



Spring Issue 2018 Newsletter

A Few Words From Our President

Greetings!

I would like to share a few thoughts on the many important events we have seen recently in the world of Hazard Mitigation/Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Adaptation/Floodplain Management.

A) Roy Wright Leaving FEMA to head the Institute for Business and Home Safety

First of all, on a deeply personal and professional level, I must note, with very mixed emotions, a major event in our world. Roy Wright, who manages both FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program and FEMA Hazard Mitigation efforts, is leaving FEMA to become the President and CEO of the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS). It has been my honor and pleasure to work to some degree of another with every single head of the Flood Insurance Program since the first Federal Insurance Administrator, George Bernstein. Like all of us, each of these folks had strengths and weaknesses. Roy Wright ranks as one of the best and most effective of this long line of dedicated civil servants. His departure will be a huge loss to FEMA. Roy has been a friend of and supporter to NHMA and locally based efforts to reduce the growing toll of generally avoidable misery and destruction which all-to-often follows foreseeable natural events. My personal sorrow at Roy's departure from FEMA is tempered by the facts that: a) Roy is now in a position to continue his extraordinary contributions to Disaster Risk Reduction through his role in IBHS; and b) because his replacement is the exceptionally talented and effective David Maurstad.

More info can be found at: FEMA: <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2018/04/05/fema-statement-departure-roy-wright>

IBHS: <https://disastersafety.org/ibhs-news-releases/ibhs-selects-incoming-ceo-and-president/>

B) Congratulations to Lori Peek and FEMA on A Splendid & Thoughtful Article on Better School Design

Congratulations to Dr. Lori Peek, Director of the Natural Hazards Center, for the publication of her thoughtful and excellent article on the need to better design new schools and retrofit old schools to protect our Nation's most important asset, our schoolchildren, from the effects of Natural Events like floods and tornadoes.

The article is well argued and based on the excellent FEMA funded publication: FEMA P-1000, Safer, Stronger, Smarter: A Guide to Improving School Natural Hazard Safety (2017) available online at: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/132592>

Lori's Op-Ed Article appears in the April 8, 2018 Sunday New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/opinion/sunday/americas-deathtrap-schools.html>

C) City of Houston Decides to Require New Construction to Be at the 500 year flood level plus 2 feet

The City of Houston has decided to require elevation of new construction to be two feet above the 500 year flood level. This is an extraordinary change in flood elevation. Had this requirement been in place 20 years ago, an incredible amount of flood damage and misery would have been prevented.

More information can be found at: https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/article/Houston-City-Council-adopts-strict-flood-plain-12805504.php?src=hp_totn

Edward Thomas, Esq.

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Introduction to NHMA Comments on Draft Natural Hazard Mitigation Investment Strategy

An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

In March, the NHMA submitted comments on FEMA's Draft Natural Hazard Mitigation Investment Strategy, and on April 7, Dr. Lori Peek, Director of the Natural Hazard Center of the University of Colorado published an Op-Ed article in the New York Times: America's Deathtrap Schools: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/opinion/sunday/americas-deathtrap-schools.html>.

We must not forget, despite the uproar of politics, that we owe our children and our parents and ourselves a debt of preparedness for the inevitable. The host of natural hazards is increasing, with an increasing cost as we increase the property and lives at stake. Dr. Peek's article is a sharp-edged reminder of our most precious assets at risk; the schools are not at risk only from insane over-armed people.

Much of what we value is at risk from obsolete design and under-invested facilities. The critical lesson from Dr. Arthur Chris Nelson, that half of the built environment that we will use in 2050 does not exist now – so we CAN get it right if we are willing, must not be forgotten.

But what of the other half that already exists now? We must take seriously the need to remedy our past failures. The National Institute of Building Sciences has released the Interim Report on Mitigation Saves – the overall finding is that \$6 would be saved for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation: <https://www.nibs.org/page/mitigationsaves>.

The Draft Natural Hazard Mitigation Investment Strategy is, essentially, a disappointment – the role of the federal government in leadership seems to be withering, while the role of the states is, one might say, waffling. The need for investment in mitigation has never been greater, as the horrible statistics from 2017's record-breaking losses show. But despite the losses, the trend is for withdrawal of investment and reduced concern for public well-being and public safety. We must not retreat from the need to be safer and smarter.

The NHMA was pleased to comment on the Draft strategy, urging that incentives be provided for mitigation (following the wisdom of the National Institute of Building Sciences) and that new efforts should be mounted to increase understanding of what works best. NHMA offered some suggestions which we hope will bring help.

What we can all do, at all levels of government and organization, is to push for the "whole plan" approach – no more silos! Every revision of an old plan or building, and every plan for the future must include full attention to the physical and social environment – the hazards we face and will face, and the human uses and preferences for the things and places we build.

Please donate to
NHMA today!

Donate



Natural Hazard Mitigation Association continuously works to promote risk reduction and reduce the consequences of natural events, especially among the most vulnerable populations in our communities. Your continued support makes our work possible.

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Working Together to Reduce Disaster Losses

By Edward A. Thomas Esq., LLC & NHMA President

I believe that the biggest challenge we face as a society in dealing with Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation is figuring out how to work with both the development community and environmentalists on the enormous changes in our National approach to community development required so that we achieve Disaster Risk Reduction, rather than continuing to develop and redevelop in a manner guaranteeing worse future disasters.

Nicholas Kristof wrote a lovely article published in the New York Times February 17, 2018 conveying an important concept much needed in our National discussions about Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction. The Article, "You're Wrong; I'm Right", nicely captures the idea that we must speak to others, outside our echo chamber. It is available at:

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/17/opinion/sunday/liberal-conservative-divide.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fnicholas-kristof&action=click&contentCollection=opinion@ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgttype=collection

There is also really splendid op-ed piece by Thomas Edsall in the March 1, 2018 NY Times, "What Motivates Voters More Than Loyalty? Loathing."

