



# Resilient Neighbors Network

**Minutes of RNN Community Meeting of  
Friday, *November 1, 2019*, 11:00 am ET**

(This is the rescheduled Meeting of October 25, 2019)

**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.

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## **AGENDA FOR RNN MEETING OF November 22, 2019:**

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes (July, August and September 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 1, 2019:

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

#### 1) ROLL CALL:

Present:

**Jenny Picciano, AICP** (Lycoming Lead Planner, filling in for Muncy Borough Manager today)

**Chelsea Blair** (Lycoming County Planning Commission)

**French Wetmore** (French & Associates, LTD, Washington State)

**Tom Hughes** (NHMA Board)

**Donna Boyce** (NHMA Board)

**Mary Baker** (NHMA Board)

**Annie Vest** (NHMA Board)

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#### 2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: (July, August, September)

Quorum not present - Minutes tabled.

#### 3) Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News

Tabled.

#### 4) Presentation by French Wetmore on NAI

**French Wetmore** introduced the NAI and oriented everyone to the four-pager called 'NAI Community Liability and Property Rights' which was sent to them.

- NAI stands for No Adverse Impact. This is a concept/program started by the Association of Flood Plain Managers about twenty years ago. It presents the reality that if you're depending on minimum federal criteria to run your flood plain management program, you will have problems. You cannot expect that the minimum criteria for the whole country will meet all the issues your community may face.
- The initial NAI thrust was on liability, so this is one of the early brochures. The idea is to get local elected officials' attention and to communicate to them that if they believe they are doing everything right by meeting the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and something goes wrong, they don't have a defense. They should know better than to expect something written in Washington to meet their immediate situation, and if they didn't go through and come up with criteria more attuned to their community - especially with some higher standards - then their defense won't stand up in court. This is based on an actual review of a variety of court cases by a group of attorneys.
- This distributed brochure is a copy of the PDF on the ASFPM's website. The original brochure on the ASFPM's website is on ledger-sized paper and is hard to see on screen. A good quality version can be found at <http://www.floods.org> (the ASFPM website). Scroll down and look for the NAI logo. The bulk of the material discussed today is on their website and is downloadable for free as a PDF.
- The classic explanation of the concept of NAI is illustrated in the graphic on the cover of this brochure. If you've done any meetings around flood plain studies, you'll recognize that it's a cross-section.
  - The example shows an original community which has had a 100-year flood, reaching so high, and covering so much ground. The minimum Federal rules - once there is a Floodway Map - allow developers to fill in the fringe.
  - The Floodway Map is based on allowing 1 foot of increase to flood heights. Obviously, if the building affected is your house, and your house was six inches above the hundred-year flood

- line thanks to development that was legally allowed by your community, then your house is now six inches *below* the hundred-flood line and you probably have grounds for a lawsuit. That is the easiest way to explain the concept of the NAI: Don't assume the minimum rules are good enough and don't cause adverse impact on someone else.
- The brochure is available to be downloaded and distributed. It is still good and can be used however you want to use it. It contains a lot of quotes as well as the imprimatur of the ASFPM, so it should have some standing in the mitigation community.
  - About five years after the original NAI concept was published, communities and local officials came back to the ASFPM and said, 'You've told us what we can't do; but now we need to know what we *should* do to better prepare ourselves and our communities.' This was no longer just an issue of avoiding lawsuits - they wanted to know what they needed to do to have better and more acceptable flood plain management programs. The focus of the NAI then shifted from detailing things to avoid doing which get communities into trouble to what specific things they should be doing to stay *out* of trouble and do things right.
  - From there, the Association responded with the NAI Toolkit. It's about 60 pages and can be found on the ASFPM website. It breaks down Flood Plain Management into seven Building Blocks: Backing, Education and Outreach, Planning, Regulations, Mitigation, Infrastructure, and Emergency Services. The Toolkit has about 5-6 pages per Building Block. It introduces the idea of three levels of activity: Basic, Better, and NAI.
    - Basic flood plain regulations would be what the National Flood Insurance Program sets as the minimum national standard. Better flood plain regulations would be to, for example, add freeboard; so, if you're going to build in the flood plain, don't accept the minimum national standard of building the lowest floor at the hundred-year flood level, but at least build the lowest floor one or two or three feet higher. The NAI standard however, is to ask the question, should you even be building in the flood plain in the first place? Are there areas you should be avoiding entirely? Is there a type of development you should keep out of the floodplain? Should you be preserving areas of natural beneficial functions?
    - There you can see the three levels of activity: Basic, Better, and NAI. It's interesting that the Basic level of activity is the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - Initially a lot of communities felt that the National Flood Insurance Program standards were way too high. It took some time for folks to accept the fact that these standards were *not* way too high, and they are not the goal - they are just the starting point, the basic thing each community should be doing. And of course, a lot of communities are doing them because they're in the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - One of the shortcomings of the Toolkit is that it telescopes discussions about important aspects of Flood Plain Management into an abbreviated list of things one should do to about five or six pages. That is really way too short. If one paragraph is spent on a Tool, it will necessarily leave out a lot of important information. Freeboard, for example, is probably explained in only one or two paragraphs. It was decided that folks could really use more guidance and from there the Association developed a series of *How To Guides* based on each of the Building Blocks. There are seven Building Blocks and seven *How To Guides*.
  - The second PDF shows a couple of pages from an 80-page How To Guide. The Table of Contents are consistent across all of the *Guides* and are all organized the same way. There is an Introduction and background as to what NAI is, followed by (in this example) Section Two which talks about the Flood Plain Manager's role in the field.
    - Section Two is probably more important in this particular *Guide* than in any of the others because it addresses the question of when there's a flood, who's in charge? The Emergency Manager or the Flood Plain Manager? The *Guide* stresses the obvious - that it is the Emergency Manager who is in charge. The Flood Plain Manager's job is to support the Emergency Manager; but similarly, the Emergency Manager needs to be contacting the Flood Plain Manager who can give him or her a lot of help and support in preparing for and understanding a flood event, and needs to be fully involved and aware of what can be done.
  - This brings us to some principals that are built into each of the Guides called Factors For Effective Emergency Services. Each of the *Guides*, at the end of Section Two, identifies some factors that, if one learns nothing else, are the key things to keep in mind about that particular Building Block. They are pretty obvious, but it's useful to restate them.

