



Resilient Neighbors Network

Minutes of RNN Community Meeting of
Friday, *November 22, 2019*, 11:00 am ET

Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) is a network of professionals representing communities actively working toward adaptation and resilience from natural hazards.

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 & communities before, during and after a disaster. RNN will also actively bring ground truth and grassroots enlightenment to policy makers, researchers, regulators, and journalists.

AGENDA FOR *UPCOMING* RNN MEETING OF *December 20, 2019*:

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes (July, August, September, and October 2019)
3. **Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News**
4. Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina & Silver Jackets link (Ed Hecker) New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets
5. Status of ABA Book – Ed Thomas
6. Follow-up on any RNN action items and future activities
7. CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics
8. Any comments from Vincent Brown for FEMA updates
9. Adjourn

Minutes for Meeting of Friday, November 22, 2019:

11:00 am ET - CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS AND ROLL CALL:

1) ROLL CALL:

Present:

Gene Henry (Hillsborough County, FL)

Traci Sears (State of Montana)

Ned Swanberg (State of Vermont)

Ed Thomas (NHMA Board)

Jim Murphy (NHMA Board)

Erin Capps (NHMA Board)

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: (July, August, September, October 2019)

Minutes tabled.

3) COMMENTS/ISSUES/RNN COMMUNITY SHARING/GOOD NEWS

Gene Henry reported on activities in Hillsborough County, Florida:

Hillsborough County is in the middle of doing preliminary coastal map changes, updating their long-term redevelopment planning process and developing the Recovery Plan. Ned's team is responsible for what they call the GDRP. They are also updating their All Hazards document and expect to put out a draft in the next month or so to send to their state for approval.

Hillsborough County is also working on some SRLs in areas of repetitive loss. They are considering using some community approved stormwater fees to buy up older repetitive-loss structures and turn them back out to the market using local funds, so compliant structures can be built in the older-platted neighborhoods. This would allow for an increase in property taxes. They don't have to let individual lots go back to a natural state if federal funds are used for acquisition. It's difficult to put natural species back into the middle of an older subdivision.

Ned Swanberg reported on activities in Vermont:

Good news from Vermont is that recent updates to the State-Wide River Corridor Map went live in August. It is an update with field-based geomorphic data. This makes the State-Wide River Corridor Map as good as it can be wall to wall and has generated a lot more interest from communities and regional planning commissions around river corridor protection as a result.

Also, Mike Kline, who has been the Vermont Rivers Program Manager for many years, just retired in September; suggests we connect with him about getting more involved.

Not many details are available yet, but Ned reported that Mike is trying to do an LLC around fluvial matters in general and continues to work with the Gund Institute at University of Vermont. He has been doing this project under the auspices of the state for a number of years and will be presenting about it in the upcoming Conference with the Vermont Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative.

The venture goes under the name of the *Vermont Functioning Floodplain Initiative*. It is a pretty sophisticated project focused on trying to come up with special information about the functions of floodplains with regard to hazard reduction as well as sediment interception, phosphorous reduction, effects on water quality and nitrogen and how all this relates to habitats - aquatic, riparian and terrestrial - and the connectivity among all of them. The intent is to create a public mapping platform that will allow better perception of all the multiple values that floodplains and river corridors provide, to better target grant money for restoration projects, etc., and better account for the multiple co-benefits of investment, restoration and conservation, among all those assets. So far, they've allocated first monies to a team doing the Phase I work. Later it will go live on the Mapping platform. It's exciting to watch this develop.

The Rivers Program in Vermont is situated within the Agency of Natural Resources, so they see ecosystem, services, and watershed dynamics as central to everything they do. This allows them to speak to both the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and to the EPA Total Maximum Daily Limit Requirements and to be able to articulate how floodplain river corridor priorities get into those in appropriate ways.

It was agreed that it would be great to have Mike Kline involved. Many communities in the RNN are doing things that would fit right into his project so anything that Ned can do to encourage him to get involved with NHMA would be great.

Ned added that there is a group in Vermont which is one of the Community Resilience Organizations set up in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene that would also be an interesting group to connect into the RNN. They are not so much interested in planning as they are in trying to promote community engagement, social capital, and the active phone list.

Ed Thomas suggested we figure out how we can link them into the RNN. Anything Ned can do to help get the linkage established in Vermont would be great. RNN exists to help folks find other places where they can go to get information and share it with each other.

