

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Resilience Working Group

Baton Rouge, March 31-April 1, 2008

MEETING SUMMARY

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Resilience Working Group held its fourth meeting March 31-April 1 in Baton Rouge. The Louisiana Governor's Office for Coastal Activities and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources supported the meeting in cooperation with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation Center for Planning Excellence. Presentations and discussions focused on sharing information about Louisiana's resilience activities, and on refining the group's draft priority actions in preparation for development of the new Governors' Action Plan. Receptions sponsored by the Center for Planning Excellence provided excellent networking opportunities, and a viewing of the film Hurricane on the Bayou provided a unique look at the Louisiana environment and the challenges posed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Appendix A provides a list of attendees.

MONDAY, MARCH 31

The meeting began mid-day on the 31st with host Michele Deshotels and co-chair Tina Shumate welcoming attendees. The group was particularly pleased to welcome back co-chair Rod Emmer. The afternoon began with some discussion of group business, followed by initial presentations on Louisiana resilience issues and planning efforts. (All of the presentations from the meeting will be posted on the resilience page of the working website: http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/coastal_resil/welcome.html.)

Resilience Working Group Proposal, Upcoming Activities

After a round of introductions, co-chair Tina Shumate kicked off the meeting with a briefing on the proposal that the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) submitted to NOAA on behalf of the group. Copies of the proposal were shared with attendees, and proposed projects were discussed. Tina told the group that DMR has been notified that the proposal has been recommended for funding, and they hope to hear from NOAA's Grants Management Division in the next month or two regarding a final decision.

The group also discussed upcoming activities briefly, including a series of stakeholder engagement workshops being planned by a number of group members. The hope is that these workshops will provide an opportunity for the resilience group to get feedback on proposed actions for the new Governors' Action Plan. This new plan will be written over the course of the summer based on input from the Alliance's six issue teams, and an Alliance "All Hands" meeting will be held in August to review and refine suggested action items. (The group returned to these business topics on Wednesday morning, so they are discussed in more detail below.)

The Master Plan and Issues from Coastal Louisiana

Michele Deshotels kicked off the presentations by giving a briefing on the *Louisiana Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast*. She was followed by two gentlemen who provided the group with an overview of the issues and challenges that Louisiana's coastal communities faced – and continue to face – in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. As individuals who are leaders in their communities and who are actively working on recovery

activities, Sherrill Sagrera and Windell Cruole shared their perspectives on factors that help and hinder community and individual resilience.

Monday closed out with a reception hosted by the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX.) During the reception attendees were able to view the award-winning film *Louisiana Speaks: Our Voice. Our Plan. Our Future* that was produced as part of the long-term community planning initiative of the Louisiana Recovery Project:

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

The second day of the meeting focused on continuing to share projects and lessons learned from Louisiana, as well as providing briefings on a number of other activities of interest to the group from across the Gulf.

Louisiana Speaks: Planning Initiatives in Louisiana

During the morning, attendees learned about planning efforts initiated after the hurricanes, discussed the current state of planning in Louisiana, and heard about ongoing work to foster resilience via good planning at both local and state levels. Rachel Diresto and Krista Goodin of CPEX briefed the group on the overall Louisiana Speaks initiative, discussing how the *Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan* was developed and how it is guiding decision-making in the state. Alison Cascio of the Center talked about development of the *Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book* and *Planning Toolkit*, and copies were shared with participants. During discussion the group heard about how these two documents have been widely used by home-owners and builders, with the Toolkit even being incorporated into training for new planning commissioners. Finally, Camille Manning-Broome of CPEX talked to the group about the Statewide Model Ordinance Project that is underway, sharing initial results from interviews and focus groups held to identify local needs related to planning, zoning, and development.

Florida Update

Mitch Stripling of the Florida Department of Health, who joined the group this winter, gave an update on developing resilience efforts in Florida. He told the group that about 25 individuals have come together into a loose working team within the state, and that this team is working on a resilience index effort. Mitch, his colleague Sandra Whitehead, and Ros Kilcollins are all part of this Florida team and will serve as liaisons to Alliance resilience efforts. The Florida team will be refining their draft index and hope to pilot it with both a county and a municipality. Mitch shared the draft index and asked the group for their input.

