

# FEMA National Advisory Council NAC Mid-Year Meeting June 7-8, 2022 | Boise, Idaho



FEMA

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## Day 1 – Tuesday, June 7

### PARTICIPANTS

<b>NAC Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Nim Kidd, Chair	Yes, Virtual
Jeffrey Hansen, Vice Chair	Yes
Carrie Speranza, Secretary	Yes
Jeanne Abadie	Yes
Kathy Baughman McLeod	Yes
Sue Anne Bell	Yes
Donald Bliss	Yes
Donna Boston	No
Paul Brennan	Yes
Paul Downing	No
Charles Esteves	Yes
Jody Ferguson	Yes, Virtual
Timothy Gleason	Yes
James Gore	Yes, Virtual
Tonya Graham	Yes
John Grathwol	Yes
Brian Hastings	Yes
Lisa Jones	No
Ramesh Kolluru	Yes
Ryan Lanclos	Yes
Nicolette Louissaint	Yes, Virtual
Linda Long	Yes, Virtual
Anna Lang Ofstad	Yes
Kelly McKinney	Yes, Virtual
Paula Pagniez	No
Jimmy Patronis	No
Brad Richy	Yes
Carol Salas	No
Brian Strong	Yes
Tina Titze	Yes
James Waskom	Yes
<b>FEMA Participants</b>	
Sara Andresen, Office of Response and Recovery	
Aitor Bidaburu, U.S. Fire Administration	
Jacquelyn Dewey, Readiness Office	Virtual
Joseph Dolinger, Office of the National Advisory Council	
Elizabeth Edge, Office of Regional Operations	

Mary Jean “MJ” Edmon, Region 10	
Travis Gaines, Office of Chief Counsel	
Justin Knighten, Office of External Affairs	
Nicole LaRosa, U.S. Fire Administration	
Meghann Lee, Office of Response and Recovery	
Rob Long, Office of the National Advisory Council	
Jeffrey Markham, Region 10	
Joshua Markman, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	Virtual
Mark Millican, Resources Branch	
Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, U.S. Fire Administration	
Lindsey Parker, Office of Response and Recovery	Virtual
Eli Pushkarewicz, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	
Lydia Sanchez, Office of Regional Operations	Virtual
Robert Schroder, Operational Planning Branch	Virtual
Todd Sharpe, Legislative Branch	Virtual
Zachary Smith, Office of Response and Recovery	
Cynthia Spishak, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	
Marc Tagliento	
Rachel Tranchik, Office of Response and Recovery	
Danel Trisi, Continuous Improvement and Integration	Virtual
Elaine Zhang, Office of the National Advisory Council	Virtual
<b>Non-FEMA Non-NAC</b>	
Tim Campbell, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria	Virtual
Nzinga Dyson, Lewis-Burke Associates LLC	Virtual
Karl Fippinger, Fire and Disaster Mitigation, International Code Council	Virtual
Luke Harrison, Office of the Florida Chief Financial Officer	Virtual
Dennis Hawthorne, Department of Defense	Virtual
Justin T. Kates, International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)	Virtual
Jessica Leins, On Target Preparedness	Virtual
Carra Sims, the RAND Corporation	Virtual
Sauda Yerabati, California Department of Public Health	Virtual
<b>Speakers</b>	
Joel Doolin, Director, Office of National Assessments and Integration	FEMA, Virtual
Nicolette Louissaint, Chair, Equity Work Group	NAC
Sue Anne Bell, Vice Chair, Equity Work Group	NAC
Ramesh Kolluru, Chair, Climate Subcommittee	NAC
Anna Lang, Vice Chair, Climate Subcommittee	NAC
Brad Richy, Chair, Readiness Subcommittee	NAC
Tina Titze, Vice Chair, Readiness Subcommittee	NAC
John Grathwol, Chair, Workforce Subcommittee	NAC
Donald Bliss, Vice Chair, Workforce Subcommittee	NAC

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## WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