The article is located at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/01/opinion/negative-partisanship-democrats-republicans.html>

The Kristoff and Edsall's pieces are both conceptually incredibly important to those of us who are trying to deal with the battles swirling around "Climate Change," in such a manner as to achieve reduction in our growing National and World-Wide toll of disasters, caused by foreseeable natural processes of the Earth.

Using the insights from both pieces point can show us the direction we need to go: finding common ground, across a growing gulf of politically charged fear and consequent hatred, to find a path forward. That common ground can and should be Disaster Risk Reduction, based on a philosophy of law, equity and fairness.

That idea of finding a common ground is fundamental to all we are trying to do in developing the NHMA Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum.

More information on the NHMA DRR curriculum can be found at: <http://nhma.info/drr/>

For successful Climate Adaptation, including Disaster Risk Reduction, all of us who care about reducing the awful and largely unnecessary toll of misery which follows foreseeable natural events must engage the powerful groups of decision makers, who call the shots on where and how we build and develop. This requires crafting and selling a significantly different approach to community development planning and decision-making than the ones generally in use right now in the United States. There is a very nice common ground, based on Disaster Risk Reduction, Stewardship of the Earth, preservation of the community for future generations, economics, threat of liability and other ideas which will resonate with what these decision makers really care about.

An example of the results of approaching a solution, which essentially does what is needed for adaptation, without using the highly politically charged term "Climate Change" was reported by Bloomberg News about two weeks ago:

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-07/trump-applies-obama-era-flood-aid-rules-it-axed-six-months-ago?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=180208&utm_campaign=climatechanged

The Bloomberg News Article, "Trump Applies Obama-Era Flood Aid Rules He Axed Six Months Ago", produced bafflement to many of my friends in the Disaster Risk Reduction Community. I am not a bit surprised. Disasters are simply getting larger and larger, and economics and also a HUD focus on caring for the housing needs of the Whole Community, especially low income and other underrepresented groups really forces the sort of move taken by HUD. This very large break with the long-standing tradition of HUD giving making very few requirements on how local and state governments use CDBG funding is really big news. HUD was barely persuaded to make a few rules requiring some slight degree of state and local regard for Disaster Risk Reduction following Sandy in NY, NJ and CT. HUD had absolutely disregarded calls for such measures following the Midwest Floods of 1993 and Hurricane Katrina, leaving decisions to state and local government.

We need to reach out to those who simply will not accept Climate Change and/or anthropogenic Climate Change and get them to change behavior and do adaptation based on what they care about; not based on what we believe or care about. I think changing behavior is critical, and even more important than changing beliefs."

Therefore, I propose that there be a National effort built around the theme of "How to Craft and Sell a Disaster Risk Reduction Message." This message should reach across the "Loathing" divide described in the Edsall op-ed, so as to achieve important changes in risk perception and risk reduction action. This proposal, like the NHMA DRR Curriculum, should be fundamentally

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By Edward A. Thomas Esq., LLC & NHMA President

Continued

based on the Dr. Dennis Mileti approach to changing risk perception and risk reduction actions. The Mileti approach is briefly summarized in the preface to the FEMA funded NHMA publication: Hide from the Wind. That publication is found at: <http://nhma.info/publications/nhma-safe-room-report/>

More about the path to fair and equitable Disaster Risk Reduction can be found in the publications recommended on the NHMA website, especially:

NAACP's Equity in Resilience Building Climate Adaptation Indicators by Jacqui Patterson; [funded by the Kresge Foundation Resilience Project]

Bounce Forward by Laurie Mazur; [funded by the Kresge Foundation Resilience Project]

Cassandra's Curse: The Law and Foreseeable Future Disasters by Lisa Sun et al.;

Resilience: The Ultimate Sustainability, by Aris Papadopoulos; and

Design for Flooding: Architecture, Landscape, and Urban Design for Resilience to Climate Change by Don Watson and Michele Adams.

These publications are described, and in some cases available for free download at:

<http://nhma.info/resources/recommended-reading/>

[Resilience Matters: Transformative Thinking in a Year of Crisis](#), Edited by Laurie Mazur; [funded by the Kresge Foundation Resilience Project]

There was an excellent article on a similar concept in Governing Magazine: The City Preparing for Climate Change Without Ever Saying the Words Tulsa, Okla., a conservative oil town, serves as an example of how places can overcome politics to prevent damage and save lives. by Alan Greenblatt | November 2017. This article also appeared in the Nov-Dec edition of the NHMA Newsletter available at: <http://www.nhma.info>

We also need to get good hazards information to public. My fundamental thought with respect to flood risk information is that while we sure need to try to inform folks of foreseeable natural risks, especially flooding, FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps have not proven to be well suited to such a purpose. They dreadfully underrepresented true and foreseeable flood risk for many reasons. This is particularly the case w/r/t levees.

We really need to change the design concept of FIRMs from insurance risk rating to Flood Awareness.

Even in the bluest of blue states, like Massachusetts and NY many of the folks who drive decisions about what, when, where and how to build are very conservative, at least about maximizing personal profits.

