

Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

11 July 2013, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., White House Conference Center Lincoln Room

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

Co-chairs

David Applegate (USGS)
Margaret Davidson (NOAA)
Dennis Wenger (NSF)

OSTP Liaison

Tamara Dickinson (OSTP)

Designated Representatives

BLM *Edwin Roberson*
CDC *Mark Keim*
DHS Bruce Davis (T)
DHS/FEMA Roy Wright
DHS/USCG *Robert Thomas*
DOD *Al Johnson*
DOE *Patricia Hoffman*
DOT Sheila Duwadi
EOP/OMB *Grace Hu*
EOP/OSTP Tamara Dickinson
EPA Peter Jutro
Stephen Clark

FERC *Marsha Palazzi*
HUD *Dana Bres*
NASA *Craig Dobson*
NGA *Paul Lewis*
NGB *TBD*
NIH Aubrey Miller
NIST *Marc Levitan*
NOAA Margaret Davidson (T)
Christopher Strager
NPS *Marcy Rockman*
NSF *Dennis Wenger*
OPHS Estella Jones (T)

State *Fernando Echavarria*
USACE *Steven Cary*
Dimitra Syriopoulou
USAID Sezin Tokar
USDA *TBD*
USFS *Elizabeth Reinhardt*
Carlos Rodriguez-Franco
USGS David Applegate
USNRC Steven West

Other Attendees

BLM Nancy Dean
Ronald McCormick (T)
DHS Mary Ellen Hynes
DHS/FEMA Rachel Sears
DHS/USCG Tony Erickson (T)
EOP/OSTP Rachel Cannon

EPA Brendan Doyle
Keely Maxwell
NIST Eric Letvin (T)
NOAA Nell Codner (T)
Maria Honeycutt (T)
NSF Morris Cohen

NSF Robert O'Connor
State Rajan Sen
USFS Jason Steinmetz
STPI Chris Clavin
Secretariat Bret Schothorst
Barbara Haines-Parmele

Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions
10:05 Report from the Co-chairs and Approval of Minutes
10:30 Report from the OSTP Liaison
10:45 Briefing: U.S. Forest Service 2013 Wildfire Season Outlook
11:15 Update: Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force Progress of Science Coordination Working Group
11:55 Close and Next Actions

Handouts

- July Meeting Agenda
- Draft June Meeting Minutes
- Italian National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology July 15 Briefing Agenda
- Sandy Task Force Science Coordination Working Group Terms of Reference

I. Welcome and Introductions

National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) Co-chair David Applegate (USGS) called the July meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., and participants introduced themselves.

II. Report from the Co-chairs and Approval of Minutes

The June monthly meeting minutes were approved with one change: Brendan Doyle (EPA) noted that on page five of the document, the acronym OGA should be changed to NGA.

Mary Ellen Hynes (DHS S&T) shared an invitation to a briefing of the Italian National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia – INGV) that will be held at the Embassy of Italy (3000 Whitehaven Street NW, Washington, DC) on Monday, July 15 at 2:30 p.m. The meeting agenda will provide an overview of the most relevant science and technology activities of the agency, in particular a general presentation on the INGV research portfolio in order to engage U.S. counterparts in possible future joint initiatives. To RSVP, SDR members were directed to please use the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1A1WP7ZfTsXzitQ9_hiC5BIKZOXduszsqbKlw-Uj30Do/viewform.

Michael Goodman (NASA) asked that the SDR Co-chairs draw attention to a special session at the 2013 fall American Geophysical Union (AGU) meeting (December 9-13, San Francisco, CA) titled, “Near Real-Time Data for Earth Science and Space Weather Applications.” According to the session’s description, near real-time data from satellite, airborne, and surface sensors are transforming existing end-user applications and spawning new ones, and these applications demonstrate the utility of timely data in diverse Earth and space science disciplines including weather prediction, geologic hazards, wildfires, flooding, invasive species, agriculture, oceanic, and space weather applications. This session seeks contributions that demonstrate the benefit of near real-time scientific or social media data and identify gaps in current capabilities. Applegate noted that the abstract deadline is August 6 and that the first author must be an AGU member or sponsored by a member. Please check the meeting website for updates and complete abstract submission policies: <http://fallmeeting.agu.org/2013>.

