

Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

10 January 2008, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Department of Commerce Room 5215

Italics indicate absent members. "T" indicate members participating via teleconference.

Officers

David Applegate (USGS), Chair
Margaret Davidson (NOAA), Vice-Chair

NSTC Liaison

Gene Whitney (OSTP)

Working Group Chairs

Earth Observations Working Group

Steve Ambrose (NASA), Co-Chair
Tim Battista (NOAA), Co-Chair
Bruce Quirk (USGS), Co-Chair

Infrastructure Task Group

Joy Pauschke (NSF), Chair

Resource Impacts Task Group

Susan Conard (USFS), Chair

Designated Representatives

BLM Ronald Huntsinger
CDC *Mark Keim*
DHS Bruce Davis
DHS/FEMA *David Maurstad*
DHS/USCG *Suzanne Strohl*
DOD *Al Johnson*
DOE *Patricia Hoffman*
DOT *Sheila Duwadi*
EOP / OSTP Gene Whitney

EPA *Peter Jutro*
HUD *David Engel*
NASA Steve Ambrose
NGB *Daniel Bochicchio*
NIH Allen Dearry (T)
NIST William Grosshandler
NOAA Margaret Davidson (T)
NSF *Joy Pauschke*

OPHS Sven Rodenbeck (T)
State *Jordan Muller*
Ralph Braibanti
Fernando Echavarria
USACE *Barbara J. Sotirin*
USAID *Peter Morris*
USDA / USFS Susan Conard
USGS Paula Gori

Other Attendees

DOE Merrill Smith
FEMA Mike Buckley
NGB James Engstrand

NOAA Nell Codner
NOAA John Gaynor
NSF Robert O'Connor

USGS Matt Hayne

Agenda

10:00 Introductions & Approval of Dec. Meeting Minutes
10:05 Report from the Chair
10:10 Report from the Vice-Chair
10:15 Report from the NSTC Liaison
10:20 Update on Wildfire Lessons Learned White Paper
10:30 Topics for Boulder Hazards Workshop
10:45 Agency impacts of FY 2008 omnibus appropriations
11:00 Addressing Hazard & Risk Down Under
11:30 Close and Next Actions

Handouts

- Agenda
- December Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) Chair David Applegate (USGS) called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Following introductions around the table and on the phone, the minutes for the previous meeting (December 6, 2007) were approved as presented.

II. Summary of Reports

A. Report from the Chair

Applegate reported that on December 19th, he and Gene Whitney briefed House Committee on Science and Technology staff on SDR activities. Topics included the SDR-coordinated report provided to Congress on the Wind Hazards Reduction Program, committee plans for authorizations of multi-agency hazard activities, and SDR plans to look at the role of science and technology in the Southern California wildfires and associated hazards.

Applegate also repeated the previous month's request for annual agency funding commitments to SDR and offered agency-specific letters for any who would find it helpful for making the case for SDR support.

Applegate noted the upcoming Gilbert F. White Lecture in the Geographical Sciences at the National Academies, which will be given this year by Gerald Galloway (University of Maryland) on the topic "Managing American Water Resources: Recognizing the Realities of Geography". The lecture will take place in Room 100 of the Keck Center (500 Fifth Street NW) on Wednesday, February 27th at 5:30pm with light reception to follow. RSVP to Jared Eno (jeno@nas.edu). More information at <http://dels.nas.edu/besr/gsc.shtml>.

ACTION (All): Applegate will re-send electronic version of the support request letter to the SDR agency representatives with meeting summary. Please let him know if a personalized letter to the SDR representative or someone else in your agency will help this process along.

ACTION (All): Please consider attending this year's Gilbert White lecture at the National Academies by Gerald Galloway.

B. Report from the Vice Chair

Margaret Davidson encouraged serious planning for an SDR retreat this spring. She noted the commonality of interest with the Climate Change Science Program and the need to foster that.

C. Report from the NSTC Liaison

To multiple rounds of applause, Gene Whitney announced that the long-awaited clearance of the Grand Challenges four-pagers had finally occurred. Printing will take place as soon as possible and hopefully in time for the next SDR meeting. If possible, electronic versions will be made available sooner. Costs have already been set aside from the previous year's Secretariat support. A cover letter needs to be drafted for Marburger's signature. Several thousand copies of the 14 documents will be printed as a set for a folder that will also include the original Grand Challenges document, which is being re-printed. At next month's meeting, the committee will review the release strategy. The documents can also be used on their own – for example Whitney indicated that he would be meeting with the House Subcommittee on Water and Power, and he planned to bring along the Floods four-pager.

Whitney also brought up the recent report that Cycle 24 of solar activity has officially begun, building toward the next solar maximum. Sunspots can interfere with anything electronic from cell phone communications to power grids to satellites, including GPS interference. He encouraged

completion of the clearance process for the Space Weather four-pager, which is being prepared by the National Space Weather Council.

ACTION (Applegate/Secretariat): Draft cover letter for OSTP Director John Marburger's signature to accompany the release of the four-pagers.

ACTION (Secretariat): Prepare four-pagers for printing. If possible, make available electronically ahead of print version.