Traci Sears reported on activities in Montana:

Montana has been working and coordinating with multiple agencies in their state on Flood After Fire Coordination. A lot of money is being pumped in for outreach about it. However, there is not a lot a coordination between the sources and the turnaround window on some efforts is too short - sometimes only 48 hours. Also, the information being put out by FEMA's contractors seems to conflict with materials produced by some of Montana's existing partners like the National Weather Service or other teams that have released different types of maps for inundation areas. They are working together to try to control that and communicate with their federal partners to have them understand that Montana is actually working on the plan. Hopefully the National Weather Service and USGS and their DARE Team will be the ones to get the information out about these areas that are vulnerable due to wildfires.

Traci shared that they were shocked to learn how many different agencies and programs are in-putting information about the watershed. It is challenging to convey and monitor all that information. A meeting is planned in January with the agencies that actually oversee the watershed and establish the inundation areas. Montana is working to make their state library become the hub for all this data so that it goes into one central location. Right now, there are about five or six different agencies producing information which is not being collected or shared through a central point. They're also working on coordination for outreach.

Traci reported that a lot of good things are coming out of the Flood After Fire Coordination in Montana and hopefully they'll be able to control the input coming in from the many agencies. It's all good material, they just need to make sure they're not sending out confused messages to citizens or local communities. That's a big task they're working on.

Ed Thomas asked if there is anything already written up on this that NHMA can share with the other RNN members.

Traci said there isn't yet, but they should have some more information in January. Their first sit-down meeting with about 7 or 8 different agencies just occurred and they're hoping to produce some information starting with the January meeting.

Three things have been identified that are going to be critical. One is understanding what watersheds have been impacted and how to maintain them. The National Weather Service realized that though they have a list of all these areas that have been inundated, they have a ton of areas where there hasn't been any follow-up on whether the watershed has gone back to a more stable condition. Their first goal will be to address that then they'll have an outreach plan. Traci expects more information will be available to share over the next few months.

Ed Thomas suggested anything that we can do to incorporate this into the wildfire and the wildfire-flood connection materials that NHMA has been working on would be great. Not sure that Traci has received the current materials that we have on the wildfire flood connection - the NHMA Admin to get that out to RNN Community Members as a draft.

Ed Thomas further suggested we share with the RNN Community members the link to the internal site of the material that was set up by the NHMA webmaster and the contractor and ask for input - we have the post-wildfire stuff, we have the wildfire stuff; if it's useful it should be used and if it's not useful we need to hear back from people and incorporate that into our Operational Plan for

the CTP and our own use of internal volunteer resources. We want to make sure we reduce this into intelligible pieces that are clear and actionable and get it out to folks who can use it.

Traci will grab these materials and work with the group that is heading this up from the different agencies to start using the Curriculum as a template.

NHMA Admin to make sure we get information out to David Mallory as quickly as possible on this initiative so he's aware of what we're up to so we can move forward.

Traci Sears requested contact info for the NHMA Board; NHMA Admin to send a link for the Leadership sheet on the website out to everybody in the RNN.

Traci Sears shared that she is working with Kelly Lynch, the attorney for the Montana Lead of Cities and Towns on the possibility of her doing an article per Ed Thomas's suggestion. Kelly is expected to get back to Traci this week on her availability, but did sound interested in doing that.

Also, they are trying to get an abstract done for the State Conference coming up in March 2020 and will plan to submit it by the end of December using materials presented by herself and Joe Rossi and the Coastal Coalition.

Ed Thomas is happy to help anyway he can on that. Suggested that when the NHMA Admin shares that item with the RNN we can go through and think about what makes sense in terms of getting RNN Community members to travel to Montana to do presentations. Some of the legal materials, for example, can be presented by one of the local attorneys who we could coach as we turn over those materials, and leverage the DRR Curriculum materials and other items that might be of interest to various RNN members.

Traci Sears shared with regard to the CAP Program - each state has a Community Assistance Program that typically funds the NFIP Coordinator for each state. Montana has been trying to quantify what they do, and they are also trying to look at how to get additional funding and so are now looking at going into the Tier System.

This is relevant to RNN because some of the information required by the Tier System is a demonstration of higher standards for plans that are already addressed by the RNN. The Tier System is looking at states having a Substantial Damage Program and plan, for example. There are other things it brings up which a lot of states will struggle with because they don't have these things in place, and which make the difference between being categorized as an enhanced program or being relegated back to a basic program and affects funding. More on that to come, but there might be a role for the RNN there to help provide states who are struggling with their mitigation plan requirements to achieve what the Tier System is looking for them to have in place.