The Co-chairs then provided a brief report-out on their June 27 SDR leadership meeting. Among the primary topics discussed at the retreat regarding a roadmap of what the SDR would like to accomplish in the coming year were:

- 1) Address the following broad ideas that have common linkages to an updated Federal hazards R&D agenda:
 - Optimize the Federal disaster S&T portfolio in the context of PPD-8, PPD-21, and the goals for national preparedness;
 - Coordinate a national consultation meeting with the NGO community to develop shared goals for UNISDR and the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework; and
 - Undertake a progress assessment of the short-, medium-, and long-range goals laid out in our Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction document.
- 2) Enhance collaborative efforts with the following ongoing initiatives:
 - Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force and its Science Coordination Working Group contributions to the draft rebuilding strategy report;
 - National Academy of Sciences and its scoping process for an all-hazards risk model framework;
 - USGCRP and NSTC Subcommittee on Global Change Research and their Interagency Task Force on Science for a Catastrophe Risk Modeling Framework;
 - OSTP Big Data Initiative and its effort to develop a Hazards.Data.gov portal and enhanced tech tools for disasters;

- NSTC Infrastructure Subcommittee and its contributions to PPD-8 and PPD-21 preparedness and resilience goals;
- FEMA effort to stand up its Mitigation Framework Leadership Group (MitFLG); and
- Recommendations outlined in the National Research Council's resilience report, Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative;
- White House National Security Staff efforts to incorporate the natural hazards S&T perspective into national security policy;
- Pending Congressional legislation including the STRONG Act, the Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act, and directives impacting NEHRP, NWIRP, NTHMP, etc.

III. Report from the OSTP Liaison

In the monthly report from the SDR's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Liaison, Tammy Dickinson (OSTP) stated that the President's Climate Action Plan was released in June (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/image/president27sclimateactionplan.pdf>), and the SDR has an opportunity to contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives aimed at carrying out the plan's objectives. This can be accomplished by collaborating with follow-on activities through OSTP, the U.S. Global Climate Research Program (USGCRP), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) that will occur over the coming months (and years). One specific activity mentioned by Dickinson was an open access to climate data initiative that may include the development of a "climate toolbox" in conjunction with the climate.data.gov and hazards.data.gov portals as well as the execution of a "Tech for Disasters" datapalooza.

Aubrey Miller (NIH) mentioned that one tool his agency is engaged in related to the plan is the Metadata Access Tool for Climate and Health (MATCH – www.match.globalchange.gov), which is a publicly accessible, online tool for researchers that offers centralized access to standardized contextual information about thousands of government-held datasets related to health, the environment, and climate-science. MATCH is one of a growing number of tools, driven by open data, which are being made available by the Administration as fuel for innovation, ideas, and insights at the important intersection of climate and human health. Please contact Miller (miller.aubrey@nih.gov) for more information on NIH's engagement with the MATCH initiative.

IV. Briefing: U.S. Forest Service 2013 Wildfire Season Outlook

Applegate introduced Jason Steinmetz (USFS), who is an Emergency Management Specialist at the U.S. Forest Service, serving as a coordinator of the National Incident Management System within the agency. Steinmetz presented on the U.S. Forest Service's 2012 wildfire season summary and an outlook for the wildfire season in 2013.

To open his presentation, Steinmetz noted that the responsibility of national wildland fire management and safety falls to several agencies within the Federal government, not just USFS. Other major Federal agency contributors that work directly with states entities during wildfire outbreaks include: DOI, NPS, BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as DOD and the National Guard. He added that in order to increase coordination and cooperation between these entities, all Federal agency and state personnel train together to create a synchronized, seamless national wildfire management force. Because fire recognizes no boundaries, Federal and state entities also have fire reciprocal agreements, whereby the agencies will provide assistance to one another to fight wildland fires in order to achieve more productive, cost effective, and efficient operations among the partnering agencies. Steinmetz outlined that fire suppression services are shared during the first 24-hour period of an incident at no cost; however, agencies will reimburse one another for the use of their equipment and personnel after that point.