While NHMA recommends building 4 feet above FEMA calculated base flood levels (BFE), NYC has strongly resisted. Prior to Sandy NYC had its own version of the NY State Building Code that required 0 ft of freeboard above BFE; while the rest of NY required 2 feet of freeboard above BFE. Now, NYC is strongly resisting changes in BFE to reflect Sandy and also climate change. See, e.g.:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/07/nyregion/new-york-city-flood-maps-fema.html>

The last time I checked, Massachusetts law still prevents local governments from requiring freeboard above FEMA BFE; despite the reality that those BFEs do not reflect climate change

The very real and pressing conflict between economics & short-term profits and also real concern about affordability of insurance vs. long term stewardship, future quality of life, Resilience and Climate Adaptation is a problem for the Whole Nation. I believe that the solution to that problem involves seriously and systematically rethinking our National approach to supporting all development including the most poorly designed and dangerously sited development through the federal tax code; and totally and systematically redesigning our system of disaster relief so that it both provides the smoothest, most efficient path to recovery and also does so in a manner designed to reduce future disaster risk & consequence, as well as reduce greenhouse gases and otherwise provide the best stewardship of our resources.

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By Edward A. Thomas Esq., LLC & NHMA President

Continued

Such a solution would be legally, morally and ethically correct, be in accord with fundamental principles of equity, fairness and stewardship of the Earth and all her creatures.

In 2009 and 2017 the American Bar Association formally adopted Resolutions and Reports which I believe helps us map out an approach towards this Road to Resilience.

The ABA Board of Governors is on record as strongly supporting the goals and concept of reducing the toll of disasters through Hazard Mitigation: land use building codes and insurance.

In February, 2017 the American Bar Association House of Delegates, the governing body of ABA unanimously adopted a resolution sponsored by the ABA Committee on disaster Response and Preparedness and the ABA Section of State and local Government Law. This Resolution states:

“RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal governments to adopt standards, guidance, best practices, programs, and regulatory systems that make communities more resilient to loss and damage from foreseeable hazards and also recognize property rights, affordable risk mitigation, the interests of taxpayers, and protection of the environment.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges lawyers and law firms, federal, state, local, territorial, tribal and specialty bar associations, businesses, and other professional and nonprofit organizations to advocate for and actively participate in community resilience initiatives.”

In addition, in 2009, the ABA Board of governors adopted a multi part Resolution concerning disasters. Particularly on point to this discussion are Resolutions 107E and 107F. We can send copies of these resolutions if you so desire.

Resolution 107 E was summarized as indicating: “This recommendation recognizes that an important step toward motivating insurance companies to return to higher risk coastal areas is to reduce the amount of exposure by lowering the potential for severe damage to homes and business properties.

The following recommendations of the Financial Services Round Table Blue Ribbon Commission on Megacatastrophes are highly desirable loss mitigation suggestions:

- State of the art building codes
- Cost-effective retrofitting
- Land use policies that discourage construction posing high risk to personal safety or property loss.
- Property tax credits to encourage retrofitting

These and related elements of loss mitigation are designed to ultimately bring to market **affordable** insurance policies with broadened coverage’s.”

Resolution 107F is summarized as indicating:

“This recommendation focuses on federal activity to mitigate losses from megacatastrophes.

The federal government is asked to accomplish the following:

- Promulgate federal standards requiring damage-resistant building codes for new construction to reduce catastrophic loss exposure, and vigorously enforce those codes. The codes would be tailored to match the risks of a region. For example, a home in Minnesota would not have to withstand hurricane-force winds (although it might have to withstand tornado-force winds).
- Develop land use policies that discourage construction in areas difficult to evacuate or that pose unusually high risk to personal safety or property loss.”

Working Together to Reduce Disaster Losses

By Edward A. Thomas Esq., LLC & NHMA President

Continued

I think that the ABA is on the right track with these recommendations. Right now, several folks within the American Bar Association, State and Local Government Section are working on a Resilience Task Force which includes an outreach effort to promote Resilience through better local and state standards of zoning and construction.

Other observations:

We need much higher standards of community development and planning so that we avoid disasters in the first place.

The need to reduce disaster losses is even more of a concern in light of changes in the Tax Code. See, e.g., Governing, "How the New Tax Law Could Slow Disaster Recovery in Small Towns," February 16, 2018 available at:

<http://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/gov-tax-overhaul-gop-casualty-loss-deductions-natural-disasters.html>

Our approach must also address question: "Since most natural events are foreseeable and damages from these events is usually preventable, how can we reduce such losses and avoid litigation?"

This question has been extensively researched by Dr. Jon Kusler, Samantha Medlock and ET among others. Related research by Professors Lisa Sun and John Marshall is also very much on point.

The Kresge Foundation work in Detroit and other areas is making enormous strides in building Resilience through development of Social Capital. We need to look to such examples as we move forward.

We have a significant barrier in that there is a fundamental lack of understanding on the part of hazard mitigators, emergency managers, researchers and many folks involved in Disaster Risk Reduction of community development principles; economics, especially externality; the law; Engineering and Architectural Standards of Care; and negotiations and communication with those who do not agree with our beliefs.

We must put into practice the wise observation of the United States Supreme Court:

"Insisting that landowners internalize the negative externalities of their conduct is a hallmark of responsible land-use policy, and we have long sustained such regulations against constitutional attack. *Koontz v. St Johns River Water Management District*, 133 S. Ct. 2586 (2013)

Confucius is reported to have indicated that:

"By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the most bitter."

We in the United States seem to have added a fourth method, far more bitter than Confucius's third method of experience: we experience but do not learn.

Am not sure we have learned much from the 2017 disaster season; although the many recent innovations by FEMA and the HUD action noted above, coupled with the truly heroic measures being taken by so many state and local governments, private foundations, NGOs and businesses do give a glimmer of hope.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

[NACo Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Social Media Day](#)

Join the National Association of Counties on April 11 for a Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Social Media Day

When: April 11, 2018 at 2:00 P.M.