ACTION (Applegate/Secretariat): Put space weather four-pager into clearance process.

III. Discussion Topics

A. Update on Wildfire Lessons Learned White Paper

Applegate reported that agency inputs to the set of questions posed were coming in. He encouraged involvement by all agencies. The core writing group is meeting directly after the SDR meeting to discuss progress. The goal is to have a draft ready for the next SDR meeting.

ACTION (Applegate): Send questions and request for agency input to Mike Buckley at FEMA.

B. Topics for Boulder Hazards Workshop

Later in the day, Paula Gori, John Gaynor and Bob O'Connor are all attending the planning meeting for the University of Colorado's Natural Hazards Center Annual Meeting on Applications and Research. Known informally as the Boulder hazards workshop, the invitation-only event serves as a key gathering for disaster professionals, seeking a mix of practitioners, Federal/state/local government, and university researchers. This year's workshop is being held July 12-15 just south of Boulder. There will have a session on wildfire response, and Gori will let them know about the white paper being developed. Sue Conard offered to help with the session. Another proposed session would look at hazards mitigation and climate adaptation communities and the connectivity between the two. Margaret Davidson offered to organize as an opportunity for SDR to work with CCSP. Joy Pauschke has already submitted a session proposal on behalf of the SDR Infrastructure Task Group.

Action (Gori): Convey SDR session interests to the Natural Hazards Center planning meeting.

Action (All): Anyone interested in an invitation to the Boulder workshop should let Whitney, Applegate or Gori know.

C. Agency impacts of FY 2008 omnibus appropriations

Whitney proposed this roundtable discussion on how disaster S&T programs fared in the omnibus FY 2008 appropriations bill in order to get a sense of any big increases or decreases for disaster-related programs. He noted that the President's budget gets filtered through the 11,000 earmarks added by Congress, specifically citing the near-elimination of the American Competitiveness Initiative funding, which was proposed for NSF, DOE Office of Science, and NIST. Going around the table:

Ron Huntsinger stated that BLM received some increase for watershed and fire suppression activities but flat funding for fire science.

Mike Buckley reported that FEMA received 95 "congressional directives", i.e. earmarks, totaling \$51 million out of the pre-disaster mitigation program, listing the community to which the money should

go, the amount, and the Member of Congress directing it. These communities, however, must be eligible for the funding and many are not. FEMA is challenged by earmarks getting in the way of meeting its mandates and mission. FEMA did receive a \$20M increase for floodmap modernization.

Steve Ambrose reported that his part of NASA was flat or dropping with centers suffering from a \$9M cut. There is some NASA money available for fire science with \$15M specified for research. On the applications side, there is pressure from some former NASA researchers to reduce staff and shift funds to research. There is \$33M total to begin work on seven missions listed as highest priority by the National Research Council's recent decadal study. NASA earth science funding is also down.

Bruce Davis reported that the DHS Science and Technology Directorate will be providing a fuller report at the February SDR meeting but that the short answer is that it took a 50% cut, now at \$690M.

Bill Grosshandler reported that at NIST, there was no additional funding provided for the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program or wildfires.

John Gaynor reported that the National Weather Service budget at NOAA is flat with no additional funds for fire weather or wind hazards. There is an interesting earmark to Iowa State University for use of their tornado-producing wind tunnel, a small but useful project. The proposed Ocean Research Priorities Plan was not funded at NOAA, although USGS received a \$1.5M for their piece of the initiative. He is hopeful that this will reappear in the President's FY 2009 request. The NOAA Office of Response and Restoration received an \$11M earmark for a response center in Mobile, AL but had to use base funds, effectively reducing the office's budget by one-third.

Patricia Hoffman reported that the DOE Office of Electricity was hit by earmarks but overall is holding steady.

Sue Conard reported that R&D at the U.S. Forest Service was level funded, which translates to a decrease in real dollars. Increasing costs in fire suppression combined with level funding is not keeping up with inflation; 46% of funding now goes to firefighting. There is a small increase for the global climate change program.

Barbara Sotirin reported some increases in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers fire programs.

At NSF, Bob O'Connor reported that the overall science research budget is up by 1%. Although the Infrastructure Management and Hazard Response program that Dennis Wenger oversees is the on hazards-specific program, it represents probably 4% of the overall hazard-related funding across many programs and disciplines. There is a new solicitation going out for NOAA/NSF hurricane forecasting information research. It will be due in June and could be a great link to FEMA's forecast program.

Fernando Echavarria from the State Department indicated that he would be very interested to hear from USAID about funding opportunities and would see what he could find for February's meeting.

Gori and Applegate reported on small increases for the Multi-Hazards Demonstration Project in Southern California to support streamgages, earthquake monitoring, and geographic research, expanding the project to the Pacific Northwest and Central U.S.

Whitney closed the discussion by noting that it is not an encouraging picture, but he urged all to keep trying as not all budget years will be this hard. He emphasized the need to maintain a sense of mission and order in budgets. With respect to the FY 2010 budget that is just now beginning to be formulated (even as the release of the President's FY 2009 request looms in February), he pointed out the myth that such budgets at the end of an Administration will not carry much weight. Looking historically, the new Administration for the most part adopts the standing agency budgets.