According to Steinmetz, the average annual number of wildfires that occur nationally is roughly 75,000, with the principal cause of the fires being dry lightning storms – especially on the West Coast. He stated that western U.S. states typically experience the longest and most intense burning wildfires, although every area of the country can experience wildfires, given the right topography, fuel types, and weather conditions. On the East Coast, the wildfire season is short and typically occurs in the spring and fall, whereas on the West Coast, in the Pacific Northwest, and in the South, wildfire season occurs from approximately June to mid-September and can run into the late fall in some areas like Southern California.

Looking back on the 2012 wildland fire season, only about 68,000 wildfires burned nationally, but Steinmetz noted that many were very large fires as they burned 9.3 million total acres of land – well above the annual average of around 7 million acres burned. There were 45 Fire Management Assistance Declarations by FEMA in 2012, which are made for large fires burning at least 100 acres of timber and/or 300 acres of grassland. The FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant Program provided a 75 percent Federal cost share with the states during these declarations in 2012, with the states paying the remaining 25 percent of actual fire suppression costs. In 2013 wildfire experts expect a slightly below average year based on the current pace. As of July 10, Steinmetz noted that just over 24,000 wildfires have burned in the U.S., consuming almost 2 million acres of land. This represents a decrease compared to the 10-year average to date of about 41,000 wildfires consuming on average 3 million acres. He highlighted that the wildfire risk in the state of California for 2013 is elevated higher than that of other surrounding states due to high field temperatures and low moisture levels and will be monitored throughout the remainder of the season.

To close his presentation, Steinmetz discussed the recent Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona, which claimed the lives of 19 members of the local Prescott, AZ Fire Department's interagency Granite Mountain Hotshots firefighting team on June 30, 2013, making it the sixth-deadliest American firefighter disaster in history. According to Steinmetz, it's known that the fire started via a dry lightning strike on Arizona state-owned land on June 28, and it's believed that the crew was overcome by the fire while building a fire line when a severe downdraft of wind from an oncoming thunderstorm pushed the fire downhill into their area (a rare event). Other details of the incident are still being determined through a joint, ongoing Federal and state investigation, and more information will be released as soon as it becomes available. For reference, Steinmetz provided a time-lapse video of the Yarnell Hill Fire as it burned, which can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT1Z5I0hHYk>.

In response to questions from Hynes and Applegate on which entity makes the decision on what resources are utilized during a wildfire, Steinmetz explained that national- and regional-scale interagency resource maps broken up into specific geographical sections help to pre-designate which primary fire suppression services are called to action during an event. In the case of Alaska – a special case due to its proximity to the rest of the country – Steinmetz stated that Federal and state officials will often let fires burn unless they are close to population centers (e.g. Anchorage, Fairbanks, etc.) at the wildland-urban interface (WUI) but noted that the resource system is designed to provide supplemental services to Alaska as needed in the case of particularly large or dangerous fires.

Dickinson then asked Steinmetz to identify specific policy concerns that may need to be addressed related to wildland fire management. He offered that the outdated policy of attempting to put out nearly every wildfire needs to be revisited and stressed the importance of educating the general public about the benefits of prescribed fire to remove potentially hazardous fuels, such as dead or downed trees. Steinmetz stated that enhancing communities' local capabilities to make their areas more fire-safe through a cohesive educational strategy should be a top priority. Hynes added that an analysis of long-term patterns in land use and technical changes over time to detect wildfire trends could also enhance prevention, mitigation, and recovery policy efforts.

To this end, Applegate mentioned the Joint Fire Science Program of the USFS, which focuses on Federal engagement with the academic community to drive the broader fire science R&D agenda. He noted that the most recent plan has evolved to account for climate change concerns and has balanced an emphasis on the long-term research horizon with an immediate focus on actionable information for the emerging needs of policymakers and fire managers. Sezin Tokar (USAID) added that the issue of cascading impacts associated with wildland fires – such as increased flooding and mudslide risks – is also an important area for R&D to address during the recovery and reforestation phases following an event. Miller piggybacked that human health concerns from wildfire at the WUI is another critical area to include in future iterations of the fire science R&D agenda.

Please contact Steinmetz (jsteinmetz@fs.fed.us) with any questions about his briefing.