**Brad Richy.** [Introduces Idaho Governor Brad Little.]

**Governor Brad Little.** Welcome to Idaho. Yesterday I was in Cox City with eight other governors. Governor Phil Bryant talked about Hurricane Katrina and the riots of Baltimore, which is important to understand when you become governor. emergency management is not something you campaign on, but you cannot lead if you do not have great partners like all of you. The training and working on all the quirks with the local governments is so important. I look at the drought and moisture assessment as we enter fire season. Last summer, when the Tahoe fire was exploding, the President came and went to California. The western governors will have a meeting as we need to do things differently. When we compare the costs of schools versus what we spend to put out fires, it is nothing. We need to make things more affordable for the taxpayers. We need to continue to train, do fuel management, and innovate. We need to up our game in drone technology, which I anticipate will be of value as we go forward in preparation and logistics. I love firefighters, and with wildlife urban interface and the demands on the public, we throw out these plans, but it is not great from an economic standpoint. We need to have conversations about priorities at the federal, state, and local level. Awareness needs to get better. I know fires are just a portion of what is out there including the Cascadia Rising, etc. If we do everything perfectly with one little mistake, there is still criticism. Thank you for coming to Idaho.

**Donald Bliss.** What do you think is the biggest challenges are from an emergency management standpoint in Idaho?

**Governor Brad Little.** The biggest challenge is awareness. If they have a plan in place, rookie local officials may not know they need to declare a disaster before the state does. We know how to make houses more fire resilient, but people are dismissive. We need to educate counties on zoning, but we also need to work with insurance companies. All insurance companies need to build emergencies into the baseline. Everyone talks about not building in the flood zone, but then people do not get credit when you try to do the right thing.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** Do you see people come together around disasters?

**Governor Brad Little.** Absolutely. When I was Lieutenant Governor, a county's whose average snow is four inches was four feet and everyone was grabbing shovels. There were only two snowplows, and they lost their grocery store. We have a lot of areas that are of flood and fire risk and others that are concerned with snow. Brad Richy does a great job working with the counties.

**Carrie Speranza.** What are the top three things that the survivors wish we could solve faster?

**Governor Brad Little.** All the mitigation and restoration projects that have been implemented are aging out, but everyone wants their neighbors to do it instead of it happening by their house. Some states can't do the forest health projects because it is expensive. We can make them cost accessible, but some other states would have it to three times as much. We have all local land use planning and there is a huge difference between what we can do between Oregon and Idaho. We have some most summers, but it's not ours. We were going to have a longer fire season, but now it will be shorter, but now we are going to have larger range fires. We built a resilient area around the interstate which makes our fires a tenth of what it should have been, but we need to scale it up. We don't have enough lumber mill capacity to do all the forest health that we need. We need to bolster some business to generate some revenue from these overgrown areas. We need to scale up for our neighbors, scaling up forest health, and generate some cash, noting that lumber for the construction industry could allow the cost of these things to go down. We know how to do this in a sustainable way now, but some of this is happening in non-fire areas. Forest recovery unmanaged is difficult in a changing climate. Our ancestors did a control burn each year, but they wouldn't burn the portion between tribes to reduce migration and encroachment.

### Related Information

- [National Interagency Fire Center \(NIFC\) Predictive Services \(https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/\)](https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/)
- [NIFC Fire Outlook Products \(https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm\)](https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm)

## INTRODUCTIONS

**Jeffrey Hansen.** Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma will be hosting the October meeting at our headquarters and cultural center. I have volunteered the space for eight years now and we are finally going to do it.

**Rob Long.** For the public, I will provide an explanation the NAC. The National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) is the federal brain of any major disaster response; [referring to a participant on screen] this is where Kelly McKinney is currently. We've had horrible disasters that shape the national conscience. Hurricane Katrina resulted in an update to the laws governing and authorities given to FEMA. As part of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), the FEMA National Advisory Council (NAC) was written into existence. Only about one third of the positions on the NAC are emergency management roles, with others being members of adjacent fields that may not normally get a voice in making improvements to the national emergency management enterprise. The overall purpose of the NAC is to advise the FEMA Administrator on "all aspects of emergency management". Tomorrow each subcommittee (SC) Chair will brief the Administrator. We will have a public comment period. As a Federal Advisory Council Act (FACA) body, the NAC has many ethics rules to abide, as well as an obligation to the public to provide an opportunity for their voices to be included. We try to connect the important things that are happening in the nation, with the public, and with emergency management leaders. We're trying something new to meet this goal – this meeting will include a focus on wildfires. This is the first time we are holding a topic-focused meeting. Very intentionally, when we will this Fall go to Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, where we can focus on how to improve our relations with our tribal partners.