Ed Thomas agreed this is a fantastic role for the RNN. He shared that Joe Rossi has been jammed trying to deal with things he's been asked to do as part of the Community Rating System within the particular community he works with in Marshfield, Massachusetts. So, the more we can share best practices and solutions, the better off all of us will be. Suggested she work with Joe Rossi on that. A great idea, with a lot of benefit to states and communities.

Ed Thomas added that Joe Rossi did a brilliant job with Traci's summer program in Montana and had a lot to say about the role of insurance in mitigation and recovery. He really is a national expert on insurance, and Montana has a lot of national experts on insurance in their various processing offices. Let's think about how we can do that. Ed Thomas is happy to contribute any way he can.

Jim Murphy requested input on a project in New Jersey:

Jim's company AECOM, has as a client the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. They're looking at working on the largest flood control project in the nation as a result of Superstorm Sandy. It is sited along the East River on the New Jersey side, all the way up and down, and they are tasked with trying to come up with flood control ideas for the whole river. Some of the problems they're addressing one wouldn't think of because it's not only sited in a developed area, but also in an industrialized area, among railroad facilities, etc.

One of their challenges is trying to coordinate between what's going to happen during an event and getting the necessary people into these areas to operate moving the gates which are huge structures, 100 feet across. Another problem they're encountering is how to deal with wind blowing across the river because the gates are so huge, they behave like giant sails.

One thing that's helped them is trying to figure out how the communities coordinate between each other for evacuation routes, etc. He wonders how many other folks in highly urbanized areas have had to deal with these issues and is curious if the RNN has any communities that have dealt with this kind of highly urbanized challenge.

Gene Henry shared that one of the things they have in Hillsborough County is a (DUOS?) which has a nice structure and helps coordinate efforts between law enforcement and first responders and planners like him and has created structure for worst case scenarios. It doesn't look at all the risks, or all the areas of vulnerability, but their Urban Area Strategic Initiative Area is Dade County - and it brings those folks together very well and they've been meeting for years.

Gene will try to get contact info to Jim Murphy for a retired Emergency Management Director at Pinellas County who might have some helpful insight. Pinellas County has 20 something communities and is the most densely populated county in the state of Florida. They dealt with multiple hurricanes over the years and coordinated with all types of vulnerable populations, as well as industrial areas and sub-code residential areas. She may have some helpful insight.

Jim shared that part of their problem is the fact that the actual flood control works they are dealing with are so massive, and the gates they have to open and close are so huge. There are park areas and landscape areas that they have to move the gates out of sight of when not in use. They're also looking straight at Battery Park, which is across the river in New York City, and are challenged with how to develop flood control works that don't spoil the view. These are just some of the challenges they're facing which are different from other large-scale flood control projects that he's encountered or learned of through the RNN. It's not just first responders, it's also all the contractors who have to move these structures. NJDEP is the coordinating agency - part of their problem right now is they're still looking for funding in perpetuity to cover all this.

Gene shared that Hillsborough County does have floodgates and they do have to coordinate with several cities and a Water Authority and the Water Management District. He can tell how many people they might affect with some of their flood gates but will need to know how many people Jim is talking about being affected by this flood work.

With respect to businesses, Gene shared that is a different perspective in the sense of evacuations and coordination with multi-jurisdictional areas. With their flood control, they do have dams, one is for a huge preservation area and another is a huge above-ground reservoir. Either one of them, when doing an Emergency Action Plan for the flood protection device in their case, affects between 3,000-5,000 structures and maybe 10, 15, or 20,000 people. The potential that Jim is discussing though is much, much greater - that's vast.

Jim shared that part of the problem is that right in the middle of where they have to site the project, the New Jersey Department of Transportation stores and operates all of their rail cars and rail lines for the subway systems between New Jersey and New York City. They don't want to shut it down unless it's absolutely necessary, and that creates some very interesting coordination problems that a project site like this wouldn't normally have.

Gene shared that Hillsborough County has also come across the issue that no one looks at signs anymore. Two of their dams are taking away signage because people just don't recognize them. They're switching to a call system if there's a significant break. That leads to all types of other issues.

This is a remarkable analysis that Jim's firm is going to have to perform. They will have to look at everybody that's affected - not only the first responders, but also industry, commercial, long term reconstruction plan, etc. pre-any event, in order to ensure that a coordination effort can be established and that everybody follows through. Like anything else, looking at the consequences of skipping certain steps. Gene asked how long of a study will Jim's firm take?