V. Update: Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force Progress of Science Coordination Working Group

Dickinson gave a short update on the activities of the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force and its Science Coordination Group (SCG), which continues to progress in its objective to ensure that the comprehensive long-term rebuilding strategy is informed by the most recent and relevant scientific advice to improve resilience and preparedness. Dickinson gave kudos to all SDR members and their Federal colleagues who participated in the SCG and provided S&T hazards information to the Task Force. She noted that the Task Force is currently reviewing over 7,000 agency comments that were submitted to the first draft of its rebuilding strategy report and plans to release an updated draft version for additional input next week (the week of July 15). As the final report is due to the President on August 2, 2013, Dickinson mentioned that an SDR briefing from a member of the Task Force on the final version of the document may be in order for the September meeting. Subcommittee members are encouraged to continue to provide comments on future draft versions of the report through their agency's official Task Force representative or through Dickinson ([Tamara L. Dickinson@ostp.eop.gov](mailto:Tamara.L.Dickinson@ostp.eop.gov)) or Chris Clavin of the Science and Technology Policy Institute (cclavin@ida.org).

VI. Adjournment

Applegate adjourned the SDR June meeting at 11:48 p.m.

VII. Future Meetings

SDR meetings in 2013 will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the dates listed below in the Lincoln Room of the White House Conference Center:

2013

- ✓ Thursday, September 12
- ✓ Thursday, October 3
- ✓ Thursday, November 7
- ✓ Thursday, December 5

VIII. 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 the SDR Secretariat Bret Schothorst (bret.schothorst@mantech.com).

IX. Contact Information

SDR Leadership

David Applegate	Co-chair	703-648-6600	applegate@usgs.gov
Margaret Davidson	Co-chair	843-740-1220	margaret.davidson@noaa.gov

Dennis Wenger	Co-chair	703-292-8606	dwenger@nsf.gov
Tamara Dickinson	OSTP Liaison	202-456-6105	tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov

Secretariat

Bret Schothorst	703-388-0312	bret.schothorst@mantech.com
Barbara Haines-Parmele	703-388-0309	barbara.haines-parmele@mantech.com

X. Summary of July Actions

Action	Lead	By When
Reach out to OSTP Liaison Tammy Dickinson (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov) or Chris Clavin of the Science and Technology Policy Institute (cclavin@ida.org) to provide input to the updated draft version of the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force rebuilding strategy report.	SDR Members and Federal Colleagues	ASAP
Contact the SDR Secretariat (bret.schothorst@mantech.com) and OSTP Liaison Tammy Dickinson (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov) with ideas or suggestions for a path forward of how the SDR can address the issue of Federal geospatial and remote sensing data interoperability and availability identified in our post-Sandy S&T lessons learned white paper.	SDR Members and Federal Colleagues	Standing
Send brief write-ups outlining the impacts that budget sequestration cuts are having on your agency's disaster reduction S&T activities in FY 2013 as well as an outlook of the President's FY 2014 budget request to the SDR Secretariat (bret.schothorst@mantech.com) copying our OSTP Liaison (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov).	SDR Members	Standing
Email the SDR Secretariat (bret.schothorst@mantech.com) and OSTP Liaison Tammy Dickinson (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov) if willing to pilot an assessment of the progress of the short-, mid-, and long-term goals outlined in an SDR Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction implementation plans.	SDR Members	Standing
Contact OSTP Liaison Tammy Dickinson (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov) and the SDR Secretariat (bret.schothorst@mantech.com) to participate in the OSTP Big Data initiative to incorporate public-facing Federal natural hazards data sets to Data.gov or to suggest needed tech tools and apps for information sharing ahead of future emergencies or natural disasters.	SDR Members and Federal Colleagues	Standing
Please consider supporting the work of the SDR and its Secretariat through a contribution from your agency. Let Co-chair David Applegate (applegate@usgs.gov) know if you need an Agency- or Department-specific request letter.	SDR Members	Standing

<p>Contact Co-chair Dennis Wenger (dwenger@nsf.gov) if your agency is able to provide funding support to the University of Colorado-Boulder's Natural Hazards Center.</p>	<p>SDR Members and Federal Colleagues</p>	<p>Standing</p>
<p>Contact OSTP Liaison Tammy Dickinson (tdickinson@ostp.eop.gov) if it would be helpful for OSTP to issue a letter to your agency or department requesting new (or re-affirmed) designation of official representatives. Ideas for other entities that should be represented on the SDR are also welcome.</p>	<p>SDR Members</p>	<p>Standing</p>