

Risk Communications and Outreach Committee Call Notes

Jan 8, 2020

1. Summary/Update of Actions since Cleveland:

The Co-Chairs reviewed with the group that at the last conference in Cleveland, the Committee met in person where a presentation was given on the history of the 100-year/1% terminology and significance of the 1% standard, an overview of behavioral science and how it related to the 100-year/1% language, and why communicating flood risk using these terms is ineffective. Since that time, the Committee has moved forward with several initiatives committee members may be interested in:

Elected Officials Guide

ASFPM is planning a release of a new web-based Guide for Elected Officials in February that will include success stories/case studies and videos of interviews with community officials. ASFPM is also planning to develop a 2-pager about the guide that is easy to hand out and drive people to the site, and they are working with a new staff member (Communications Coordinator) Eric Murtaugh, on a rollout plan which may include things like a webinar, a workshop at the conference, or other methods to promote the new guide. Several members of this subcommittee helped edit the guide, so we're happy to see it being finalized and rolled out.

1% paper and potential link to Risk Rating 2.0

Our Committee has been thinking about developing a discussion paper on the topic of the 1%/100-year flood terminology and standard for some time now. We had a volunteer committee member develop an outline for this concept last year. The paper will discuss the issues/problems with communicating risk using these terms, and potentially provide insight into better ways to communicate flood risk. Knowing that Risk Rating 2.0 is coming, the committee chairs feel its important to incorporate some important elements into the eventual paper/discussion. Some of those elements are:

1. As FEMA transitions to RR 2.0 for insurance purposes, there is an opportunity to also re-define what a "Flood Insurance Rate Map" is (i.e., if a FIRM no longer provides information supporting "flood insurance rating", then what is the role of flood hazard mapping and where might it go in the future?).
2. As FEMA transitions to RR 2.0, even if the FIRMs remain the same for some period of time, the importance of the 1% line will be greatly reduced. It will still provide the line between "mandatory" and "non-mandatory" flood insurance, and it will remain important for floodplain management purposes, but because insurance *rates* will no longer be based on the line, it may actually reduce the need to lean on the now-commonly-used 1% terminology as we move forward.
3. As the data to support RR 2.0 becomes clear and possibly available, what sorts of products might be generated

If the FIRM of the future will be re-imagined in the coming years, and if additional non-regulatory tools/products/information will be developed, we believe that our Committee could have an important role in helping the program move forward by providing recommendations to FEMA from a risk communications perspective that will help the products/tools/information of the future support better flood risk communications. **If you are interested in assisting with this, please email Jessica and Jen (Jessica.J.Ludy@usace.army.mil, Jennifer.marcy@atkinsglobal.com)

Risk Communications Abstract Review for ASFPM Conference

The committee chairs regularly help ASFPM review abstracts for the Communications and Outreach track in preparation for the conference. This year, we saw some trends we thought were interesting and wanted to let the group know some of the interesting topics they may see if they attend the conference later this year:

- A lot of 3D visualization projects, including to support communicating probabilistic flood risk (as opposed to deterministic)
- Risk communications in the context of social vulnerability and equity
- A lot of "best practices/what works" and even a couple "what doesn't work" which is just as helpful

- We might be able to have a full session on just language around communicating risk (1%, 100-year, etc.)
- There were enough abstracts related to risk-informed decision making that we recommended a session on that
- Every year, we have seen the submissions increase for this topic and it shows that people are interested in this topic

2. Risk Communication Round Table and Partner Efforts:

USACE Levee and Dam Risk Communication Update

Stacy Langsdale, Institute for Water Resources talked about some of the efforts coming out of her office related to the Levee Safety and Dam Safety Programs. The USACE is highly focused on risk communications and putting efforts in related to both levees and dams, so you may see additional efforts from the Corps if you are a local community dealing with these issues. A few years ago USACE did trainings for their own staff on communications planning, and are now launching similar trainings for the dam safety program. The Corps also has internal “coaching calls” to help keep the conversation going with staff. And they are working on public meeting slide decks, animations, and other tools to make risk communication easier. Comment from Ricardo Pineda (ASFPM Chair and CA Dept. of Water Resources) was on Dam Inundation Maps being (or not being) publicly available, and what an important issue this is (for many reasons, including CRS classification connections, hazard mitigation planning, and public understanding of risk). The USACE is also talking a lot about this topic and the USACE is generally supportive of sharing this information (uneditable versions), though District Commanders do have a right to hold back from sharing the information if warranted.

