

# Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

7 January 2010, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., White House Conference Center

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

## Officers

David Applegate (USGS), Chair  
Margaret Davidson (NOAA), Vice-Chair (T)  
Dennis Wenger (NSF), Vice-Chair

## NSTC Liaison

TBD

## Designated Representatives

**BLM** *Edwin Roberson*

Daniel Lechefsky

**CDC** Mark Keim (T)

**DHS** Bruce Davis (T)

**DHS/FEMA** Deborah Ingram

**DHS/USCG** *Steven Cohen*

**DOD** *Al Johnson*

**DOE** *Patricia Hoffman*

**DOT** *Kelly Leone*

*Sheila Duwadi*

*Tim Schmidt*

**EOP/OSTP** TBD

**EDA** *Audrey Clarke*

**EPA** *Peter Jutro*

*Stephen Clark*

**FERC** Howard Wheeler (T)

**HUD** *David Engel*

**NASA** Andrea Donnellan

**NGA** *Stephen Homeyer*

**NGB** *Daniel Bochicchio*

**NIH** Allen Dearry (T)

**NIST** William Grosshandler

*Jack Hayes*

**NOAA** John Gaynor

**NSF** Dennis Wenger

**OPHS** Sven Rodenbeck (T)

**State** *Cari Enav*

*Fernando Echavarria*

**USACE** *Barbara J. Sotirin*

*Dimitra Syriopoulou*

**USAID** Sezin Tokar

**USDA** TBD

**USFS** *Carlos Rodriguez-*

*Franco*

**USGS** David Applegate

Paula Gori

## Other Attendees

**DOE** Patrick Willging

**EPA** Alona Bachi

**FEMA** Candice Abinanti

**NGA** Whitney Nelson

**NIST** Steve Cauffman

**NOAA** Maria Honeycutt

**USAID** Wayne Pennington

**White House** Carlos Monje,  
Jr.

**Secretariat** Ross Faith

Barbara Haines-Parmele

## Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions

10:05 Approval of December Meeting Minutes

10:10 Report from the Chair

10:20 Report from the Vice-Chairs

10:30 Presentation: Long-Term Disaster Recovery  
Working Group

11:00 Summary of SDR Presentation at COP15

11:15 Update on the Climate Change Adaptation  
White Paper

11:55 Close and Next Actions

## Handouts

- Agenda
- December Meeting Minutes
- AMS-Hill Climate Adaptation Briefing Announcement
- Institute for Sustainable Communities January 12<sup>th</sup> Conference Program
- Draft SDR Calling Card to the Climate Science Community

## **I. Call to Order and Introductions**

Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) Chair David Applegate (USGS) called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and the participants introduced themselves.

## **II. Approval of December Meeting Minutes**

The December Meeting Minutes were approved with no opposition or abstentions.

## **III. Report from the Chair**

Applegate reported that Ron Huntsinger, a longtime participant of the SDR, was retiring from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). While sorry to see Ron go and wishing him well, Applegate welcomed the participation of Daniel Lechefskey, BLM Climate Change Advisor, at the meeting.

Applegate informed members of an upcoming Hill Briefing on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation, to be held from noon to 1:30 p.m. on January 8th at the Cannon House Office Building. The briefing is being hosted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the American Geophysical Union (AGU), the American Meteorological Society (AMS), the Ecological Society of America (ESA), and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

Also on the calendar, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is scheduled to hold a convening of experts on January 12th to inform and support the deliberation of the Long-term Disaster Recovery Working Group.

Applegate noted that he recently participated in a planning session of National Level Exercise 2011 (NLE 2011). NLE is a cycle of seminars, planning events, and exercises designed to strengthen the Nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazards incidents, including terrorist attacks involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). The NLE 2011 will be the first such exercise to focus on a natural hazard – in this case a catastrophic New Madrid earthquake event occurring in the middle of the country.

Applegate also mentioned that he had recently been contacted by the U.S. Group on Earth Observations (USGEO) International Working Group (IWG), which is interested in having a liaison from the SDR to keep it abreast on topics related to international disasters.

NASA will host the Earth Observing Missions Applications Workshop from February 1-3, 2010 in Colorado Springs, CO. Those interested in attending are invited to register at <http://applicationsworkshop.eventbrite.com>.

Applegate also stated the Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2009, H.R. 3820, has worked its way through the House Science Committee. The bill includes a provision calling upon the SDR to provide a multi-hazard review of Federal efforts within two years.

## **IV. Report from the Vice-Chairs**

Noting that the SDR serves as the National Platform to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), SDR Vice-Chair Dennis Wenger (NSF) stated that he recently accepted the charge to head up and revitalize work of the ISDR subcommittee responsible for the initiative on Early Warning. Although proactive in nature, the initiative has been relatively dormant over the past year. Moving forward, the subcommittee will be working to publish responses to the 2008 ISDR survey on early warning capabilities and programs of member countries. One finding of the survey is that communication and dissemination of information to at-risk communities is weak.