Shine a spotlight on the work your county is doing to build a culture of preparedness as part of NACo's Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Social Media Day! @NACoTweets will host a Twitter chat on Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness **at 2 p.m. Eastern on April 11** using #ResilientCounties. Start collecting your top examples, and learn how to participate here: <http://www.naco.org/blog/naco-disaster-mitigation-and-preparedness-social-media-day-april-11>

FEMA's 2nd Lunch & Learn of 2018:

When: Tuesday, April 10 from 12:30 – 1:30 PM

Where: Ogilvy Washington

Host: The Union of Concerned Scientists

Topic: "When Rising Seas Hit Home: Hard Choices Ahead for Hundreds of U.S. Coastal Communities?"

Communities and nations of the 21st century face a great challenge: to protect people from the harm caused by an increasingly volatile climate. The damaging impacts of climate change will grow as the climate changes and adaptation fails to keep pace, unless societies take steps to increase their resilience through aggressive action on both climate mitigation and adaptation. [This report](#) from the Union of Concerned Scientists highlights 15 principles for decision makers to use to prioritize investments in climate change adaptation.

Bring your lunch, mingle with partners and representatives from FEMA, and join us for an hour of learning. Refreshments will be provided.

Location: Ogilvy Washington, 1111 19th Street NW | Floor 3, Washington, DC 20036

Seats are limited, so please remember to reserve your spot ASAP by emailing Alise Murawski at alise.murawski@ogilvy.com. Walk-ins may or may not be accommodated due to space limitations. Refreshments will be provided.

Please reach out to Peter Herrick, Jr. (peter.herrickjr@fema.dhs.gov) with questions.

For virtual participation:

Join the meeting here: <https://fema.connectsolutions.com/rnpn-II/>

Audio Connection: [1-800-320-4330](tel:1-800-320-4330)



SECURITY & SUSTAINABILITY FORUM

Convening Global Experts to Guide Decision Making

New Urban Resilience Leadership Webinar Series

Learn about effective, innovative, ethical, equitable climate adaptation actions

Please forward this invitation to colleagues.

Register for the First Webinar



[Arizona State University's School of Sustainability](#) is hosting a new **five-webinar series** -- "Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience Leadership Series". The series is co-hosted by the [American Society of Adaptation Professionals](#) and the [University of the District of Columbia's College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences](#).

The free series will introduce participants to climate change adaptation and resilience leaders working in policy, innovation and technology, and climate justice and social equity from across various scales of government and other sectors. These experts will share cutting-edge examples of how they are putting effective, innovative and equitable climate adaptation into practice.

The first webinar in the new series focuses on Climate Policy.

[Webinar 1: Climate Adaptation Policy at the State and Local Level](#)

April 16, 2018
1:15 PM to 2:45 PM EDT

Register for the Webinar

Deliberate, proactive climate action is a deviation from business-as-usual, and requires boldly challenging the status quo. At the heart of climate action are individuals: courageous leaders who may come from any part of society. Climate action requires revising, or creating new, law, policy, or regulation to incentivize adaptation action and penalize maladaptation. In this webinar, hear from individuals who exemplify visionary leadership and are moving their jurisdictions forward through groundbreaking climate policy.

For description of panelists and speakers, see copy of announcement [here](#).

SPECIAL FEATURE:

Read the new issue of NFPA's Fire Break newsletter.

[Share this newsletter](#) | [View as webpage](#)



FIRE BREAK
Saving lives and property from wildfire



Announcing the first-ever Wildfire Mitigation Specialist certification

Although there are many practitioners working in the wildfire outreach field, there is no certification that standardizes some body of knowledge, gives professional credibility, and validates the specialized talent in this area...until now. Learn more about the certification's background and how you can become a Certified Wildfire Mitigation Specialist.

[Read More](#)



CONFERENCE & EXPO | **JUNE 11-14 2018** | **LAS VEGAS**
Mandalay Bay Convention Center

Joining Ranks: City Networks on the Rise

April 23, 2018 - 1:00pm - 2:30pm
The Rockefeller Foundation
420 Fifth Avenue
Trustees Dining Room, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10018

Cities in the United States and around the world are ever more linked in networks that they join, but so little is known about which cities join and why.

Attend an exclusive briefing and Q&A with the authors of *Joining Ranks: City Networks on the Rise*, a research project led by the [Boston University Initiative on Cities](#), supported by Citi Community Development and The Rockefeller Foundation.

[REGISTER NOW](#)



[The New York Times, Sunday Review](#)

You're Wrong! I'm Right!

Nicholas Kristoff February 17, 2018

We live in two Americas.

In one America, a mentally unstable president selected partly by Russia lies daily and stirs up bigotry that tears our social fabric.

In another America, a can-do president tries to make America great again as lying journalists stir up hatred that tears our social fabric.

The one thing we all agree on: Our social fabric is torn. In each America, people who inhabit the other are often perceived as not just obtuse but also dangerous. Half of Democrats and Republicans alike say [in polls](#) that they are literally afraid of the other political party.

This is not to equate the two worldviews. I largely subscribe to the first, and I'm a villain in the second. But I do believe that all of us, on both sides, frequently spend more time

demonizing the other side than trying to understand it, and we all suffer a cognitive bias that makes us inclined to seek out news sources that confirm our worldview.

A classic study offered free research to ordinary Democrats and Republicans. People on both sides were eager to get intelligent arguments reinforcing their views, and somewhat interested in arguments for the other side that were so silly they could be mocked and caricatured (it's very satisfying to dismiss rivals as libtards or bigots). Neither Democrats nor Republicans were interested in intelligent arguments challenging their own views.