Jim replied that he doesn't know. AECOM has the contract, probably the largest one in the nation, between \$60 and \$100 million. He described how engineers came up with an idea to have a lesser flood control structure for the 25-year flood, which only has to move for a 25-year storm. But the issue is, if you have a storm coming, how do you know if it's a 25 or a 100-year event? So, this is some of the innovative thinking that's going on.

Gene offered that they are in the second year of their Sea Level Rise Study with the University of South Florida and have received a lot of great information from Texas A&M. They're looking at all the areas of vulnerability - how do you step up some of the sustainably, not just the resilience - and all the different agencies that become involved. The Third Phase of this Study will begin after January and will look at policy statements and the hand-shaking that has to be perpetuated and

solidified at a high level in order to sustain this for any length of time. That's the other thing - all the different authorities that must address the pre-disaster and the post disaster stuff. That's a remarkable analysis. In their case, they performed the metric model and broke it down to sub-geographic units just to understand and explain the consequences of loss of commerce, housing, etc.

Gene is very interested in Jim's study. It brings an immense number of interactions to bear that have to be perpetuated into the future so that people don't forget about it, and also ensure that the funding becomes a continuing line item within those respective budgets, authorities, jurisdictions, etc.

Jim shared they are also concerned about liability; what area is responsible for what? Is a design failure considered to be operational/maintenance?

Gene shared that if it's not designed well enough where it can be functionally kept up over a long period of time, there could be problems. He described how one of the doctoral students in Hillsborough County who was working at the port removed a lot of infrastructure flood protection devices and mixed in the natural beneficial functions of the floodplain to assist some of the hardened infrastructure improvements, versus letting the infrastructure control the whole thing. That allowed for reduction in maintenance costs.

One of the reduction levels accounted for in their Sea Level Rise Study is all vulnerable populations, including businesses, that don't readily come to mind. All the parties involved have to adopt the Multi-Jurisdictional All Hazards Document - they all have to adopt it and have a Resolution, that way it perpetuates the funding mechanisms and the responsibilities.

Jim said he would like to put Gene in touch with their Project Manager on this and have them talk by phone. There're many different entities involved, with different missions, aims and objectives.

Gene said he is still at Hillsborough County for a little longer. Jim is invited to give him a call. He is happy to talk with anybody at any time.

Ed Thomas shared that with respect to liability, these are very serious issues and emphasized that the designers are the ones that are the experts. He has seen in the law that they are the folks - more than anybody else - who are looked to for choosing a design level; and choosing a design level based on historic records and sea level rise and climate uncertainty.

Ed also shared that as Ops Chief for the National Capital Region for FEMA they were doing an evacuation plan for Washington D.C. It was incredibly complicated because they had all the people who thought they were in charge - and were in charge - of different things: The Supreme Court of the United States, which has jurisdiction over certain roads, had their concerns; the Capital, which also is in charge of certain roads and had their own concerns; and the District of Columbia which had a process in mind for evacuation to Virginia but were told unequivocally by Virginia that it would be unacceptable to them. Resolving all those competing interests and needs and then dealing with the industries and businesses involved - who also think that they're in charge of stuff - was a fascinating thing. He does think that eventually they're going to have to work out an evacuation plan.

Ed Thomas shared that as we see what's going on in Florida, they may be one of the leaders in the nation with regard to working on evacuation plans that are really designed to work.

It would be great to have an RNN session that talks about what people are doing around the country with regard to this - not just with getting an evacuation plan, but with regulatory requirements that are actually designed to work. Florida is working on a number of those.

If we were to do something just on evacuation planning, this might be something that could be put out to the RNN Communities to see if we could get some input from people like Gene Henry. It would be something to continue to follow up on nationally. Ed would be happy to chat a little about what they find in the National Capital Region and the liability issue.

4) STATUS OF PRACTICAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT IN SOUTH CAROLINA & SILVER JACKETS LINK (Ed Hecker) New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets

5) STATUS OF ABA BOOK – Ed Thomas

Ed Thomas shared that it has been a struggle finding authors for Chapter 3 of the ABA Book on Resilience. Donna Boyce has stepped into that role and is working on it - we've gotten an extension to December 15th for the chapter, so if anyone wants to work with Donna to get that chapter done it would be absolutely splendid.

This is the Chapter talking about basics of Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery. We had hoped the RNN Communities would be authoring this chapter; unfortunately, we had folks drop out because of their busy schedules. But it is an opportunity to contribute. Chuck Wallace prepared the first draft on it and several others offered to step in but then had to bow out, so we are very grateful to Donna Boyce for taking the lead on this and have given her a bunch of materials. Since Ed Hecker's chapter is double the permitted length, we have sent that material to Donna hoping some of what was written by Ed Hecker and David Vaughn could be used for it. This material is foundational because it's talking about short and long-term solutions.

