

Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

2 October 2003, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., White House Conference Center, Eisenhower Room

Names of absent members are indicated in italics.

Officers

Helen Wood (NOAA), Chair
John Filson (USGS), Vice-Chair for Science
Margaret Lawless (FEMA), Vice-Chair for Policy

NSTC Liaison

Gene Whitney (OSTP)

Working Group Chairs

International Working Group

Larry Roeder, Jr. (State), Co-Chair
Fernando Echavarria (State), Co-Chair
Larry Weber (NSF), Co-Chair

Earth Observation Task Group

Rosalind Helz (USGS), Chair

Grand Challenges Task Group

Tim Cohn (USGS), Co-Chair
Priscilla Nelson (NSF), Co-Chair

Remote Sensing Applications Working Group

Rosalind Helz (USGS), Co-Chair
Steve Ambrose (NASA), Co-Chair

Designated Representatives

CDC

Josephine Malilay

DOD

Earnest Paylor

EPA

Peter Jutro

Regan Murray (alternate)

FEMA

Margaret Lawless

FERC

Dan Mahoney

HUD

John Kennedy

Kevin Sheehan (alternate)

NASA

Steve Ambrose

NIST

Shyam Sunder

Noel Raufaste (alternate)

NOAA

Helen Wood

NRO

Keith Fennell

NSF

Priscilla Nelson

OHS

Bill Jeffrey

OMB

Erin McCartney

Gary Reisner

Jason Freihage

OSTP

Gene Whitney

State

Fernando Echavarria

Larry Roeder, Jr.

USACE

Michael O'Connor

USCG

Ernesto Montijo

USFS

Sue Conard

US Public Health Office

Eric Noji

USGS

Tim Cohn

Other Attendees

NOAA

Margaret McCalla

Dori Akerman (GRS)

Mary Kate Rubin (GRS)

NSF

Dennis Wenger

Partnership for Public Warnings

Ken Allen

USGS

Kathleen Gohn

Michael Blanpied

Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions
10:03 Approval of Meeting Minutes
10:05 Report from the Chair
10:15 Report from the OSTP Liaison
10:25 Briefing on the Partnership for Public Warning
10:55 International Day for Disaster Reduction
11:05 International Working Group
11:20 Grand Challenges
11:35 Earth Observation Task Group
11:50 Annual Operating Plan and Re-vet Letter
12:00 Close

Handouts

Agenda
Minutes, September 2003 SDR Meeting
Minutes, Earth Observation Task Group Meeting
Meeting Notes, Grand Challenge Task Force
Disasters Roundtable Agenda
Partnership for Public Warning – Public Alert & Warning
Global Flagship Conferences in 2005
GDIN2004 Agenda
ISDR Draft Resolution
International Day for Disaster Reduction Statements
FY2003 Annual Operating Plan
SDR Membership Re-vet Letter

Call to Order

SDR Chair Helen Wood called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Members approved the September 11, 2003 meeting minutes.

Summary of Discussion

1. Report from the Chair

Helen Wood reported that the CENR and the IW-GEO are focused on activities related to the proposed integrated Earth observation system. The importance of integrated Earth observations for effective disaster reduction is clear and it is critical that the Subcommittee continue to send that message. One key opportunity for continued discussions of this topic is the upcoming Disasters Roundtable entitled, "Hazards Watch: Reducing Disaster Losses through Earth Observations" to be held at the National Academies on 22 October 2003. The Subcommittee will host a meeting on 23 October 2003 in the White House Conference Center to continue the discussion and the discussion will inform a Subcommittee white paper on integrated Earth observations.

Ms. Wood also reported on the activities of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR), noting that the next CENR is 28 October 2003.

2. Briefing on the Partnership for Public Warning (PPW)

Helen Wood introduced Ken Allen, the new executive director of the non-profit Partnership for Public Warning (www.partnershipforpublicwarning.org or www.ppw.us). Mr. Allen discussed the need for a national all-hazard warning capability and outlined the following five key issues that demonstrate the urgency of this need:

- Timely and effective warnings are necessary.
- Currently, there is a lack of an effective warning system.
- The problem is not due to technology.
- The problem is a lack of key senior-level decisions, and the solution will result from public policy, standards, and education.
- A public-private partnership is necessary.

Mr. Allen also presented several scenarios that underscore the importance of a national all-hazard warning capability that would rely on a public-private partnership, among them:

- There was no alert and warning system that sounded on September 11, 2001 or, more recently, for the power outages on the East Coast.
- One single technology is not the solution; the country should have multiple sources sending the same message.
- There are no standards and no clear policies. Broadcaster participation is discretionary.

Chartered in January 2002, the PPW is governed evenly by state and local government; nonprofits; and industry. It is an educational, scientific, and non-lobbying entity. Significant accomplishments of the PPW thus far include: (1) The vision of PPW is to save lives and minimize injury and property loss; (2) PPW provided comments to DHS; (3) In 2003, PPW published "A National Strategy for Integrated Public Warning Policy and Capability" and drafted its national strategy, "*Implementing the Vision*"; (4) The PPW provided an assessment of emergency alert systems.

Important next steps for PPW are to secure funding; to create a primer to show what warning systems are available in a given area; to contribute to Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Public Warning Industry Days, November 19-20, 2003; and to participate in other activities, such as educational outreach to youth and a national summit on public alert and warning. According to Ken Allen, public alert and warning can be improved through collaboration and consensus, interoperability and integration, existing infrastructure assessment, and education and awareness. In regard to the state of warnings in the national agenda, Mr. Allen recommends that DHS take a leadership role.