Decades ago, a media expert at M.I.T. named Nicholas Negroponte foresaw the emergence of a news product that he called "The Daily Me," with information tailored to a user's needs. Negroponte was thinking of local

weather, sports, particular interests and so on, but what actually arrived with the internet was a highly political version of "The Daily Me."

There's not an exact parallel in the way the right and the left seek out like-minded news sources. The right has spawned conspiracy nuts like Alex Jones who believe that the Sandy Hook school shooting was faked, and [one study](#) found that the more people watched Fox News, the worse they did on a current events test.

So I'm not advocating that you waste time on Breitbart propaganda any more than I'm saying that it was worth listening to leftists in the 1970s who praised Chairman Mao. But wherever we stand on the spectrum, there are sane, intelligent voices who disagree with us — and too often we plug our ears to them.

[See full article here.](#)

When we stay within our own tribe, talking mostly to each other, it's difficult to woo other tribes to achieve our aims.

Crafting our Message

By [Ed Thomas, Esq.](#), NHMA President

For successful Climate Adaptation, including Disaster Risk Reduction, all of us who care about reducing the awful and largely unnecessary toll of misery which follows foreseeable natural events must engage the powerful groups of decision makers, who call the shots on where and how we build and develop. This requires crafting and selling a significantly different approach to community development planning and decision-making than the ones generally in use right now in the United States. There is a very nice common ground, based on Disaster Risk Reduction, Stewardship of the Earth, preservation of the community for future generations, economics, threat of liability and other ideas which will resonate with what these decision makers really care about.

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adaptation, without using the highly politically charged term "Climate Change" was reported by Bloomberg News about two weeks ago: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-07/trump-applies-obama-era-flood-aid-rules-it-axed-six-months-ago?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=180208&utm_campaign=climatechanged

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This very large break with the long-standing tradition of HUD giving making very few requirements on how local and state governments use CDBG funding is really big news. HUD was barely persuaded to make a few rules requiring some slight degree of state and local regard for Disaster Risk Reduction following Sandy in NY, NJ and CT. HUD had absolutely disregarded calls for such measures following the Midwest Floods of 1993 and Hurricane Katrina, leaving decisions to state and local government.

We need to reach out to those who simply will not accept Climate Change and/or anthropogenic Climate Change and get them to change behavior and do adaptation based on what they care about; not based on what we believe or care about. I think changing behavior is critical, and even more important than changing beliefs.

The Nature Conservancy

[New Study Finds Flood Risk for Americans is Greatly Underestimated](#)

Arlington, VA | February 28, 2018

A groundbreaking [new study](#) published today in Environmental Research Letters finds that 41 million Americans—some 13 percent of the population—are at risk from flooding rivers, which is more than three times the current estimate that is based on regulatory flood maps. The study used a new high-resolution model that maps flood risk from rivers across the entire continental United States, whereas the existing regulatory flood maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) cover about 60 percent of the land in the continental U.S.

“We were all surprised by how many Americans we found are exposed to flooding from rivers,” said Oliver Wing, the lead researcher behind the study and a PhD student at the University of Bristol, United Kingdom. “It’s particularly worrisome considering that most of these people aren’t even aware of the risk they face. This research will help fill this critical information gap.”

The increase in numbers of those at risk is a result of the expanded coverage of the map combined with its ability to estimate flooding on small streams—something that wasn’t adequately captured in previous flood-risk models, according to the study’s researchers.

Wing said that not only is the model able to produce flood risk maps across the country, its level of accuracy on smaller scales—that is, along specific rivers—compares well with FEMA flood maps that presently serve as the primary source of flood hazard data in the U.S.

Another key concern, Wing added, is that people continue to build in harm’s way, often without realizing they are doing so. The study—which integrates new maps from the Environmental Protection Agency that more precisely estimate where people live now and where future population growth is expected—predicts that under potential population growth and development projections, more than 60 million Americans may be by 2050 vulnerable to “100-year,” or “one-percent,” floods, which are those mapped by FEMA.

“Because climate change may cause so-called 100-year floods to occur more frequently, even more people may be exposed to flooding in the future. All of this highlights the critical need for comprehensive floodplain and flood risk management planning,”

“Because climate change may cause so-called 100-year floods to occur more frequently, even more people may be exposed to flooding in the future. All of this highlights the critical need for comprehensive floodplain and flood risk management planning,” Wing said.

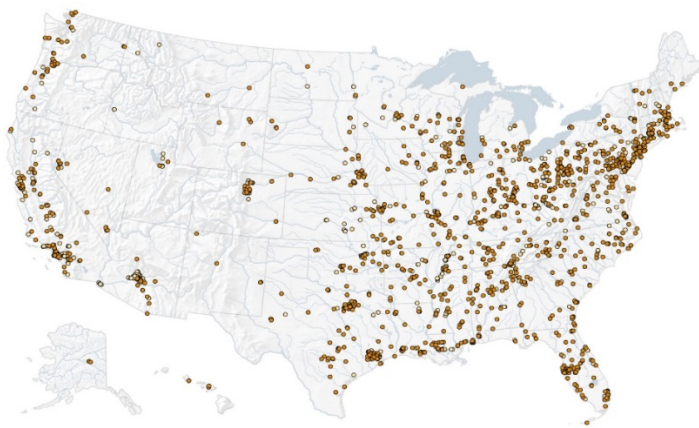
Kris Johnson, a scientist with The Nature Conservancy and co-author of the study, said, “By knowing those places most at risk from floods, we could avoid development in these areas. Protecting floodplains or developing them in ways that can withstand flooding—such as flood-tolerant parks—can prevent unnecessary risk to people and help avoid expensive damage to property and infrastructure. Floodplains also store and convey floodwaters, which can help prevent flooding in nearby communities.”