Website Revamp

ASFPM is revising their website. For a sneak peek at what it will eventually look like, see www.floodsciencecenter.org. Committee webpage revamps will be included in this, and we will have some input regarding what we want to see on those committee pages. If there are things you'd like to see on our site, let us know, and stay tuned for the website update some time in 2020!

TMAC Happenings

The 2018 TMAC report is out – see <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111853> (was delayed due to TMAC shutting down for part of 2018/early 2019). Some interesting recommendations on communicating uncertainty were included. These are included below and you can also review them in the 2018 report at the link above:

- FEMA should establish upper and lower bounds for the 1%-annual-chance exceedance flood elevation Uncertainty using a confidence interval size of their choosing and use those limits to map the SFHA “Boundary Zone”—the area where this SFHA boundary is most likely to be. FEMA should share SFHA Boundary Zone information with the public, and other key interested parties, test how it is received, and make improvements prior to formalizing any specific standards or policy for routine map updates.
- As part of efforts to communicate uncertainty, FEMA should periodically conduct behavioral risk audits and address the biases that characterize how individuals process information on flood risk to their property. The audits and actions taken (including language regarding the likelihood of flooding) to address biases will also help other key stakeholders, such as floodplain managers, local officials, lenders, developers, and real estate agents, to encourage property owners to invest in cost-effective mitigation measures and purchase flood insurance before the next flood occurs.

The report also includes recommendations on how FEMA can improve flood insurance uptake, which is (basically) by putting out more information via non-regulatory products. Those recommendations are pasted below but are also available in the 2018 report at the link above:

- Building from AR16, FEMA should share and communicate data that can help drive decisions toward purchasing flood insurance, mitigation prioritization, and reducing risk. This data should support historical, future, and probabilistic analyses of coastal, fluvial, and pluvial flood hazards. FEMA should work with other agencies to assist data collection, creation, and sharing to support integrated water resources management and encourage data sharing.

- AR 34 To increase insurance coverage, expanding on AR28, FEMA should include, as part of their nonregulatory products suite, areas previously identified as SFHAs, including information available in the Community Information System, and areas of previous flooding. This information should be easily maintained, support and communicate the actuarial rating of NFIP flood insurance, and empower informed decisions by property owners and local, regional, Tribal, and State agencies.

The TMAC 2019 report isn't complete yet, but will mainly be a memo to FEMA stating what TMAC thinks they should focus on in 2020. At the public meeting in December, the TMAC discussed that their 2020 tasking might be related to helping FEMA to determine what the future Flood Hazard Mapping Program might look like (i.e., a program that identifies flood hazards in a graduated way, identifies flood risk to improved property in a graduated way, and increase investments in flood mitigation through new incentive structures), and then also how to get to that point (i.e., what are the obstacles, opportunities, roles for stakeholders, and elements of the current program, that may *not* need to change moving forward. This may allow an opportunity for more stakeholder input on the future of the program.