- The first one is 'Clearly designate roles and responsibilities.' Clarify up front who's in charge of what, and what are your various roles. The Emergency Manager needs to know where does the Flood Plain Manager fit in, and vice versa, and what are they supposed to do?
- Another good example which is again a no-brainer for Emergency Managers, is 'Evaluate and Improve'. Every time an event occurs, go back, learn the lessons, and refine the program. There is a set of *Factors* for all seven of the *Guides*.
- The next most important aspect of the *How To Guides* is Section Three. Section Three has four or five Tools. The Toolkit has tools, but they're broken down pretty small. Each Chapter of a particular Building Block might have twenty Tools - twenty little regulatory standards, for example, that a community should consider, and spends a paragraph on each. So, the *Guide* picks four or five of the more important standards, or best, most representative Tools of the Building Block, and discusses them. In the Emergency Management Building Block, there are four Tools identified and they follow a chronological order for flooding.
  - The first one is "Flood Threat Recognition" which means find out or know or get advised about when a flood is going to happen. One the challenges that Flood Plain Managers have is to remind Emergency Managers that floods are different and the biggest difference between floods and tornadoes or earthquakes or explosions, is that you've got *warning*. Depending on the size of the river or the coastal storms, you've got maybe one or two days of warning. So, you don't want to use the standard Emergency Management approach of assessing the situation after it occurs in order to respond. With floods, you don't wait for the disaster to happen and then respond. As soon as you know it's coming, you can do things.
    - Convincing or having Flood Plain Managers get that message across to Emergency Managers is one of the main focal points of Flood Threat Recognition. It also gets into the various Tools you have and how to select the best ones.
  - Once you know the flood is coming, the next step is where's it going to go? What's it going to do to my community? Again, here you can prepare long before the flood, with a Flood Inundation Map, which shows where the flood is predicted to go and how high. It's amazing how many communities don't have a Flood Inundation Map. They have their Flood Insurance Rate maps, or they have a map of the last flood, but not a progressive what's-going-to-happen-at-different-levels flood map. A community needs that to do a good Advanced Flood Response Plan, which is the Third Tool.
  - The Flood Response Plan assesses what's going to happen at different levels and figures out in advance what a community will need to do. You don't issue a warning that tells everybody to evacuate if your Flood Threat Recognition says it's going to go this high, and your Flood Response Plan says it's going to only affect this part of your community. You need to know, for example, when or if the Fire Station is going to get flooded and know to evacuate the Fire Station based on what the first Two Tools tell you.
  - The next Tool is Critical Facilities. Obviously, the National Flood Insurance Program and Flood Plain Managers don't consider critical facilities as that important; they identify their key focus as buildings - a building is a building. So, a hospital is built to the same standard as single family homes, in standard Flood Plain Management Regulations. But obviously, in practice a hospital deserves a bit more protection and attention than an ordinary single-family home, and the section on Critical Facilities reviews how some critical facilities have managed this.
- In Section Four, all of the *How To Guides* have Case Studies. Some of the best communities have great activities that have been done - you can see they're all around the country - from Illinois, Florida, Tennessee, to New York State, and Ventura, California. A lot of folks are doing great stuff all over the country and these Case Studies are all about a page long, but they have links to the rest of the Reports.
- Section Five is Resources and Links. On the very last page, you will find the first Page of Tool One in the Emergency Management Guide. See the Blue Box in the upper right corner - each Tool has a step-by-step approach. Again, much of this is pretty obvious, but it's helpful to have something you can walk through if you want to perform any of these activities. For example, if you want to evaluate your community's Flood Threat Recognition System - where do you start?

