



Resilient Neighbors Network July 14, 2016 Retreat Report

Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA) Practitioners
Symposium and Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) Retreat
- Broomfield, Colorado



JULY 14, 2016

NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION ASSOCIATION (NHMA)

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INTRODUCTION:

The Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA) Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) Community is a peer-to-peer sharing network of local communities whose members share hazard mitigation experience, knowledge and expertise and offer support to other communities and other partners. RNN communities collaborate to identify and share best practices and grow awareness about the benefits of hazard mitigation.

On July 14th, 2016, the Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA), as part of its ongoing effort toward development of the Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) in response to its commission from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), hosted a Retreat for the RNN Community as part of its annual Practitioners Symposium in Broomfield, Colorado. The purpose of the RNN Retreat was to bring together members of the Resilient Neighbors Network communities to examine their goals and objectives as a group, analyze their accomplishments to date, and strategize their direction, purpose, and growth going forward.

The RNN Retreat was held in conjunction with the 2016 NHMA Practitioners Symposium, Wrap-Up Session and the RNN Monthly Community Meeting, held on July 15, 2016, where the objectives and ideas produced by the Symposium and the RNN Retreat were put forth and discussed for the benefit of those community members who were not present at the Retreat.

The Natural Hazard Mitigation Association is pleased to report on the tremendous success of these two meetings and encapsulate the experiences, ideas and analyses of the member communities who participated. The following *Resilient Neighbors Network Retreat Report* and *2016 NHMA Practitioners Symposium Wrap-Up Session and RNN Community Meeting* provides a summary of the in-depth discussions and action items proposed by the dynamic discussions of the RNN Community members and others which came out of the 2016 RNN Retreat and its subsequent monthly meeting.

Summary:

On the afternoon of July 14, 2016, in conjunction with the [2016 NHMA Practitioners Symposium](#), member communities of the Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) and other participating communities, met to share ideas and discuss the RNN through a “Strategic Vision Retreat”. This Retreat allowed RNN community leaders and national experts to review and refresh the RNN, evaluate the RNN model, analyze its successes and failures through a SWOT analysis, and define a self-sustaining business model for a “Nation of Resilient Neighbors Network”. Topics of the brainstorming session included the current status of the RNN, the future direction of the RNN, and what actions or activities needed to be implemented to move the RNN concept forward. It should be noted that because not all RNN member communities were able to attend the symposium/retreat and participate in the discussion, all were invited to attend by phone. All RNN communities were given the opportunity for input and comments before any significant actions were taken. This report summarizes the information recorded from the brainstorming session as well as the content of the NHMA Practitioners Symposium Wrap-Up Session held the following morning on July 15, 2016, which included the Monthly Meeting of the RNN Communities.

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I. RNN Communities: Mission / Vision Statement

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.

II. Resilient Neighbors Network – Member Communities and Guests, 2016 RNN Retreat

Member Communities and Guests, 2016 RNN Retreat

Augusta, Georgia	Pasadena, Texas
Central Shenandoah Valley, Virginia	Rockford, Illinois
Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, North Carolina	Tulsa, Oklahoma
Grays Harbor County, Washington	State of Vermont
Hillsborough County (Tampa), Florida	Lowland Center, Louisiana
Jefferson County, West Virginia	FEMA
Urban Drainage and Control District	



Some of the 2016 RNN Retreat Attendees (Left to Right): Christine Caggiano (Michael Baker International); Jim Murphy (NHMA Board Member); Chuck Wallace (Grays Harbor, WA); Ed Thomas (NHMA President); Jim Mullen (NHMA Board Member); Rebecca Joyce (Central Shenandoah Valley, VA and NHMA Board Member); Shannon Burke; Rosina Philippe (Lowland Center, LA); Dan Deegan; Mary Kell (Tulsa, OK); Roger Faris; Tom Hughes (NHMA Board Member); Daya Dayananda (Pasadena, TX).

III. RNN Communities - Definitions

What is the RNN?

The Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA) Resilient Neighbors Network Community (RNN) is a 13-community, peer-to-peer sharing network whose members share hazard mitigation experience, knowledge and expertise and offer support to other communities and other partners. RNN communities collaborate to identify and share best practices and grow awareness about the benefits of hazard mitigation and pre- and post-event resiliency opportunities.

IV. Break Out Session RNN Discussion:

A. Resilient Neighbors Network Goals:

- Create opportunities for relationship building between the communities involved in RNN that allow for openness and candor among members.
- Develop a trusted support network between RNN members focused around their shared goal of expanding community resiliency.
- Coordinate the expertise and available resources of RNN member communities in order to develop solutions for shared concerns and issues.
- Focus the activities of the RNN around resilience. Resilience is defined by the RNN as the dynamic, sustained, and constant reduction of negative impacts over time.

B. Question:

- **How often should the RNN meet? In person?** It was agreed the RNN should continue to meet once each month via telephone conference call and once each year for a strategic Retreat so members and member communities could expand the benefits of contact with each other.

C. Value Proposition:

- RNN serves as a resource and connection point for communities interested in becoming more resilient by sharing best practices and the challenges involved with natural hazard mitigation. Additionally, RNN has access to publications and training modules created by the NHMA to assist fellow communities around the United States. RNN serves in a mentorship role to local communities utilizing a variety of methods ranging from email and telephone communication to, when requested, one-on-one community mentoring relationships between communities that share

commonalities such as size, location, type (rural or urban), and/or natural hazard vulnerabilities.

- Ongoing shared-learning will be a key experience of RNN member communities throughout their membership. RNN member communities will have opportunities to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of their fellow RNN communities through discussions during monthly conference calls, one-on-one communication between members, trainings such as webinars provided by NHMA and other organizations, and resource sharing of publications, educational materials, presentations, and plans created by RNN members.

D. Current Challenges:

- **RNN relationship building within the NHMA:** Like other organizations made up of volunteers and that cover a large geographic area such as the entire United States, RNN and NHMA have had to make a concerted effort to make sure their activities support each other and that good communication is maintained. Steps have been put in place to help enhance their connectedness such as having this RNN retreat as part of NHMA's Natural Hazard Symposium and having an NHMA board member who is an RNN member as well. RNN members expressed their desire for this to continue and to create more opportunities for connection whenever they arise.
- **Creating a niche for RNN:** The term 'resiliency' has become quite common and the RNN membership wants to make sure it concentrates its energy on activities that focus on the key component of a community's overall resilience - disaster risk reduction and natural hazards mitigation.

E. Basic Elements of Proposed "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" Program of RNN:

During the RNN retreat, members expressed an interest in developing a program specifically aimed at providing mentorship to a community during and in the aftermath or recovery phase of an emergency situation or a disaster caused by a natural hazard. The program was named, "Neighbors Helping Neighbors".

- The first element of the program would involve a local community reaching out to the RNN for assistance. That community would be connected with an RNN member community that could provide the most valuable assistance based on factors such as being in the same region or having experienced the same type of natural hazard.
- The second element of this program involves a face-to-face visit from the RNN member community representative or a trusted person such as an NHMA member to provide technical assistance.

- The third element would be on-going mentorship as the community works through its situation and the RNN member community representative provides follow-up and on-going check-ins as needed.
- The final element would be for the RNN representative who has assisted the local community to write up a short report for distribution to the RNN members and NHMA. This support could be invaluable to local communities because it would provide services at a grass-roots level to communities in need, by practitioners who have expertise in handling similar situations that such a community is facing.

F. Outcomes:

As a result of all that was discussed during the Retreat, the RNN members concluded that the positive outcomes that would result from their ideas would lead to:

1. Membership growth in the Resilient Neighbors Network.
2. More solutions found for problems that local communities face because of their vulnerabilities to natural hazards.
3. The RNN members would have a sense of accomplishment as they are able to help disaster-risk reductions move forward in local communities.