IV. Presentations

A. New FEMA Floodplain Maps for DC

Mike Buckley provided an informal presentation on the recently announced changes to the floodplain maps for DC, which was the topic of a recent Washington Post article regarding the effect on plans to upgrade flood protection for Federal buildings near the Mall and the possibility of a permanent flood barrier at 17th Street.

B. Addressing Hazard & Risk Down Under

Matt Hayne, who currently visiting the USGS for six months from Geoscience Australia, provided a presentation on how natural hazard risk assessment is handled in Australia. He began by noting that the states have primacy for emergency management, one factor in the difficulty facing efforts to better integrate science and emergency management. Geoscience Australia started doing multi-hazard risk assessment in specific communities in region, but there was concern about getting embroiled in court cases. Five years ago, a report was delivered calling for a national program of systematic and rigorous disaster risk assessments with a nationally consistent approach to data collection; this came, however, without funds to do the work. It was recognized that it was not the role of the federal government to get bogged down with specific local reports but rather to take on the role of coordination and leadership, developing tools and providing training – enabling rather than doing the work. A national risk assessment framework was adopted with a focus on earthquakes, severe wind, tropical cyclones, and tsunamis. The decision was made not to include bushfire (wildland fire), because the activities are currently quite fragmented, but it will be included in the future. The goal of the framework is to establish a common understanding of hazards across Australia. Where states do not have the resources to do studies themselves, Geoscience Australia does the risk assessment in partnership with them.

One goal is to develop more rigor in building code standards with more specific data about windfields, for example. The long-term goal is for a fully probabilistic risk model, but there is not enough information about the underlying geophysics. GA is producing a nationally consistent exposure database containing attributes on residential, commercial and industrial buildings; access rights for such data are easier in Australia than in the US but still a challenge so use proxies where needed. Some of the engineering vulnerability models have been taken from FEMA's HAZUS, but there are also unique building types in Australia.

Another effort focuses on provision of near-real-time consequence data. GA is doing economic analysis of indirect losses, running models of recovery across key sectors with and without government assistance in order to look at how the federal government should be putting money into the system. A critical infrastructure protection project is developing the modeling for critical infrastructure with very complete data from all private-sector utilities and the banking sector. The project is looking at impacts on interconnectivity if one node is affected, then looking at community impact; this effort is increasingly being merged with the risk project.

Capacity building is another focus, supporting development of open-source software for earthquake risk and tsunami inundation models. Local governments are picking this up and applying it and

giving feedback. The federal-state relationship has always been tenuous, so the federal government is trying to bring capabilities and tools that are valued, and it appears to be making some headway. The whole effort is fundamentally about coordination and leadership, bringing new knowledge and capacity building to the states.

The recently published Natural Hazards in Australia document is available at <http://www.ga.gov.au/hazards/reports/nhiar/>.

ACTION (Applegate/Secretariat): Place Hayne’s presentation on the SDR members website. Provide links to reports described in presentation.

V. Adjournment

Applegate thanked Hayne for his presentation, NOAA for hosting, and the group for coming. The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Future Meetings

The SDR meets on the first or second Thursday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

February 7, 2008	May 3, 2008	August 7, 2008	November 6, 2008
March 6, 2008	June 5, 2008	September 4, 2008	December 4, 2008
April 3, 2008	July 3, 2008	October 3, 2008	

VII. 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 David Applegate (applegate@usgs.gov).

VIII. Contact Information SDR Leadership

David Applegate, Chair, 703-648-6715, applegate@usgs.gov
 Margaret Davidson, Vice Chair, 843-740-1220, Margaret.davidson@noaa.gov
 Gene Whitney, NSTC Liaison, 202-456-6081, gwhitney@ostp.eop.gov

IX. Summary of December Actions

Action	Lead	By When
Send electronic version of support letter to the SDR agency representatives with meeting summary.	Applegate	22 January
Let Applegate know if you would like a personalized support request letter to the SDR representative or someone else in your agency	SDR Members	31 January
Consider attending this year’s Gilbert White lecture at the National Academies by Gerald Galloway.	SDR Members	RSVP by 13 February
Draft cover letter for OSTP Director John Marburger’s signature to accompany the release of the four-pagers. Provide to Gene Whitney.	Applegate/Secretariat	15 January
Prepare four-pagers for printing. If possible, make available electronically ahead of print version.	Secretariat	1 February
Put space weather four-pager into clearance process.	Applegate/Secretariat	7 February

Send questions and request for agency input on wildfire response paper to Mike Buckley at FEMA.	Applegate	20 January
Convey SDR session interests to the Natural Hazards Center planning meeting.	Paula Gori	10 January
Anyone interested in an invitation to the Boulder workshop should let Whitney, Applegate or Gori know.	SDR Members	7 February
Place Hayne's presentation on the SDR members website. Provide links to reports described in presentation.	Applegate/Secretariat	31 January