The ISDR's other major subcommittee focuses on promoting links and synergies between disaster reduction and climate change adaptation. A third ad hoc body handles database issues.

In another development, the ISDR Scientific and Technical Committee, on which Wenger serves, is seeking to broaden its focus beyond technical issues and place a greater emphasis on social science.

SDR Vice-Chair Margaret Davidson (NOAA) recalled the presentation given at the December SDR meeting by Dr. Jerry Schubel, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific and former Chair of the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel (ORRAP) to the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST). After the December meeting, Davidson and Schubel, along with several stakeholders from the Federal government, academia, and the private sector met for a multi-day JSOST/ORRAP Workshop on Coastal Inundation and Sea Level Rise in Lansdowne, VA, December 3-5. Davidson stated that the Federal government is particularly interested in making sure that models, information, and tools related to coastal inundation and sea level rise are developed within certain standards so they will be compatible when scaled up. She expected a summary from the workshop would be prepared by the end of January and indicated that she would circulate it to the SDR when finalized.

#### **V. Presentation: Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group**

Applegate introduced and welcomed Carlos Monje, Jr., Senior Policy Advisor on the White House Domestic Policy Council, who is coordinating engagement from the Executive Office of the President in the interagency Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group (LTDRWG). At the President's request, the working group is being co-chaired by the Secretaries of Homeland Security (DHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and includes participation by Secretaries and Administrators of more than 20 Federal departments, agencies and offices.

President Obama became interested in forming the working group to address the sluggish pace of recovery of the Gulf Coast communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina. While the initial response to the disaster in 2005 posed its own challenges and obstacles, the recovery phase has proved to be the most challenging, expensive and least coordinated step in the disaster cycle. The working group has therefore been designed as a mechanism to improve coordination among Federal agencies and engagement with State, local, and other stakeholders.

To inform deliverables of the working group, Regional Offices of HUD and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hosted ten regional video teleconferences as well as five stakeholder forums in partnership with select States and local communities across the Nation. Both series of events provided an opportunity for participants to discuss disaster recovery management issues and opportunities. The themes that emerged from these events were fairly consistent. One emergent theme was that recovery planning – particularly the order in which services and infrastructure should be repaired – needs to be mapped out before disasters strike. Another was that the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including the Federal government, need to be developed in greater detail and better communicated. Now halfway into the six month process, these discussions along with input provided by the public at <http://disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov/> are helping to shape two important products:

- The working group's *Report to the President*, which will identify opportunities for improving the delivery of recovery assistance in the future through changes in policy and legislation, in addition to designating areas for further study; and,
- The *National Disaster Recovery Framework*, which will provide guidance for the delivery of recovery assistance using current resources and authorities.

Monje noted that the working group is currently laboring to meet an aggressive schedule. The *Report to the President* is expected on April 1, 2010. A draft of the *National Disaster Recovery Framework* is anticipated for comment during the first quarter of 2010, with a final publication date scheduled for June 1, 2010. Monje commented that the report and framework are coming together around certain themes – namely the importance of:

- Pre-disaster recovery planning
- Partnership and coordination
- Communications
- Leadership, especially at the local level
- Rebuilding smarter, safer, and more sustainably

Monje also noted that a significant focus of the working group is on systems, infrastructure and services that did not break down in the aftermath of Katrina and other disasters. He then opened up the discussion for comments and questions from SDR members.

Wenger observed that the working group seemed to be headed in the right direction, adding that the link between recovery and mitigation is critical. He also noted that a problem often plaguing post-disaster recovery efforts is the turnover in leaders and teams during the transition from response to recovery, in which actors change without necessarily passing the “baton.” Wenger also stated that a call was emerging within the disaster community for a “Federal recovery act” to complement the Stafford Act, and he asked Monje if the report to the President will make such a recommendation.

Monje stated that there is recognition of the importance and potential positive impact of such legislation and noted that such a course of action is being considered within the spectrum of recommended changes. He noted, however, that the working group’s report will primarily focus on regulations and policy, and if a recommendation for legislation were made, it would be in course of follow on efforts.

Wayne Pennington (USAID) noted that as a result of its mandate, the U.S. Agency for International Development has a wealth of experience to offer in the area of disaster recovery.

Monje responded that Jessica Stewart is looking into international examples to inform the working group’s recommendations.

Paula Gori (USGS) asked if the working group was finding it difficult to approach recovery from an all-hazards perspective, and specifically queried whether the group was obtaining enough input on hazards other than hurricanes (i.e., earthquakes and tornadoes). She suggested looking at recovery efforts following the 1994 Northridge earthquake if the group was seeking additional information.

Monje stated that the difficulties of rebuilding the Gulf Coast post-Katrina had certainly tilted the focus of the working group, but the forums convened in New York City, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City provided input on recovery in the wake of other hazard impacts. He also noted that the working group was looking into the history of flooding in Iowa and North Dakota.