G. Future RNN Discussion Topics:

As the retreat concluded, a list was created by the attendees to share with the RNN Community representatives that were unable to attend the retreat. This list provided topics that the RNN members wanted to discuss as a whole group and included:

1. In person meetings, whole group, in a member community, working together. Using the concept of neighbors, it was felt that RNN needed to discuss the best way to connect in person.
2. Network profiles - organization and individual; include what each community can provide; include NHMA members as well. A discussion about the revision of the RNN member community profiles needs to take place. Developing profiles of key NHMA members also may be of benefit.
3. Member to member visits - RNN communities mentoring each other. How individual RNN members could connect with each other needs to be included in the discussion.
4. Communication between RNN and NHMA. As a result of this meeting, the RNN Communities began to understand the benefit of becoming closely involved with NHMA. This needed to be shared with all the RNN communities.

H. Action Items and Assignments

The final activity at the RNN retreat was to create a list of action items and assign these tasks so that all the ideas that were generated would not lose momentum after the retreat and NHMA Symposium concluded. The action items and assignments included:

1. Finishing the RNN Community Matrix to show the characteristics and expertise of the member communities based on work already completed. (Matrix prepared and distributed September 13, 2016.)
2. Update RNN community profiles. (Roger Faris has agreed to begin this work.)
3. Discuss activities for group on August call:
 - Distribution of RNN Retreat Notes to Community members.
 - Broomfield Report status to be determined.
 - Current Matrix to be distributed to Community members
 - RNN Meeting dates for the year to be confirmed and Invitations sent to all Community members in advance.
4. Rebecca Joyce would contact all communities by August.
5. Update Mission Statement - make sure it reflects RNN. (Updated and distributed September 13, 2016.)

V. Conclusion:

The brainstorming session at the NHMA Practitioners Workshop/RNN Retreat was an excellent opportunity for the RNN communities and other local communities to reconnect and prioritize some immediate steps that can be taken over the next several months to expand the Resilient Neighbors Network's ability to provide mentorship between member communities as well as to other local communities across the Country. In sharing ideas, the main theme that emerged was the focus on local communities throughout the United States being "neighbors" to each other and what that concept entails in terms of disaster risk reduction and resilience. The RNN communities in attendance confirmed their commitment to mentoring and learning from each other as well as reaching out to other communities that may benefit from their knowledge and experiences. The immediate tasks necessary to take the RNN to the next level of development are centered on refining the RNN mission, defining the capabilities of the RNN communities that could be valuable resources for providing mentorship, and creating a process where other communities could request and receive specific types of assistance from individual RNN communities or NHMA members. An important component of the success of RNN is the support of the program by the NHMA. The RNN member communities perceive the relationship between the NHMA and RNN to be that of a parent and child. As the parent organization, NHMA can encourage RNN's success through its guidance, sharing of resources and respect. Through the various sessions that led up to and followed the RNN brainstorming session during the entire Practitioners Symposium, the enthusiastic and positive support of the RNN program by the membership of the NHMA was evident. With the NHMA's continued assistance and the completion of the tasks mentioned in this report, the future for the Resilient Neighbors Network looks bright.

2016 NHMA Practitioners Symposium Wrap-Up Session & RNN Community Meeting Friday, July 15, 2016

Attendees: Ed Thomas, Kim Thiele, Roger Faris, Jim Murphy, Tom Hughes, Chuck Wallace, Rebecca Joyce, Rosina Philippe, Mary Kell, Daya Dayananda, Christine Caggiano (Michael Baker International), Shannon Burke, Jim Mullen, Dan Deegan, David Miller

Ed Thomas opened the meeting with a re-cap of the [NHMA 2016 Practitioners Symposium](#) held the previous day.



