activity

NHMA is currently involved with many activities, including:

- a. **Developing comments in support of the groundbreaking FEMA rules implementing President Obama's Executive Order setting a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard;**
- b. **Developing a Draft Resolution & Report on Resilience, emphasizing Disaster Risk Reduction for the American Bar Association [copies of the draft are available on request] as well as presenting on Climate Adaptation/Hazard Mitigation at the ABA Homeland Security Institute this week;**
- c. **Selecting contractors for the further development of the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum;**
- d. **In some ways all our current work is a bit eclipsed by the recent spate of disasters: floods in West Virginia, Virginia, South Carolina, as well as the California and Pacific Northwest wildfires.**

Please Remember: We are fundamentally an all-volunteer group!

Please consider joining NHMA if you are not yet a member and donating some time to help us help build a safer, more just and resilient future.

- **Visit the [NHMA Membership Page](#).**
- **[Volunteer With NHMA](#)**

II. Louisiana Flooding

NHMA has deep roots in Louisiana. We are incorporated as Louisiana Educational Charity; our former long-time volunteer Executive Director, Dr. Alessandra Jerolleman is a Louisiana resident, many of our members come from Louisiana. A Louisiana Charity, the Lowland Center is an NHMA resilient Neighbors Network Community. Speaking of the Lowland Center, they are a 501 (c) (3) Charity helping with recovery from the current historic flooding in the beleaguered Pelican State. If you are wondering how to provide financial support to the Louisiana recovery, do consider the [Lowland Center for a donation](#):

Lowland Center: 106 Sandalwood Dr. ~ Gray, LA 70359

Of course NHMA is also a 501 (c) (3) charity and can use your support to help

UPCOMING EVENTS

NIST
Webinar
Sept. 28

[Register Now!](#)

About Section



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us promote climate adaptation and bouncing forward in building a better, safer and more just future!



A. Current NHMA Assistance to the Folks in Louisiana

NHMA is working with French Wetmore & Associates; the American Planning Association, Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Division; and the Louisiana Floodplain Managers to spread the word about the NHMA 9-Step Process for a safer, better recovery. That process is described at:

<http://recovery.stormsmart.org/>

We have also just met in DC with FEMA and HUD staff to promote the use of existing NHMA webinars and publications to promote the concept that using all available resources in a smart way can make for a smoother, better recovery. We also are working to use available NHMA resources to assist ongoing American Bar Association efforts.

B. Why Are the Floods so Devastating?

Craig E. Colten, the Carl O. Sauer Professor of Geography at Louisiana State University observed in the excellent online magazine, *The Conversation* that:

*"I see parallels between the damage of current flooding and the damage caused by Katrina. In both cases, **human decisions magnified the consequences of extreme natural events. Planning and permitting enabled development in areas that had experienced repeat floods, and agencies had failed to complete projects designed to mitigate flood damage before the storms hit.**"*

The article is titled, "Suburban sprawl and poor preparation worsened flood damage in Louisiana", and is well worth reading. It is available at:

<https://theconversation.com/suburban-sprawl-and-poor-preparation-worsened-flood-damage-in-louisiana-64087>

C. Next Steps: Lessons for the Nation

There is an exceptionally thoughtful and insightful Editorial by the New York Times Editorial Board which contains profound thoughts and questions that weave together the current situation in a manner to support the President's Executive Order on Flood Risk Management Standards [EO13690], the new FEMA proposed rules on implementing EO13690, as well as suggesting that even more needs to be done with respect to higher standards. This excellent Editorial, *After Louisiana, Preparing for the Next Storm*, is available at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opinion/after-louisiana-preparing-for-the-next-storm.html?ref=opinion&_r=0

The Editorial points out that:

"There is much for state and local governments to do, too. It is up to them to upgrade building codes and zoning laws to reflect the increased risk of storms and floods. In some cases they will need to require minimum elevations for construction that are even higher than what FEMA is proposing for federally backed projects. But in other areas, public

officials will have to take a tougher line and refuse to allow certain projects to be built or even encourage residents and businesses to relocate.

Another area of focus has to be restoring and enhancing natural defenses against flooding. Barrier islands can help protect coastal areas from storm surges. Wetlands and parks can soak up storm runoff and excessive rain.”