Mark Keim (CDC) reinforced the notion that pre-disaster planning is critically important for effective recovery by noting that the level of resilience in public health systems is likewise dependant on pre-disaster investment. He also commented that from a public health perspective, community resilience has three components:

- 1) Exposure, mitigation, and evacuation

- 2) Susceptibility
- 3) Long-term health effects

Applegate referenced the increased focus both within disaster risk reduction community on climate change adaptation strategies and asked whether the topic had come up in any working group discussions.

Monje indicated that the topic had indeed surfaced. Another topic receiving significant attention is geospatial mapping, and the working group recognizes the important role this information serves in decision making.

Davidson (NOAA) indicated that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service are involved in the working group's discussion of geospatial Earth observations.

Deborah Ingram (FEMA) stated that she would share the list of agency and individuals participating on the LTDR working group to facilitate the development of links to and input from SDR Members. In the meantime, SDR Members interested in providing input to the LTDR working group should contact Ingram ([deborah.ingram@dhs.gov](mailto:deborah.ingram@dhs.gov)) for more information.

#### **Summary of SDR Presentation at COP15**

Allen Dearry (NIH/NIEHS) reported out from his relatively recent five-day trip to the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, where on behalf of the SDR he gave a one-hour presentation in the U.S. Center's "briefing room" on the subcommittee's work, the *Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction* (500 copies of which were shipped for distribution at the U.S. Center), the links between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Dearry noted that his audience was mostly comprised of policy types from the UN, ISDR and other organizations, but also included significant representation from business and industry. For many, Dearry's presentation was their first introduction to disaster risk reduction (DRR), and his focus on science and technology was fairly unique among the other presentations, approximately eight of which were given per day at the U.S. Center, with additional events taking place concurrently at the European Union's Center.

#### **VI. Update on the Climate Change Adaptation White Paper**

Applegate drew SDR Members' attention to the two-page draft document in their meeting folders, noting that it was being developed to serve as a calling card for the SDR to the USGCRP and others within the climate science community. He opened the floor for comments and suggestions.

Maria Honeycutt (NOAA) noted that SDR members were also developing a longer white paper on the same subject and stated that the calling card could be improved by incorporating and more explicitly stating the white paper's recommendations for the establishment of working groups and other coordination mechanisms.

Dearry noted that JSOST is farther along than the USGCRP on some matters involving climate change adaptation and recommended that the SDR consider engagement with JSOST.

Ingram recommended revising the calling card to shine more light on potential opportunities for engagement.

For the group's reference, Pennington distributed hardcopies of USAID brochures on climate change adaptation. An electronic version of the longer brochure can be accessed through USAID website at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/environment/climate/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/climate/index.html).

Gori recommended that the SDR develop a one or two page brochure to distribute and raise awareness of its work within the Federal community.

Ingram noted that FEMA is working with HUD on a new sustainable communities initiative and recommended bringing someone involved in the effort to speak to the SDR at a future meeting. She also stated that after a fourteen year hiatus, the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force, co-chaired by FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), is being reconstituted. She added that FEMA is working with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on other flood issues as well.

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

**VIII. Future Meetings**

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

February 4, 2010	June 3, 2010	October 7, 2010
March 4, 2010	July 1, 2010	November 4, 2010
April 1, 2010	August 5, 2010	December 2, 2010
May 6, 2010	September 2, 2010	

\*Note: The SDR's 2010 meetings are scheduled to be held at the White House Conference Center.

**X. 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 Ross Faith (ross.faith@mantech.com).

**XI. Contact Information SDR Leadership**

David Applegate, Chair, 703-648-6714, applegate@usgs.gov  
 Margaret Davidson, Vice Chair, 843-740-1220, margaret.davidson@noaa.gov  
 Dennis Wenger, Vice Chair, 703-292-8606, dwenger@nsf.gov

**Secretariat**

Ross Faith, 703-388-0308, ross.faith@mantech.com

**XII. Summary of January Actions**

Action	Lead	By When
RSVP to Jennifer Koch (Jennifer.M.Koch@hud.gov) to attend the Long-Term Disaster Recovery meeting at HUD.	SDR Members	January 8, 2010
Register for NASA's Earth Observing Missions Applications Workshop at <a href="http://applicationsworkshop.eventbrite.com">http://applicationsworkshop.eventbrite.com</a> .	SDR Members	January 20, 2010
Contact Jack Hayes (jack.hayes@nist.gov) if your agency is interesting in exploring how to make use of	SDR Members	Standing

the NEES facilities for earthquake research.		
Send Sezin Tokar (stokar@usaid.gov) your ".gov" e-mail address to receive USG-only updates from USAID on global disaster response activities.	SDR Members	Standing
Contact Ross (ross.faiht@mantech.com) to receive copies of the Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction Implementation Plan packets or CD.	SDR Members	Standing
Let Dave or Ross (ross.faiht@mantech.com) know how you use the implementation plans, including when you link to the plans from your agency websites. Send Ross or Dave additional distribution suggestions, including relevant contact information.	SDR Members	Standing