- Step One is Where Do You Want The Notification? Obviously, if you've got a huge county with vast areas of farmland, you probably don't want to spend a lot of time on unpopulated areas but will most likely need to focus more on cities. Or, if you have acutely high hazard areas like a steep canyon, or you may have areas that historically have flooding, and people need to not be caught unawares.
- Step Two is Knowing What's Already Out There. This is very important - a lot of the country is already covered with Flood Threat Recognition Programs. There are agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers who may be monitoring flood threats on the dams and levees they oversee. There are also the flood-warning folks, the Weather Service and the State Emergency Management Agencies. Take a look at what's out there that your community can use. Some states have their own set of gauges and warning points - Ohio is a good example of this. If you can't find something already being done for you, then figure out what you can do locally and put it together.
- Step Four is Use It and Approve It - which means test it out. If you have a flood and something went wrong, correct things.
- Step Five says Take This One Step Further. Don't just use it as an internal Emergency Management Tool - get it out to the public so people know that there's a system out there they can use. And the whole Weather Service System on the large rivers is out now on the websites and anybody can access what the River Gauges are saying and what it means. In more and more of them, they actually have gauges linked to inundation maps so you can see in real time the effect on any area. Input the predicted level and see what's going to be affected. There's a lot of very good tools out there. And the NAI brochure links to some of them. In this particular Guide, there is a lot of input from the National Hydrologic Warning Counsel which is an Association like NHMA of people who are 'gauge-gurus' and 'gauge-nuts', they have real expertise and a lot of good contact.

**French Wetmore** is helping to get these brochures and the Guides out and has put together some webinars about them. He has three webinars prepared to present for NHMA and the RNN on aspects of the NAI: Mapping, Emergency Services, and Regulations. In the next month or two he will get a webinar schedule out for folks. The webinars will take about 45 minutes and will focus on one of those topics. A link to the materials on the ASFPM website was re-distributed by Mary Baker.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**Tom Hughes** asked if any other states are getting this out to the locals and if so, how are they doing it?

**French Wetmore** explained that the Georgia Association for the ASFPM has a member named Sean Roche who is on both the Georgia Association and the NAI Committee. He sets up webinars monthly on different NAI topics. His material is the source of the three webinars that French is planning to give for us.

Other than Georgia, French doesn't know of anyone distributing this material that isn't a state government. The ASFPM has a Road Show Workshop they developed initially for coastal areas and is collecting materials about NAI from French Wetmore as well. There have been some communities - at least one that he knows of in Georgia - that have used NAI in their ordinances. But nothing that he knows of by a state that takes this as their official position.

**CRS Credits:** The Community Rating System references NAI for its higher or better class community criteria. At the end of each Tool is a sidebar detailing the CRS credits available under each particular activity.

**Tom Hughes** shared that in Pennsylvania, a lot of the Emergency Managers thought that working closely with their Flood Plain Manager was 'mission creep', but they were able to show that this is a partnership the communities really need them to have.

The Emergency Manager and the Flood Plain Administrator need to be 'joined at the hip' before going out at a flood event. A lot of the Emergency Managers they found didn't even know who their Flood Plain Administrator was. This is probably common all across the country, as it's not somebody they normally talk to in the course of their daily duties, like the code official, etc. Fire does this for the Fire Rating, but the EMAs just didn't really talk to the Flood Plain Administrators because they thought they had separate duties. It turns out they can really help each other.

**French Wetmore** agreed and said he would like to see a lot more of that happen. In the communities that have been flooded, there are some really great arrangements that have been made at the community level between these two Managers. At the state level typically you're not as likely to see that.

In the Case Studies, for example, almost every one of them has a very close relationship between the Emergency Managers and the Flood Plain Managers - even in the big places like Nashville. It's too bad communities have to learn this the hard way - 'I could have known more; I could have done better.'