The study calculated that in the continental U.S. there already exists \$5.5 trillion worth of assets in areas subject to 100-year floods. Better planning and the protection of floodplains, Johnson said, is particularly important as average flood losses in the U.S. have steadily increased to at least \$10 billion annually. One measure of this is the current debt of the National Flood Insurance Program, which now stands at some \$24.6 billion. Congress also appropriated over \$100 billion in response to hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, much of which will aid areas impacted by flood damages.

“Floodplains provide high quality habitats for wildlife, they can offer outstanding recreational opportunities for people, and they help improve water quality,” Johnson said. “Protecting and restoring the natural infrastructure of floodplains provides an important complement to built infrastructure like dams and levees. We need comprehensive approaches to reduce the devastating effects that flooding has on so many communities.”

The new study analyzes and identifies only those at risk from flooding from rivers. The estimate of 41 million people does not include the millions of additional Americans that are at risk of coastal flooding.

[Note: The article is: Wing, Oliver E.J., Paul D. Bates, Andrew M. Smith, Christopher C. Sampson, Kris A. Johnson, Joseph Fargione, and Philip Morefield, 2018, Estimates of Present and Future Flood Risk in the Conterminous United States. Environmental Research Letters 13 (2018): 034023. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aaac65> [open access]]



[More Than 2,500 Sites That Handle Toxic Chemicals Are Located in Flood-Prone Areas Across the Country.](#)

[The New York Times](#)

[Floods Are Getting Worse, and 2,500 Chemical Sites Lie in the Water's Path](#)

By HIROKO TABUCHI, NADJA POPOVICH, BLACKI MIGLIOZZI and ANDREW W. LEHREN FEB. 6, 2018

Anchored in flood-prone areas in every American state are more than 2,500 sites that handle toxic chemicals, a New York Times analysis of federal floodplain and industrial data shows. About 1,400 are located in areas at highest risk of flooding.

As flood danger grows — the consequence of a warming climate — the risk is that there will be more toxic spills like the one that struck Baytown, Tex., where Hurricane Harvey swamped a chemicals plant, releasing lye. Or like the ones at a Florida fertilizer plant that leaked phosphoric acid and an Ohio refinery that released benzene.

Flooding nationwide is likely to worsen because of climate change, an [exhaustive scientific report](#) by the federal government warned last year. Heavy rainfall is increasing in intensity and frequency.

At the same time, rising sea levels combined with more frequent and extensive flooding from coastal storms like hurricanes may increase the risk to chemical facilities near waterways.

The Times analysis looked at sites listed in the federal [Toxic Release Inventory](#), which covers more than 21,600 facilities across the country that handle [large amounts of toxic chemicals harmful to health or the environment](#).

Of those sites, more than 1,400 were in locations the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) considers to have a high risk of flooding. An additional 1,100 sites were in areas of moderate risk. Other industrial complexes lie just outside these defined flood-risk zones, obscuring their vulnerability as flood patterns shift and expand.

The presence of chemical sites in areas vulnerable to flooding is a holdover from an age where the advantages to industry of proximity to rivers and oceans — for transportation and trade, or for a ready supply of cooling water — seemingly outweighed the risks.

For full article, go [here](#).



SHOUT OUT!

This month we feature one of our RNN Charter Communities, Hillsborough County, FL

Hillsborough County, FL is located on the Gulf of Mexico and includes the City of Tampa, FL. Gene Henry, Hazard Mitigation Officer for Hillsborough County and Community Representative to the RNN, has worked for years to develop effective strategies to protect his community from the ravages of tropical storms and the deadly flooding that comes with them.

Being on the coast, storm surge can extend up to three miles inland and reach heights of 13 to 17 feet above ground level. Hillsborough County has implemented some strong building codes and safer buildings, with priorities in its disaster recovery areas to protect large areas of coastal property and the people living there.

"We encourage people to install hurricane straps to secure their roofs and walls," Henry said. "Storm shutters can prevent damage from flying debris. We also recommend elevating the main breaker or fuse box above flood levels, keeping drains clear, maintaining flood insurance in flood prone areas, and developing personal preparedness plans including business continuity plans."

Other vulnerable coastal areas can learn a lot from the forward-thinking strategies of Hillsborough County, which is making great strides in becoming a disaster-resilient community.

[The Climate Is Changing For Climate Skeptics](#)

As climate litigation heats up, a judge's climate science tutorial puts the fossil fuel industry in an awkward position with the science deniers it once funded.

By [Amy Westervelt](#)

SAN FRANCISCO — Climate change skeptics may have outlived their usefulness to the fossil fuel industry.

That was one of the key takeaways from a [five-hour climate tutorial](#) held Wednesday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco. Judge William Alsup, who has a history of digging into the scientific and technical details of the cases before him, ordered the tutorial to better understand climate science before presiding over [a case](#) in which the cities of San Francisco and Oakland are suing the five largest fossil fuel companies — ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, ConocoPhillips and Shell — over the damages of climate change.

Although both sides presented the science that would seem to most help their cases, it was clear that the age of discrediting climate science in general is over. Faced with [media investigations](#), [fraud probes](#) and at least a dozen [climate liability suits](#) from coastal cities facing large bills as they attempt to adapt to climate change-induced sea level rise, fossil fuel companies have been forced to move away from the position that climate science is invalid or that human-caused emissions don't contribute to climate change. Instead, they're focused on emphasizing a history of uncertainty in climate science, downplaying the severity of climate change and minimizing their role in it.