Ken Allen closed his presentation with a question and answer session in which SDR members discussed leadership, effectiveness, research, and application. Gene Whitney asked about opportunities to train and educate the public to respond properly. Mr. Allen explained that there are many research gaps in measuring the effectiveness of how people receive warnings. The linkage has not been made between research and decision makers, adding that research must be applied if we are to inform the decision makers appropriately. Dennis Wenger mentioned the need for new research on social aspects of warnings given the recent expansion of technology.

Helen Wood asked how to provide effective advice and research. Ken Allen emphasized that research alone will not close the gaps. Tim Cohn added that local control is necessary for an effective warning capability. Priscilla Nelson stated that access to information will increase, and that PPW will benefit the longer-term vision. Mr. Allen replied that he is concerned with both the short and long-term vision. Helen Wood thanked Mr. Allen and noted that the Subcommittee's role should be to advise from a Federal investment standpoint.

3. International Day for Disaster Reduction

Kathleen Gohn reported on the successful completion of the draft statement for the International Day for Disaster Reduction, a day celebrated annually on the second Wednesday of October and sponsored by United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The SDR members approved a statement to be issued by Dr. Marburger, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), on 8 October. Larry Roeder of the State Department spoke of a similar address that the U.S. delegate to the UN will read to the UN to express support for the International Day for Disaster Reduction. The committee agreed to draft a statement next year for the President to issue.

Action

- SDR members will begin drafting the next annual International Day for Disaster Reduction statement in March 2004.

4. International Working Group

Larry Roeder began the discussion on the recent activities of the International Working Group (IWG) by describing the Working Group's interactions with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the ongoing preparations for Yokohama +11 to be held January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

Larry Roeder distributed a GDIN agenda and invited each member to participate in the GDIN. Members offered feedback on the agenda and suggested new sessions on risk communication, fire, and hurricanes. Susan Conard asked whether an all-hazards focus should be built into the conference. Larry Roeder relayed that he would accept feedback if anyone wanted to suggest a specific panel.

Mr. Roeder also reported on the National Academy of Sciences project on “U.S. Humanitarian Intervention: Data and Research Needs, Interagency Cooperation, and Predictive Planning.” The project requires input from each agency regarding data sources and available reports. Mr. Roeder asked members to support the effort by coordinating with their respective agency. The Working Group co-chairs will send out a letter to every agency to gather this information.

Action

- SDR members will work within their agencies to provide feedback to the IWG for the “U.S. Humanitarian Intervention” report.

5. Grand Challenge Task Force

Tim Cohn and Priscilla Nelson reported on the last meeting of the Grand Challenge Task Force, where they established the parameters for grand challenges:

- Grand challenges are contextual;
- Grand challenges require a metric for traceability, measurability, and achievability of products;
- Grand challenges work to prevent progressive failures, like power outages.

For each grand challenge, there are at least four dimensions of information, beginning with the high-level challenges and including associations and definitions and the identification of agency resources and ongoing tasks to frame a ten-year vision. The task force will create a first report by the spring of next year.

Action

- The next meeting of the Grand Challenge Task Force will be on 27 October 2003 in the National Science Foundation Main Building, Room 1235.

6. Earth Observation Task Group (EOTG)

Rosalind Helz provided an update on the activities of the Earth Observation Task Group (EOTG), reporting primarily on the 9 September 2003 meeting of the Task Group. The EOTG is providing the disaster reduction perspective to the U.S. National Plan for integrated Earth Observations and also will create an NSTC white paper or a larger report.

Action

- The next meeting of the Task Group will be held 6 November 2003 at 1 p.m. in the Eisenhower Room of the White House Conference Center.

7. Agenda Items and Other Communications with the Subcommittee

Please send proposed agenda items and any other items intended for distribution to the full Subcommittee to Dori Akerman (dori@grs-solutions.com) by October 31, 2003.

8. Contact Information

SDR Leadership

Helen Wood, Chair, 301-713-1140, helen.wood@noaa.gov

John Filson, Vice-Chair for Science, 703-648-6715, jfilson@usgs.gov

Margaret Lawless, Vice -Chair for Policy, 202-646-3027, margaret.lawless@dhs.gov

International Working Group

Larry Roeder, Jr., Co-Chair, 202-647-5070, roederla@state.gov

Fernando Echavarría, Co-Chair, 202-663-2395, echavarriafr@state.gov

Larry Weber, Co-Chair, 703-292-7240, lweber@nsf.gov

Remote Sensing Applications Working Group

Rosalind Helz, Co-Chair, 703-648-6086, rhelz@usgs.gov

Steve Ambrose, Co-Chair, 202-358-0851, sambrose@hq.nasa.gov

Earth Observation Task Group

Rosalind Helz, Chair, 703-648-6086, rhelz@usgs.gov

Grand Challenges Task Group

Tim Cohn, Co-Chair, 703-648-5711, tachohn@usgs.gov

Priscilla Nelson, Co-Chair, 703-292-7018, pnelson@nsf.gov

Secretariat

Dori Akerman, 703-560-7448, dori@grs-solutions.com

9. Future Meetings

The SDR meets on the first or second Thursday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Eisenhower Room of the White House Conference Center:

2003

November 6, 2003

December 4, 2003

January 8, 2004

February 5, 2004

March 4, 2004

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.