Positive/Collective thoughts of the group:

- Networking is a powerful tool with NHMA
- Group session looked at the challenges honestly
- We must continue to speak in layman's terms so all can understand the issues, concerns, opportunities
- Need an Elected Official on the board [will work in partnership with NACo to achieve this]
- Integrated Pyramid – Locals on the top; feds on the bottom
- Helped Invigorate the RNN folks - Important Leads there; not delegated to subordinates

- We strengthened relationships within RNN community and with NHMA
- Had value based discussions – but need to document each other’s visions and values
- RNN is updating the RNN community matrix
- Need to engage businesses using economics, not rhetoric, discuss business continuity, opportunities to invest in a prepared community, get economic development folks on the same page; help with short-term profit vs. long-term gains that can be realized. This concept will be included in the DRR Curriculum.
- Search for brutal honesty during recovery visioning planning process – After a Disaster, people rarely ask “Do I stay or do I go?” How local does the visioning process get: from the community, to the neighborhood, to the family
- We are technical language translators for various audiences
- Try to “Facilitate Common Vision” with many initial differing views/issues/concerns
- Use of National Disaster Recovery resources
- Use of news clipping services for getting the word out should be considered NHMA (Tom/Crissy)
- Market <http://nhma.info> to get folks using it; Review and upgrade of RNN area (Dan/Roger and Board Members Due Out); need to post articles such as today’s Fire Mitigation Picture and Caption on mitigation efforts (fire resistant material/cleaning up debris) by homeowner; need to get “Firewise” information on our webpage or link to states Firewise programs [Action Item to KIM?]
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact/RNN/NHMA/Peer-to-Peer and possible funding sources will be included in DRR Curriculum
- RNN Support – Tailor made resource for working with Native Americans should be developed.
- Identify which states have conferences, do mini-presentation and provide material via the use of Google Docs (some firewall issues and RNN will need access)
- Meet with different audiences; move away from your comfort zone audiences; figure out who the tribes are, e.g. Native Americans, lawyers, engineers, architects, planners, etc.
- Figure out ways to influence the law for recovery/mitigation needs; ET working on this through ABA
- Iowa Mitigation Fund – Should really say it is an economic fund that assists mitigation efforts for SAFE development
- Discussed past work with ASFPN-National Park Service and Rails to Trails folks providing vast federal Technical Assistance during the Midwest Flood of 1993. The folks performing this work included Wendy Blackwell, now New Mexico State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO). Concept of using federal support through Stafford Act Funding as we did in 1993 with FEMA Technical Assistance Mission Assignment to National Parks Service. All tie back to the DRR Curriculum, RNN Peer-to-Peer assistance and Living Mosaic/Patchwork Quilt
- RNN – Rebecca Joyce mentioned Resilient Virginia initiative as an example of this peer-to-peer support
- Need a possible update and dissemination of the NHMA PowerPoint through NHMA CTP with FEMA (completed and distributed at Resilient Nation Network webinar on February 15, 2017) [copy of the PowerPoint is available on request]

- Rebecca Joyce mentioned that now that she has a better idea of what the RNN is she can reach out and tap for resources, to which Ed added that all of NHMA should be designed and positioned to assist the locals and the RNN
- Continue to push to hire paid staff but also energize the board and membership to contribute time – will need for the positions and folks identified for business functions, duties, tasks and work needed accomplished by the organization
- Website POC – is Jamie Marso
- Social Media POC - Nicole Bernard – LinkedIn and Facebook
- Webinars – Must continue goal a monthly webinar which will include legal issues. Tom previously coordinated the ISO BCEGS session earlier this year
- Tom would like to place article in International Association of Emergency Manager’s (IAEM) monthly “IAEM Bulletin”
- Roger Faris graciously agreed to write up selected community RNN community profiles. The RNN Communities interested should contact Roger. (Action Item-Roger & RNN Communities)
- Consider possible future use of Roger’s Duck article of a fictitious town (April Fools release date) regarding a storm event was experienced but NOTHING happened
- The higher standards to avoid future damages called: “Half Done is **extremely** well begun” is a key concept which should be developed in the DRR Curriculum.
- Tom will contact Board Members on conferences/workshops that are being attended to ensure visibility for NHMA with practitioners (Action Item: Tom)

We would like to develop Partnerships/Alliances with:

- International Association of Emergency Manager’s (IAEM)
- Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM)
- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)

Such partnership development will be included in the FEMA-NHMA CTP contract.