Efforts from audience for group awareness

- CA DWR just wrapped up their flood preparedness week – see <https://water.ca.gov/What-We-Do/Flood-Preparedness/Flood-Preparedness-Week> for more information and for tools you may be able to use to implement a related campaign in your area!
- CA DWR has a Flood Risk Notification Program that alerts people that are located in areas protected by levees on a yearly basis – has been going on for 9 years now and has been pretty successful and that may be a good webinar topic for future use as well <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Flood-Management/Community-Resources/Flood-Risk>
- Brian Jones with Pima County Flood Control District in Arizona – has been doing trainings for realtors via a 3-hour course (gives credits for real estate agents), also developing a website for realtors, and looking to roll out “mini-courses” (how to get a flood map) as well via short webinars or videos. The goal of the program is to develop “Floodplain Ambassadors” so that homeowners hear this information from other sources and not just us. Brian is happy to share those resources as other states/entities may be interested in doing the same in their area. Email brian.jones@pima.gov for more information.
- Kevin Coulton in Portland, OR – wrote an Op-Ed called “Make America’s Swamps Great Again” – be happy to present a webinar on it and have given the talk a couple of times at conferences recently. See <https://www.aswm.org/wordpress/guest-blog-make-americas-swamps-great-again/> for a blog post on this topic.
- Hunter Merritt, USACE, Sacramento District – a couple of things that might be interesting for the group include:
 - Watershed University has a series of webinars that might be useful for folks – see <https://water.ca.gov/watershed-university/> for more information
 - Also a summit happening in LA in April for Watershed University focused on professionals for water mgmt. and LA river Center and Gardens April 21 and 22nd and is free! - see <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/watershed-university-12877176641> to register
- Lots of development in Sacramento, CA, a highly floodprone community, and there is lots of construction happening on levees and is big news locally. They have set up a website (<http://www.sacleveeupgrades.com>) to communicate about the levee work that is happening and said that they welcome input on the best ways to do that – if people have thoughts on what has worked in the past that the USACE should consider, let them know (Hunter.Merritt@usace.army.mil) A member from Houston mentioned that the San Jacinto River Authority has launched a Know Your Watershed Campaign, which is designed to help people identify their watershed, recognize where the flow is coming from, and provide important water-related facts. It includes an Address Viewer and a virtual tour of the San Jacinto River watershed in story map format – see <http://www.knowyourwatershed.com>

3. Risk Communications Webinars:

Our committee is hoping to put on 2 webinars in 2020, and one of the topics we'd like to address is Risk Communications Planning (how do you plan for effective risk communications?) – This might include Stacy Langsdale from the USACE, perhaps someone to speak about some good examples of CRS Programs for Public Information, and other tools that are available related to Risk Communications Planning.

We have not yet selected a second webinar topic, so if you are interested in presenting on a topic this year, please send your name, topic, and 4 dates/times to Jessica and Jen (Jessica.J.Ludy@usace.army.mil, Jennifer.marcy@atkinsglobal.com). Some potential webinar ideas from the members on the call were:

- Potential webinar idea (no volunteer yet) - Use of social media in risk communications
- Potential webinar idea (no volunteer yet) - Crowd sourcing to get engagement in the comm related to flooding
- CA DWR has a Flood Risk Notification Program (Ricardo Pineda)
- "Make America's Swamps Great Again" (Kevin Coulton)

4. Action Items and wrap up

- Keep an eye out for ASFPM's new Elected Officials Guide in the month of February
- If you're interested in helping the committee on the 1%/100-year flood language discussion paper, email Jessica.J.Ludy@usace.army.mil and Jennifer.marcy@atkinsglobal.com
- Check out TMAC's 2018 report and recommendations on communicating uncertainty and promoting flood insurance purchase at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111853>
- Check out all our member updates and activities from the call, including:
 - <https://water.ca.gov/What-We-Do/Flood-Preparedness/Flood-Preparedness-Week>
 - <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Flood-Management/Community-Resources/Flood-Risk>
 - Email brian.jones@pima.gov for information on his Realtor Training program
 - <https://www.aswm.org/wordpress/guest-blog-make-americas-swamps-great-again>
 - <https://water.ca.gov/watershed-university/>
 - <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/watershed-university-12877176641>
 - <http://www.sacleveeupgrades.com>
- We hope to see many of you at ASFPM 2020 in Houston!