If anyone else wants to look at the draft they are most welcome. We're getting really close to printing this book and we need to get it done one way or the other.

Jim Murphy offered to look at it if time permits and will send Donna a note and let her know.

Ed Thomas mentioned a publication which just came out from the American Bar Association containing an article in ABA Magazine about some steel frame buildings in earthquake country that are seriously dangerous. There was also an article in the Los Angeles Times which mentioned steel frame buildings in the context of other buildings that are unsafe in earthquakes. We are hoping to make this the focus of action, looking possibly at an NHMA webinar in cooperation with the ABA focusing on action that needs to be taken on that to reduce future risks. Please let Ed Thomas know if anyone wants to hear more about this.

6) FOLLOW-UP ON ANY RNN ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

7) CTP COLLABORATION MONTHLY CALL FOR TOPICS

Ed Thomas suggested that Jim's request for assistance today might be something to submit for the Monthly CTP Collaboration call. Jim responded that he would need to get buy-in from his Project Manager at AECOM and also their client, and maybe have an initial call with just a few folks like Ed and Gene and some others before taking that particular step.

Gene Henry added that some of his peers are looking into other funding avenues for use of local or state funds in order to buy out older structures and turn them into affordable housing. That would incrementally change those subdivisions with compliant code structures. Hopes to elevate that and look for alternative funding for these communities to begin addressing the vulnerabilities in these older communities.

Erin Capps shared that the Hurricane Conference was discussed in the Board call yesterday. There is potential to bring this into the Roadmap. Taran Roddy is focusing on the new CTP - if anybody wants to be part of that effort, please let her and Erin Capps know.

8) ANY COMMENTS FROM VINCENT BROWN FOR FEMA UPDATES

9) ADJOURN

The Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Next RNN meeting is **December 20, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.** Eastern Time.

ACTION ITEMS:

November 2019 Action Items List

DISTRIBUTION OF CURRICULUM MATERIALS:

- (Nov)-A1. **NHMA Admin** to get a link to the Curriculum materials out to everyone for review requesting input on updates or changes that need to be incorporated. - **DONE**
- (Nov)-A2. **NHMA Admin** to make sure we get information on this out to David Mallory so he's aware and we can move forward. - **DONE**
- (Nov)-A3. **NHMA Admin** to send a link for the Leadership sheet on the website out to everybody in the RNN. - **DONE**
- (Nov)-A4. **Traci Sears** will use the wildfire and wildfire flood connection materials from the RNN Curriculum in her work with the group that is heading up watershed inundation efforts for Montana, using the Curriculum as a template.
- (Nov)-A5. **Traci Sears** will send material from Montana's watershed planning efforts to the RNN to be incorporated into the RNN Curriculum wildfire and wildfire flood connection modules.
- (Nov)-A2. **Jim Murphy** to look at the draft of Chapter 3 for the Resiliency book if time permits and get a note to Donna Boyce to let her know.

October 2019 RNN Action Items List

DISTRIBUTION OF NAI MATERIALS / OUTREACH:

- (Oct)-A1. **French Wetmore** to present three webinars to the NHMA membership and the RNN Communities on several aspects of the NAI.
- (Oct)-A2. **French Wetmore** to be available to do additional presentations on the NAI for anybody who would like a webinar presentation made to folks in their locale.
- (Oct)-A3. **NHMA and the RNN** to circulate information about the NAI freely to their communities and Emergency Mangers and Flood Plain Managers as well.
- (Oct)-A4. **Annie Vest** get the NAI material out to NEMA.
- (Oct)-A5. **Tom Hughes** to circulate NAI material to the IAEM.
- (Oct)-A6. **Barb Miller** to circulate the NAI material to the communities she is working with and tell them that these are the standards they should really consider implementing in order to do it right and avoid having to do this all again in the Spring.
- (Oct)-A7. **Barb Miller** to send the NAI material over to her NFIP Coordinator to make sure they're aware at the state level that this material is available.
- (Oct)-A8. **French Wetmore to help Tom Hughes** present NAI material at a workgroup to update their 2016 Flood Plain Model.
- (Oct)-A9. **French Wetmore** to get Endangered Species Act materials over to Tom Hughes related to a model ordinance for Puget Sound done some years ago.