**It would be great to get the word out about the NAI through whatever means you have available.**

**Per a question from Tom Hughes, French Wetmore** suggested that the order of the webinar presentations depend entirely on the NHMA or the RNN's perspective. Since the RNN is mostly local folks, community practitioners, etc., Emergency Services might be the best first choice.

**Tom Hughes** agreed Emergency Services probably should be first followed by Mapping or Regulations.

**Annie Vest** asked how far has this material been circulated across the Emergency Management community? Has NEMA seen this, for example, or any other Associations? This is the first she's seen of it and thinks it is incredible.

**French Wetmore** explained that the initial circulation of the NAI material was for internal Flood Plain Management and their advisors, which is quite a long list. They all got a copy. The ASFPM did the most coordination with the Natural Hydrologic Warning Council. French Wetmore actually went to their Annual Conference in June. But the suggestion about NEMA is absolutely correct - he has not seen anything by them on the NAI, and the job of outreach on this has been left to the folks at ASFPM who have just lost their outreach person. So, the bottom line is, if NHMA and the RNN don't do it, he is not sure what's going to happen, so feel free to get this out to everybody. If anybody would like the webinar presentation made to folks in their locale, he is ready to do his part to get the word out.

**Tom Hughes** suggested that **Annie Vest** get this material out to NEMA and he can circulate it to the IAEM. This is the first he has seen of this presentation and it looks like a great tool for the locals.

**Barb Miller** agreed that this material is very helpful. She will also send it on to the communities she's working with and tell them that these are the standards they should really consider implementing in order to do it right so they don't have to do this again in March of 2020. They are really looking at a lot of flooding come the spring, because the ground is so saturated in the mid-west from last season's floods that if it hadn't gotten cold and frozen a lot of farmers wouldn't even have been able to get into their fields.

**French Wetmore** shared that Illinois over the past 20-25 years has done NAI practices so well (without calling them that), and the amount of buy-outs and clearances they managed to do through mitigation on the Mississippi River were so successful that now when the Mississippi floods, nobody worries about it or even takes much notice because there's nothing there to get damaged.

**Barb Miller** shared that she and **Annie Vest** would tell a whole different story. She will send around a copy of an excellent story map they just did on flooding in her area that really portrays the horrific nature of their most recent flood event. Everyone thought back in 2011 when the Missouri River flooded that it was the worst it could ever get but this past flood event was about ten times worse than the one in 2011. Mostly because the bulk of the flooding happened below any of the control structures set up by the Army Corps of Engineers.

**French Wetmore** pointed out that this is one of the purposes of the Flood Inundation Map - it shows what could happen in a flood event.

**Barb Miller** shared that her state is trying to do flood preps, with Risk Map tools and everything else, but the reality is they just don't have enough good data. They're in the middle of re-mapping the whole Alquin River Basin that flows into the plat. That river was so dramatically changed during this last event that they had to halt mapping and must now scrap everything they've done and start over. Literally, the river moved up to a hundred yards east and west.

The Midwest especially has to start doing some things differently because if they don't, these floods are going to keep happening. If the state doesn't get behind maps and mitigation and pushing things forward, it's just not going to happen. Barb Miller will send this NAI material over to her NFIP Coordinator to make sure they're aware at the state level that this material is available.

**Annie Vest** was pleased to share that this year in Tulsa despite all the flooding, they didn't have a single structure flood from the Arkansas River event which was catastrophic in other areas. That is a real testament to a community that's been doing flood hazard mitigation for many, many years.

**French Wetmore** shared that in the 1970's, they had a lot of floods that killed people. So, this is music to his ears: folks putting a lot of time and effort into getting this book together and wanting to see it get out. If anyone needs him on a call or a presentation of any kind, please feel free to ask.

**Tom Hughes** shared that they're looking at updating their 2016 Flood Plain Model used by all the communities. That would probably be a good phone call for a work group, if French could help them out on that.

**French Wetmore** is happy to help. Another thing to consider is the Endangered Species Act material that's being worked up now. They did a model ordinance for Puget Sound a number of years ago when it was facing a lawsuit so he can give Tom that material too.

**Many thanks to French Wetmore** for his time and an excellent presentation on NAI.

- 5) 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
- 6) Status of ABA Book – Ed Thomas
- 7) Follow-up on any RNN action items and future activities
- 8) CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics
- 9) Any comments from Vincent Brown for FEMA updates
- 10) Adjourn

The Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Next meeting is **November 22, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.** Eastern Time.

## ACTION ITEMS:

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### October 2019 RNN Action Items List

(From Meeting of November 1, 2019)

#### 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.