The bottom line of the Editorial, with respect to Louisiana, was expressed by the Times as “It will be up to public officials to make sure that the people who return and rebuild are not put in harm’s way again.”

Can We Please Give a Big Amen to the Times for Those Thoughts?

D. Lack of Flood Insurance in Louisiana (of all places!)

As Claire Rubin notes in her excellent blog, *Recovery Diva*:

“In Louisiana, an estimated 42 percent of homes in high-risk areas have flood insurance, according to FEMA. Only 12.5 percent of homeowners in low and moderate-risk zones do. Many of the areas hit hard by record rainfall last week were not considered at high risk for flooding.

Those residents without flood insurance are eligible for up to \$33,000 in FEMA individual disaster assistance funds, although most will likely receive less than that, based on payments following other major disasters.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, FEMA paid \$6.6 billion to approximately 1.07 million households and individuals in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, an average of just over \$6,000 per grant, according to agency figures. Superstorm Sandy in 2012 produced an average payout of under \$8,000 for about 180,000 residents of New York and New Jersey.”

As we consider the awful impact of suffering and uninsured loss, I think we need to keep a few thoughts in mind:

1. There is a vast, unwieldy but costly and well-intentioned system of disaster relief available to those who are afflicted by a Presidentially Declared Disaster. So far as I am aware, the best description of that system of relief is available in publications from the Natural Hazard Mitigation Association: *Disaster Risk Reduction Ambassador* and *A Living Mosaic Curriculum*

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A Living Mosaic updates the venerable but outdated *Patchwork Quilt* White Paper. Both publications were developed in part with FEMA funds, and a huge amount of volunteer time. They are available free of charge at: <http://nhma.info/publications/>

2. It appears that a huge number of folks, both inside the FEMA designated Special Flood Hazard Area, and outside that area in places shown on FEMA maps as flood prone but subject to a lower chance of flooding, do not have flood insurance. That is a true tragedy for them and for the Nation.

There are ways to deal with such situations:

a. A comprehensive set of suggestions for increasing market penetration for flood insurance is contained in: LITIGATION AND MITIGATION—A WAY FORWARD FOR THE FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY, in *Managing Risk to Humans and to Floodplain Resources, Background Reading for the 2010 Gilbert White Forum*, ASFPM, 2010. This publication is available at:

http://www.asfpmfoundation.org/pdf_ppt/2010_GFW_Forum_Background_Reading.pdf

b. More Specifically, at one time, FEMA prepared and forwarded to the appropriate federal instrumentalities which make, insure, regulate or supervise lenders or loans, Reports on apparent lender non-compliance with the Flood Disaster Protection Act. Such Reports produced a wave of lender compliance so great that the President did not feel it necessary to provide Individual Assistance for the Hurricane Bob disaster in 1990. Reviving this practice would be an excellent idea. The Hazards Center and the Association of State Floodplain Managers published an article in 1992 about this effort and the outcome in the early 1990s. The Article, Stone Soup II, appeared in *Multi-Objective Approaches to Floodplain Management*, ASFPM 1992. Copies can easily be made available to all those interested.

Suffering an uninsured loss is horrible. Another way to avoid this dreadful situation would be to follow the Resolution adopted by the American Bar Association in 2009 to develop a national program of catastrophe insurance made affordable by, among other things, stronger codes and ordinances. Yet another way to promote avoidance of uninsured losses would be the one advocated in an excellent article which appeared in the Tampa Bay Times a few days ago: The Article suggested making flood insurance part of a homeowner's policy. Such an approach both lowers premiums by spreading risk, and ensures that the many folks outside of the SFHA (Special Flood Hazard Area) who have a false sense of security based on common misunderstanding concerning FEMA maps, will have flood coverage.

The article is available at:

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/business/banking/romano-either-fix-flood-insurance-system-or-be-prepared-for-disaster/2290280>

One article which includes a discussion of the limitations and misunderstandings of what the Flood Insurance maps show is:

A THREE-LEGGED STOOL ON TWO LEGS: FEDERAL LAW RELATED TO LOCAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE PLANNING AND ZONING, by Sarah J. Adams-Schoen and Edward A. Thomas, peer reviewed article in American Bar association publication *The Urban Lawyer*, 47 URB. LAW. 3 (2015). Located at: http://nhma.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/UL-47-3_08Adams-Schoen-Thomas.pdf

The idea of better understanding the limitations of FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps is the theme of lectures developed for the Arkansas Bar Association and the Arkansas Floodplain Managers Association (AFMA). The PowerPoints for those lectures are available on request from NHMA.

