

ATTENDING AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS

1. National Weather Service
2. DWR
3. Humboldt County Public Works Department
4. Humboldt County Planning & Building Department
5. Humboldt Harbor District

SUMMARY

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) invited area agency and stakeholder contacts to attend a briefing that highlighted the findings of the public review draft of *California’s Flood Future: Recommendations for Managing the State’s Flood Risk*. The team again worked with DWR’s Eureka Flood Office and CSAC to distribute the meeting information and arrange logistics.

DWR’s Terri Wegener and USACE’s Craig Conner lead the approximately two-hour discussion. A deeper discussion of each *California’s Flood Future* recommendation followed.

Key meeting questions/suggestions Included:

- The area is geographically isolated with lots of transportation infrastructure at risk; when this infrastructure goes out, it has a huge impact to the area’s economy and supply chain
- The public is aware of tsunami risk, but not necessarily equipped with emergency plans or adequate supplies
- The area also includes more rural communities that have experienced social injustice issues that have limited funding and resources for flood preparedness efforts
- Debate when evaluating adopting new flood maps due to strong support of personal property rights and regulating agencies not wanting to incur large amounts of change; public only in favor of adopting new flood maps if it lowers their insurance premium
- The North Coast Integrated Regional Water Plan has been a great process and a good way to communicate flood information
- It seems easier for local agencies to receive FEMA money after a disaster, rather than in advance for less money
- While informational materials have been helpful, incorporating electeds and multiple agencies in table top exercises has proven very helpful
- Identifying case studies in both rural and urban areas of successful projects would be helpful.

RECOMMENDATIONS DISCUSSION

(Italics indicate ideas or phrases from meeting presenters)

Recommendation 1

Conduct regional flood risk assessments to better understand statewide flood risk.

- Every time FEMA has new maps, we have to get them passed, it’s a necessary evil. Locally, there’s a strong coalition for private property rights – they should be able to do what they want.

- County adopts maps because they have to to participate in national flood insurance program, and if they didn't, they'd be bankrupt. Public works would adopt – but county won't tell residents to be more restrictive. Citizens would like to reassess to get lower flood insurance premiums.
- It's a strange experiment, people are aware and interested in risk – but if we talk about flood insurance they're hesitant because it could increase their insurance premiums.
- We're doing a study on sea level rise for Humboldt Bay – but we had to be clear that there are no direct regulatory implications of report. Regulatory requirements are hard in rural communities – luckily building are codes state codes, otherwise wouldn't have them.

Recommendation 2

Increase public and policymaker awareness about flood risks to facilitate informed decisions.

- People will look at information, but the best way to raise awareness is to have a flood.
- Challenge with flood is that decisions are complex and hard, could take years to resolve.
- The North Coast Integrated Regional Water Plan has proven to be a good way to communicate flood information.
- Addressing substantial flood risk is huge. We've moved away from educational materials – and moved toward exercises and drills for elected officials and members of the public. They've been helpful.
- The local board acts when localized – but when comes to requirements it's hard to have board make decisions.
- Agencies don't even organize themselves for coordination in a multi-hazardous form. It would be helpful to support ways to consolidate and create uniform information.

Recommendation 3

Increase support for flood emergency preparedness, response, and recovery programs to reduce flood impacts.

- County just developed a flood preparedness plan that's county wide – lack of specificity for levee and small communities. There's still a need there.
- Where do cities fit in in county plan?
- With USACE, DWR, and FEMA we've encouraged federal agencies to work through local agencies for on the ground programs.
- Support for emergency services is subject to fiscal constraints – first to get cut. Having a consistent emergency services funding or staff is hard. We've experienced a lot of turnover and when inconsistent staff, there are no plans or follow through, as those plans are multi-year effort.

Recommendation 4

Encourage land use planning practices that reduce the consequences of flooding.

- It's realistic to have planning/emergency/flood working together because we're in the same department. Lots of agricultural zones– so no development planned.
- One issue is just scale the scale of planning in our own community – planning differs greatly between rural and urban – identifying case studies and best practices at each scale would be helpful.
- We have a small special district in the flood zone. The coastal commission has a regulatory presence, but the tsunami work group wants nothing to do with tsunami prep – because it limits ability to work on land use planning. There's a conscious effort to keep planning and emergency managers apart.
- If you want community involvement – you don't want the regulatory agency involved.

Recommendation 5 & 6

Implement flood management from regional, systemwide, and statewide perspectives to provide multiple benefits/ Increase collaboration among public agencies to improve flood management planning, policies and investments.

- North Coast IRWM group has been successful – good social capital – good working relationship with DWR.

Recommendation 7

Establish sufficient and stable funding mechanisms to reduce flood risk.

- It's easier to get FEMA money after the fact for 20 times as much money than for prevention efforts now.
- Looking statewide – look beyond cost benefit ratio to something that incorporates other values/benefits

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