In this California case, the oil companies are being accused of promoting doubt about climate science, which has delayed regulatory action and left coastal cities to deal with eroding coastlines, property loss and infrastructure damage. The state sees a precedent in its lead paint cases, "where we had to pay out a lot of money to address a damage created by a company, and so to hold those companies responsible we set up an account that they all paid into to cover those costs," explained San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera.

The writing has been on the wall for outright climate denial ever since documents unearthed by the attorneys general of Massachusetts and New York in an ExxonMobile fraud probe revealed it [publicly promoted doubt](#) about climate science even as its own scientists' research showed otherwise.

Fossil fuel companies are in a tight spot. No company wants to be subjected to the multiple investigations Exxon is facing, so it's no longer safe to push the narrative — or pay others to — that man-made climate change doesn't exist. (Although the persistence of those narratives does make the industry's recent embrace of climate science seem more reasonable and forward-thinking than it actually is.) At the same time, they don't want new emission-constraining regulations that will leave their assets stranded or margins reduced.

Now the industry largely accepts the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's [summary reports](#) on climate science, which pull together thousands of experts from around the world to synthesize the science every five to seven years. Each of the defendants named in the California case has made public statements accepting that human emissions contribute to climate change, and that climate change poses various risks, including to their businesses — [most recently Exxon](#).

To read the full article, go [here](#).



Taran Roddy Represents NHMA at the National Hurricane Conference

Report by **Gina Wightman, Wightman & Associates, LLC**

I attended Taran Roddy's session, "[The Disaster Roadmap: Leveraging Funding and Best Practices](#)" at the NHC in Orlando, FL last week. I thought you might all want to know that, not surprisingly, she conducted an engaging session that was very well received by the participants. The room was full, and many members of the audience represented jurisdictions affected by the 2017 hurricanes. Their questions and concerns were focused on post-disaster funding requirements, reimbursements, deadlines, timing and opportunities. Taran, who is a senior manager with CohnReznick's Disaster Recovery and Response Group, emphasized the importance of knowing the grant program rules to maximize mitigation opportunities in the community. She cited the example of New York's use of Hurricane Sandy Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds for the 25% match required by the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. She also recommended seeking technologies to more accurately predict future flood risk such as that used by North Carolina's Floodplain Mapping Program.

The session reinforced NHMA's efforts through the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum to provide training for local government officials and other stakeholders on navigating the maze of federal and other mitigation programs after a disaster. Taran's slide deck will be used to enhance Module 8 of our current DRR Curriculum and reflects NHMA's intent to keep the modules fresh and relevant. We hope for many more successful presentations of the DRR Curriculum to national, state and local communities!

[Houston Speculators Make a Fast Buck From Storm's Misery](#)

A new economy has arisen in the suburbs of Houston battered by storms: the buying and selling of flooded homes.

By SIMON ROMERO, MARCH 23, 2018

HOUSTON — The yard signs appeared almost immediately. Canyon Gate was still in ruins, its streets strewn with moldy furniture, the stench of rot everywhere. But somehow, someone had managed to plant dozens, maybe hundreds of them across the tiny Houston suburb. One proclaimed “Dump Your Home!” Another, stuck into the dirt, read “Flood Damage? We Can Help.”

Bernadette Leaney, 67, one of the thousands of Houston residents whose homes were swamped in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, hated them. She and her neighbors were just beginning their grim reckoning with the damage. Who could be looking to make a buck this soon? She tried to ignore the come-ons. “But then I realized I just couldn’t stand looking at them anymore,” she said. “They were adding to our despondency.”

She tore down every sign she came across — 114 by her count — until another resident told her it was one of their own neighbors who had posted many of them. His name was Nick Pelletiere, she learned. He ran a company that transported cadavers for funeral homes, but recently he had expanded into another lightly regulated trade: buying and selling flooded homes. People in Canyon Gate called him Shady Nick.

Canyon Gate’s dilemma lays bare a defining feature of coastal life in a time of climate change: Many of the neighborhoods where we already live should never have been built in the first place,

... doubling down on reconstruction could make the consequences of the next disaster much more severe. But doubling down is what speculators do, and — at least in the short term — they are profiting from their efforts.

“I’m the guy who put up the bandit signs around town,” Mr. Pelletiere said one morning in February in his own flooded home, where he and his family were living on the second floor as contractors slowly repaired the first. He said that, like most of his neighbors, he had no idea that he was living inside a reservoir until the hurricane unleashed nearly 50 inches of rain and the reservoir — just as its designers intended — flooded the land all around him.

But where some saw calamity, Mr. Pelletiere, a 47-year-old Chicagoan who followed his star to Houston two years ago, saw opportunity. Even as a volunteer boat team was evacuating him, his wife, their two children and the family dog, he was growing obsessed with a single thought: It’s time to buy.

[For full article, go here.](#)



About the [RNN](#)

Resilient Neighbors Network

NHMA is working with communities around the USA to create a peer-to-peer sharing network, so grassroots communities can work together directly to strengthen and expand local hazard-mitigation programs.

If you, or someone you know, would like to participate in the RNN, please visit: <http://resilientneighbors.com/about/membership/> or contact us at: nathazma@gmail.com

[RNN Mission:](#)

To increase resilience in existing and developing communities at the grass roots level by documenting and actively sharing best practices, through education, peer to peer collaboration and mentoring.

[RNN Vision:](#)

RNN will be a source for a compilation of community-driven hazard resilience best practices that can serve as a resource to people and communities before, during and after a disaster. RNN will also actively bring ground-truth and grassroots enlightenment to policy makers, researchers, regulators, and journalists.