Hurricane on the Bayou

As the final part of the morning, attendees walked over to the Louisiana Art & Science Museum for a viewing of the film *Hurricane on the Bayou*. This film shows southern Louisiana before, during, and after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Four local musicians recount their personal stories and highlight the rapidly disappearing wetlands that are the state's first line of defense against storms.

Post-Hurricane Research Efforts in Louisiana

After lunch, attendees learned about some of the ongoing research efforts in Louisiana related to resilience. Dr. Margaret Reams and Dr. Nina Lam of LSU told the group about a resiliency index project they have recently initiated. Sponsored by Minerals Management Service, the two-year project will investigate the long-term sustainability of Outer-Continental-Shelf (OCS) dependent communities. Drs. Reams and Lam will be compiling socioeconomic and ecological

variables into an index, and then using historic data on population returns after storm events to investigate the comparative resilience of different communities.

Dr. Rick Weil of LSU shared the results of his post-Katrina social science research, highlighting the implications of his findings that relate to the resilience of individuals and communities. Through numerous interviews with Louisiana residents after the storm, Dr. Weil documented extremely high rates of volunteerism after the storm, learned about people's attitudes and perceptions about assistance provided by government versus non-governmental entities, and identified the importance of social networks to individuals' ability to handle and recovery from stress. Finally, Dr. Weil shared insights about the practices of certain cohesive communities (e.g. the Vietnamese community in New Orleans East and the Jewish community) that made them particularly resilient; his findings suggest that these communities' applied strategies and planning techniques than any community could adopt to enhance their resilience.

Updates and Briefings on Activities Across the Gulf

The last part of the day provided updates on a variety of resilience-related activities and projects in the region:

- Rod Emmer shared a new publication from Louisiana Sea Grant titled *Hazard Mitigation and Land Use Planning in Coastal Louisiana: Recommendations for the Future*. The summary chapter of this publication had been shared with attendees before the meeting, and Rod gave an overview of the recommendations in this chapter.
- Pat Skinner of the LSU AgCenter and Shirley Laska, Director of UNO's Center for Hazards Assessment Response and Technology, briefed the group on several new outreach efforts that will help Louisiana residents become more resilient as they recover and rebuild. Pat shared the "Home Design and Construction Registry," a new website that will help people who are rebuilding find contractors and other services, as well as learn about how to build in a way that is resilient, green, and affordable. Shirley told the group about a "Community Elevation Dialog Project" that is fostering discussions about what it takes to live in risky areas, and shared newly-developed handouts that provide information to homeowners about funding sources for elevating their homes; these handouts compile information about different sources for the first time.
- Todd Davison and Tina Sanchez gave an update on the Coastal Storms Program. MS/AL Sea Grant is in the process of hiring a coordinator to support this effort, and additional funds are expected in FY09 to support project work. Two initial projects are expected to get underway in FY08. The first will be to develop a "catalogue" of all the ADCIRC modeling efforts in the region, and the Northern Gulf Institute will be helping with this project. The second will be to try and couple surge and hydrologic modeling for the Pascagoula river system in the Gulf.
- Kevin Kirsch of NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration briefed the group on a newly-funded Disaster Response Center that will serve the Gulf region. This Center will be located in Mobile and will centralize NOAA's response capabilities. Kevin is in the process of talking to emergency managers and other stakeholders about regional needs, and invited the group to provide input as part of this process.
- John Bowie shared information he had gathered regarding bathymetry collection in the states. This information feeds into Action Item R-2:8 of the current Action Plan.
- Heidi Recksiek showed the group a newly-released online inventory of Gulf of Mexico topography and bathymetry data. The inventory is part of a NOAA project entitled "Roadmap to a Seamless Topobathy Surface." This online resource provides maps showing existing data in all counties and parishes in the Gulf region, as well as information about how to generate high-resolution digital elevation models (DEMs) that

minimize error. An overview of different topobathy applications is in the works. The inventory can be accessed online at <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/topobathy/>.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program in Louisiana, New Video about Coastal Surge Maps

Franki Coons of FEMA gave an overview of how the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is being applied in Louisiana Katrina/Rita recovery. She described some of the challenges of applying HMGP to address pressing recovery needs while satisfying regulatory and administrative requirements. In Louisiana, FEMA worked with the state to find a way for HMGP to support and complement the Road Home program; they found a way for HMGP funding to be used to pay for elevations when homeowners choose to stay and rebuild, and FEMA hopes to devote \$750 million to this effort.