Check out the pictures from our Symposium on [Slideshare!](#)

NHMA Blog

Be sure to check out our [new blog!](#)

NIST/NHMA Presentation Webinar- Septemeber 28th

Stephen Cauffman, is a Research Engineer with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), will present a webinar on the "NIST Community Resilience Guides and Activities." The webinar will provide background on the motivation for community resilience and the approach that NIST is taking in its community resilience program. The focus of the webinar will be to introduce the Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems, a six-step planning process for community

resilience. The webinar will also introduce the companion Economic Decision Guide, that allows for competing projects to be evaluated not only on their contribution to improved resilience, but also co-benefits that can be derived during normal conditions.

[Click here to register](#)

Flooding Prediction tool set to reduce the impact of major floods in the USA

A new tool has been developed by a University of Texas professor to help predict when and where major floods will occur in the country. The National Water Model tool uses weather, river and geological data to provide the predictions.

Prof. David Maidment, the originator of the development, came up with the idea for the tool as part of the National Flood Interoperability Experiment, a collaborative effort between the academic community, the US National Weather Service, the US government, and commercial partners.

The tool uses a powerful supercomputer at the Texas Advanced Computing Center at the University of Texas in Austin to collect the nationwide data and process it. The computer can calculate the flow in all of the rivers and streams in the USA in 10 minutes.

[Click here to read more](#)

NEW RESEARCH: US Military & Rising Seas

Recently, the Union of Concerned Scientists released its new research, *The US Military on the Front Lines of Rising Seas*. This analysis of 18 East and Gulf Coast military installations shows how they are at risk of losing land as sea level rise moves the high tide line inland in decades to come. UCS also finds that coastal bases will experience more extensive tidal flooding and when hurricanes strike, deeper and more extensive storm surge flooding.

[Click here to read more](#)

Continuing Education Opportunities from FEMA

There are still seats available for floodplain management courses at EMI that have been pre-approved for Continuing Education Credits (CECs) for CFMs. EMI courses are offered at the beautiful Emmitsburg, MD campus. If you are a state, local, or tribal government employee you may attend the training for FREE with all expenses covered except meals (meal tickets approx. \$110/week).

[Click here to learn more](#)

Register for the 9th Annual Hazus Conference in South Carolina

The South Carolina Emergency Management Division and the College of Charleston Lowcountry Hazards Center will host the 9th Annual Hazus User Conference in **Charleston, South Carolina** from **November 7 - 9, 2016** at the College of Charleston

Abstracts: Participants and attendees are encouraged to submit **presentation abstracts** that address the theme. Submissions can incorporate Hazus-related applications including but not limited to: the use of Hazus in flood, earthquake, or hurricane studies; international applications of Hazus; academic uses; or enhancements of

Hazus hazard and exposure inputs. Details for submitting are below:

- Submissions should include the presenter's complete contact information, a brief biography, and an abstract around 150 words in length
- All abstract submissions should be emailed to the Hazus Outreach Team at hazus-outreach@riskmapcds.com, and must be received **no later than August 15th, 2016**.

About Hazus: Hazus is a nationally applicable standardized methodology that contains models for estimating potential losses from earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes and was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS). Hazus uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to estimate physical, economic, and social impacts of disasters.

Hazus continues to grow both in terms of its capabilities as well as increasing national and international interest. The Conference will showcase the latest advances in research and practice, and provides an opportunity for users to meet, collaborate and share information regarding new and innovative applications of the Hazus technology and resources.

[Click here to register](#)




Engineering professor using NASA satellite data to forecast forest fires

Using historic data, his team found that their high, very high and extremely high classifications coincided with 77 per cent of the fires in Alberta from 2009 to 2011. His findings were promising enough that after five years of NSERC funding, his project has received money for another five years. As this project continues, his team will tackle more questions including how wildfire behaves, and smoke migration patterns.

Hassan's hope is to develop his research into an accurate system that can augment what is already in place to provide forecasting for areas that are less accessible while also bolstering the reporting from established weather stations.

"We're trying to better understand where fires happen so firefighters can be prepared and react more quickly and effectively," says Hassan.

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