A Message from Angela Gladwell, Risk Management Directorate Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration: Risk Management Weekly 3/26/18 -- Future Conditions

Team,

We would like to talk a bit about RiskMAP and RiskMAP Recalibration, one of our 3 FY18 RMD FINISH priorities, especially in light of recent budget events.

We move into the rest of the fiscal year with the passage of the FY18 budget, and a clear message on the value of investing in mitigation. With specific reference to the newly updated “for every dollar invested in mitigation, \$6 dollars can be saved in disaster recovery,” the bill provides:

- \$263 million appropriated for RiskMAP (\$85 million over FY17, and \$263 million over the President’s budget) -- Together with carryover, we will have a RiskMAP budget of over \$470 million this fiscal year!
- \$249 million for the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (\$149 million over FY17)
- \$9 million for the National Dam Safety Program The bill also reauthorizes the NFIP until July 31st of this year. See attached for the budget summary.

Now that we have a final budget, we can move forward with execution and finalize performance targets; we will get those to the regions in the coming weeks, so that you can continue on your path to award the majority of your funds by June 30th. We plan to use much of this additional funding to make significant investments in Lidar, as we continue to emphasize the criticality of having national Lidar to producing quality flood risk data, and we are finalizing a strategy for implementation. With the increased funding comes an increased need to demonstrate program outcomes, ensure effective program oversight and OPERATIONAL DISCIPLINE, and MANAGE OUR RISKS across our vast and expansive portfolio. We had good conversations with the HQ/Regional Risk Management team last week about important cross-cutting risks that we need to dig in and solve together to help us along this path. These include issues such as recruitment strategies for specific positions that are difficult to hire, re-examining information tracking needs to maximize data quality and improve efficiency, data management and access, continued need to refine and “perfect” procurement process with all players, managing steady state with heavy and on-going disaster work, and specific policy issues, among others.

We balance this news with the increasing interest of the Administration and others to empower local ownership and investment in flood risk management, and consider how we can reduce the federal role in developing and maintaining flood hazard data. We will continue to EXPLORE these questions as we prepare to respond to an OMB ask, and feed this perspective into the work of the RiskMAP Recalibration team. We are using all of the diverse perspectives to inform the RIGHT answer for our program moving forward, in light of our FEMA strategic objectives/moonshots.

The RiskMAP Recalibration project team is meeting this week to continue this work, and we look forward to talking to you at the upcoming HQ/Regional RMD All Hands about WHY we are Recalibrating RiskMAP, the IMPACT we expect it to have, and what we are doing/NEXT STEPS. This will continue to evolve as the Recalibration team receives input from RMD, FIMA and FEMA stakeholders in the coming months as we finalize the business case. We want to emphasize to you that we are very EARLY into this process, and you will have opportunities to shape this along the way, but it is important to us that we are transparent with you and broader FIMA/FEMA as we progress.

Thank you,

Angie and Nick

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For a copy of the [FY2018 Enacted Budget go here.](#)



FEMA Releases Recovery Advisory to Assist Architects, Engineers, and Contractors in the U.S. Virgin Islands with Rooftop Equipment

High winds from Hurricanes Irma and Maria significantly damaged rooftops and rooftop equipment in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Residential and commercial buildings and critical facilities were impacted by damaged rooftop equipment that was, in some cases, critical to the operation of services. Impacted equipment included heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units, exhaust fans, boiler stacks, and satellite dishes, and most problems were related to inadequate equipment anchorage along with corrosion of equipment and connectors.

FEMA has developed the [Attachment of Rooftop Equipment in High-Wind Regions](#) Recovery Advisory to provide guidance and recommendations to enhance wind resistance of rooftop equipment in high wind regions. This Recovery Advisory is intended for architects, engineers, contractors, building officials, and building owners. It recommends practices for facilities in the planning phase and provides design criteria, as well as mitigation actions for addressing vulnerabilities within existing rooftop equipment. The Recovery Advisory also outlines preparations building owners can make prior to hurricane landfall to secure equipment and minimize impact and recommends post-event assessments by qualified inspectors.

Residential and commercial building owners are encouraged to understand the various types of rooftop equipment problems that were observed after the 2017 hurricanes and work with the AEC's on design and construction mitigation guidance. Additional guidance can be found in FEMA's Design Guide for Improving School Safety in Earthquakes, Floods, and High Winds (FEMA P-424, 2010).

The Recovery Advisory is available digitally through the FEMA Library here: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/158123> and includes links to many additional resources to support rebuilding.



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PEMA/OSFC Clips March 22, 2018

The Senate Finance Committee today approved a measure sponsored by Senator Randy Vulakovich that would establish a sales tax "holiday" for the purchase of emergency preparedness equipment.

Senate Bill 765 would establish two weeks - one in this fall (September 4-10) and one next spring (March 6-12) - that would exempt certain purchases relating to emergency preparedness from the sales tax. The tax exemption would include items such as generators, shutters and other storm protection devices, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and first aid kits. The bill now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

"We are indeed fortunate to live in Pennsylvania. We don't have to deal with sustained periods of extreme temperatures or worry that an earthquake will shatter our homes and lives," said Senator Vulakovich.

"However, that doesn't mean that we don't have to be prepared for surprises from Mother Nature. In some ways, the fact that we rarely face cataclysmic conditions only makes it more difficult for us to deal with them when they occur. People in Florida may not like hurricanes, but they do know how to prepare for them."

"As Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee, I can say that Pennsylvania has come a long way in developing a coordinated response to many emergency situations," Senator Vulakovich said. "However, I don't know if there will ever be a point where we can stand back and say that we are totally prepared for every emergency. We must continue to increase public awareness of the steps they can take to prepare themselves and their families to get by after a disaster. These tax holidays would be a major step in that effort."

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