Bill Barton of FEMA closed out the day by sharing a newly-developed video about coastal surge maps. The video explains how the maps are developed and shows how they can be used. (A link to the video will be provided on the working website when it is available.)

Networking Reception

A reception hosted by the Center for Planning Excellence Tuesday evening gave attendees an opportunity to discuss the many projects and activities they heard about during the day. (The River Terrace location at the Shaw Center also provided a view of the Mississippi River at an exceptionally high flood stage.)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

On the final morning of the meeting, attendees focused in on the work of the group, reviewing the seven draft actions prioritized by the group in December and discussing next steps for development of the new Governors' Action Plan.

Work to Date, Forming a "Core Team," Plans for Resilience Engagement Workshops

The discussion began with a brief history of the Alliance and the first Governors' Action Plan, and a recap of the resilience group's work since their first meeting last July. Attendees reviewed the mission statement, resilience definition, and meetings to date. Since the group has grown to include approximately 100 interested participants, attendees also discussed the need to establish a "core team" made up of three representatives from each state with two alternates. This will assist with allocating travel support in the future. Co-chair Tina Shumate will be following up with members about participation in the core team.

The group also discussed a series of stakeholder engagement workshops planned for the late Spring and Summer of 2008. These workshops will allow the group to seek input from stakeholders in each state regarding the proposed resilience activities for the new Action Plan. They will also help implement one of the group's identified priority actions, which is to bring together individuals from different professions related to resilience, driving collaboration at intra and inter state levels. The State of Mississippi will hold the first workshop on May 6th during the Mississippi Smart Growth conference. All group members were invited to attend. Information about the conference is posted on the working website. Alabama will host the second workshop on May 20 in Spanish Fort. Jim Weatherford suggested that Texas may want to host two meetings. While the agenda for the workshops will be tailored according to the needs and issues of each state, all of them will include an opportunity for attendees to provide feedback on the group's proposed actions.

Discussion of the Seven Draft Priority Actions

Edits to actions made by the group are in blue.

Action items and individuals involved and/or volunteering to help are in red.

Action #1 Resiliency Index: Develop a resiliency index that can be used as a vehicle to introduce and promote the concept to local governments and communities. Pilot the index with Gulf communities and prepare a final version based on feedback.

- This action is discussed in the proposal for funding.
- There are two index efforts in the group now. **MS/AL Sea Grant and FL representatives are leading these efforts.**

Action #2 Gulf of Mexico Resiliency Clearinghouse: Compile resiliency-related information sources, projects, tools, and policies from across the Gulf of Mexico region. Identify local, state, federal, private, non-profit, and academic efforts, and develop a mechanism for sharing this information (e.g. an atlas or directory of partners, policies, and tools in each of the five Gulf States.)

- This project is not explicitly mentioned in the proposal for funding.
- **The Coastal Storms Program Coordinator should be able to help with this.**
- Kris and Jim G. said the Habitat Identification and Characterization Priority Issue Team (HabID) is building a clearinghouse mechanism that all GOMA groups can use. The Resilience group should take advantage of this.
- Jim W. was envisioning a website, one-stop-shop.
- Michelle suggested keeping the focus on the Gulf but including links to other major resilience resources.
- Mitch suggests flagging best practices whenever possible.
- Jay stated that someone needs to be responsible for this project for it to be successful, and Todd reminded the group to be thinking about how funding and resources can be focused to complete action items in the new plan since progress will be reported to the Governors on a regular basis.
- **NGI might be able to help. Jay wants to stay in the loop.**

Action #3 Resiliency Workshops and Networking Across Resilience-related Professions: Improve coordination and communication between coastal emergency managers, floodplain managers, natural resource managers, and county officials to foster and integrate pro-active resiliency and mitigation measures. Hold **an ongoing series of** workshops across the Gulf region, providing counties and parishes with helpful tools to make their communities more resilient.

- The proposal for funding includes a related project.
- **Texas might help lead (Jim W.)**
- **Ros K. says the group should coordinate with the Gulf NERRs' Coastal Training Programs (CTP) on this action item.**
- CTP coordinators will work with EPA National Estuary Programs (NEP) too. Louisiana doesn't have a NERR but they do have a NEP (Barataria-Terrebonne.)
- Jim W. is thinking about holding regional workshops, and is wondering if the stakeholder Engagement Workshops the group has discussed can begin this work. He might use these to kick-start the formation of ongoing regional groups.
- The group discussed holding workshops in the short-term to share existing tools, then holding more later on as more tools become available.

Action #4 Improved Spatial Reference Framework: Enhance the vertical accuracy, geographic distribution, and real-time availability of the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS), by building out the National CORS Network and supporting repeat observations of gravity and the passive survey control network throughout the Gulf coast. Establish connections between the NSRS and all local tidal datums, and support the development of a coast-wide vertical datum transformation tool to enable integration of topographic and bathymetric surveys and enhancement of hydrodynamic models.

- The proposal for funding includes a related project. The group discussed the need to think about locations for two proposed Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS.)
- Ann J. said this action is a priority for GCOOS stakeholders and she would like to be involved.
- State geodetic advisors should be involved.
- Jim G. said the HabID group has identified topography and bathymetry as core data layers. The HabID proposal for funding includes looking at topobathy digital elevation models (DEMs.)
- Michelle D. suggested sponsoring workshops for surveyors on the revised benchmarks established post-Katrina. Elevations, subsidence, etc. could be a topic for workshops.
- The nutrient team is working on hydrodynamic models that may need these data too.
- Todd D. explained that high resolution data is needed for surge models and said Florida is spending \$25 million to collect DEM data. The group discussed known available DEM and Lidar data. (Comprehensive DEMs for MS and LA have been developed by FEMA. FL is developing a state-wide DEM. TX is getting state-wide lidar, but there are issues with vertical control.)
- Jay R. said that NGI is working with USGS on how to support the needs of the surge modeling community.
- Kris B. pointed out that this type of data will be very useful to the Restoration Team.
- Heidi R. reminded the group to be thinking about areas of coordination with all of the other Alliance Priority Issue Teams.

Action #5 Incentives Research: Research economic and other drivers/incentives that encourage and/or enable sustainable and hazard resilient development. Consider how changes in incentives will impact land use (e.g. type of development.)

Evaluate existing development practices and incentives in high-risk areas and make recommendations... Need some mechanism to identify the gaps.

- The proposal for funding does not explicitly include this activity.
- The group did extensive rewriting of this item, but did not reach consensus on final language. The group agreed to continue working on the language.
- Jim W. said that Texas is doing a cost-benefit analysis of setbacks, trying to show how long-term benefits balance out the short-term loss of tax base.
- The group talked about connecting to other teams since their work can provide information about the ultimate costs of different land use decisions.
- The following individuals volunteered to work on this item: Steve S., Tina Shumate, Sandra W., John J., and Michele.
- Heidi asked individuals who have alternative text ideas to send draft language.

Action #6 Culture/Heritage Documentation: Document the culture and heritage of traditional coastal communities in the Gulf region. Document traditional uses of coastal resources to demonstrate the connections between healthy ecosystems and healthy communities (sense of place.)

- The proposal for funding includes a related project to explore societal acceptance of resilience concepts.
- The group wants to add a sentence about research into attitudes/perceptions/beliefs related to resilience. (Heidi will follow-up with Jay.)
- MS DMR wants to be involved with this one. Michele would like to be involved and will know more in a couple of weeks about her availability.
- Mitch said Galen Phillips, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, also wants to be involved.
- Jay's proposed project could feed into actions 1, 5, and 6.
- MS has documented heritage. LA has done some work as well. There are multiple maritime museum efforts.
- Tina Shumate suggested that over the next couple months state representatives should figure out what they have already and what specific projects they might want to do.
- If the group wants to map cultural/heritage information, there might be a connection to the HabID group. This group has talked about documenting the values (including social as well as economic) of habitats.

Action #7 Coastal Community Engagement: Enable coastal communities to choose locally appropriate paths to resilience and sustainability through a variety of outreach and engagement tools (e.g. workshops, factsheets, websites, videos, charrettes, etc.) Work with the Education Team to get the resiliency message out via a variety of partners (e.g. PBS stations, Earth Gauge, etc.)

- The group changed the title of this item from "Outreach Products" to "Coastal Community Engagement." The group talked about this action being the delivery mechanism for the products that come out of actions #1-6.
- John J. said his Sea Grant smart growth network might be able to help.
- Cile proposes working with PBS stations.
- Jay asks "who's the audience" for our group? Attendees said the exact target audience for action items #1-6 would vary, but identified decision-makers (e.g. natural resource managers, emergency managers, floodplain managers, planners, and local officials) as the primary audience for the group. They agreed there is a need to reach the general public, and talked about coordinating with the GOMA Education Team to try and do this. It was suggested that the Education Team might help deliver tools the group develops.
- The group also discussed their desire to foster true engagement that extends beyond basic education, fostering action and ongoing participation by the target audiences. The group will continue to dialog about this action, exploring tasks that drive a deeper level of community practice.

Connections to Other Teams, Recommendations to Leadership, Future Meetings

Connections to Other GOMA Teams

During the discussion of the draft action items, attendees pointed out connections with other GOMA Priority Issue Teams. The group will need to coordinate with the other teams as the new Action Plan is written. The following connections were highlighted:

- Habitat Identification and Characterization Team: Consider data management infrastructure/mechanisms, and coordinate on #1 (clearinghouse), #4 (improved spatial reference framework), and maybe #6 (culture/heritage documentation.)
- Regional Restoration and Coordination Team: Coordinate on #5 (incentives research) and #4 (improved spatial reference framework and integrated digital elevation models.)
- Environmental Education Team: Essential partner for the group on many of the draft actions, and on #7 (coastal community engagement) in particular.

Recommendations to the Alliance Management Team:

Co-chair Tina Shumate and co-facilitator Heidi Recksiek will be updating the Alliance Management Team (AMT) on the group's progress at a meeting in Mobile on April 9th and 10th. (The AMT includes the Alliance leads from each of the five Gulf States.) The Mobile meeting will kick-off development of the next Governors' Action Plan. The group discussed sharing its mission and definition statement, as well as the seven draft priority actions. The following specific recommendations were also discussed and will be made to the AMT:

- Formalize the Working Group as the Coastal Community Resilience Priority Issue Team.
- Identify State representatives to form a "core team." (Co-chair Tina Shumate will ask the AMT to designate three representatives and two alternates for each state. **Members of the group who are interested in being formal representatives should contact Tina and communicate with the AMT representative for their state.**)
- Do not broaden the formal charge to the group to include marine debris, oil and gas, and ports. (The AMT had asked the group to consider adding these issues.) The group agreed these topics will be incorporated in their work as they relate to the resilience of communities, but that it would not be appropriate to specifically focus on any one industry. The group also wanted to urge the AMT to encourage other groups to think about these issues as well.

Next Group Meeting, GOMA All Hands Meeting

Florida representative Mitch Stripling agreed to host a meeting of the working group sometime this fall. This will give Florida the opportunity to showcase resilience activities as the other states have done. Mitch will work with Heidi to poll members about possible dates and locations for a fall meeting.

The Alliance will be having an "All Hands" meeting the week of August 18th in Corpus Christi. The group agreed that it would be a good idea for a core group of members to attend and hold a working session in conjunction with this meeting. The focus for the working session would be to review the input received during the stakeholder engagement workshops and to finalize the group's items for the next Action Plan.

APPENDIX A Attendees

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