**Jon Grathwol.** The topic-focused meetings will allow us to focus on issues that are present around the nation, but that we don't all have exposure to

**Rob Long.** Indeed. I could only identify seven NAC members who had previous experience with wildland fires. If we continue approaching in this manner, we should be able to rotate topics such that each NAC members is exposed to several topics they may not personally have managed over the course of their term. Back to our ethical obligations, let's hear from our ethics and attorney advisor.

**Travis Gaines.** I am the FEMA attorney supporting the NAC. I want to acknowledge the great culture I've experienced as part of the NAC. There is a distinction between federal workers and non-federal workers. While there is a legal distinction, you all hear one another equally. The desire to advance the public good is at the heart of the NAC. When the NAC speaks, people listen. What matters is that you have influence and the framework for government which provides the framework for this to flourish. We need to pay attention to ethics so that ethical controversies do not distract from what's important. We work to build recommendations, and this is foundational to that job. I hope we keep in mind the great responsibility that is the public trust.

**Rob Long.** Beautifully said. You touched on being intentional. The NAC is unique as most FACA bodies are stood up for about two years to address a specific topic then sunset; that NAC is asked to consider all matters of emergency management. The Administrator can ask the NAC to look at pressing topics, but the NAC also has

much agency in what is considered. We are a surprisingly small community, but we are asked to solve the world's problems. Speaking of the culture of the NAC, it is our tradition to provide introductions.

[Starting with those appearing by virtual means.]

**Sauda Yerabati.** I am the Emergency Preparedness Program Manager for the California Department of Public Health's Center for Environmental Health.

**Luke Harrison.** I represent the Fire Marshal and Chief Financial Officer for the State of Florida, Jimmy Patronis.

**Jessica Leins.** I work for emergency consulting in North Carolina, but I have experience in fire service. I wanted to see these proceedings. The wildfire topic was particularly interesting.

**Justin Kates.** I am the Director of Emergency Management for Sommerville, Massachusetts. I am representing the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) as the Vice President.

**Dennis Hawthorne.** I served 19 years in the Kentucky National Guard and now on a National Guard Bureau supporting the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and FEMA.

**Nzinga Dyson.** I am a consultant representing clients that have an interest.

**Lindsey Parker.** I am with FEMA Office of Response and Recovery (ORR).

**Carra Sims.** I am a senior behavioral scientist at RAND. I am part of the Society of Industrial Organizational Psychology.

**Ramesh Kolluru.** I am the Chair for the Climate SC and am the Vice President for Research, Innovation and Economic Development at the University of Louisiana.

**Kelly McKinney.** I am a health care professions representative on the NAC and an old emergency manager in New York going back to 2001. I am currently the Vice President for emergency management for New York University Langone Health. I regret not being in person, but I am currently attached to the FEMA Vanguard program.

[Shifting to those in-person.]

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** I am the Climate Vice Chair of the NAC. I specialize in commercial construction focusing on unreinforced masonry collapses. Looking at things from an engineering lens, such as doing building inspections to get needed information to decision makers. Through my career, I've done insurance, policy, and more. We can only engineer so far, and we need engineering perspectives in community resilience.

**Carrie Speranza.** The NAC started 15 years ago when I was a young Emergency Manager and I set out to build a resume that could allow me to apply for the NAC. I am now the Deputy Director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency as well as the Secretary of the NAC.

**Jeffrey Hansen.** I am the Director of Community Protection for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the third largest tribe in the nation, which includes a reservation comprised of 11,000 square miles. I oversee the Office of Emergency Management, including criminal justice, fire, etc. I love working on making the response of the Nation better. It's a lot of work but we're continuing to improve and getting Indian country ready for disasters. I welcome the new members. This is my eighth year on the NAC.

**Jody Ferguson.** I am the Director of Emergency Management for Peirce County for Washington State. I am also part of one of FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams. I was a Naval Post Graduate School fellow at FEMA, and I stayed connected with FEMA through Leiloni Stainsby and John Rabin.

**Elizabeth Edge.** Lydia Sanchez and Elaine Zhang are supporting virtually. I am the Director of Regional Operations. I've spent 30+ years in FEMA. Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell will be a panelist and moderator tomorrow. Justin Knighten, the Director of the Office of External Affairs will be here tomorrow as well.

**Brad Richy.** This is my second term on the NAC. There is nothing more rewarding than what we do. I work for the Idaho Office of Emergency Management and as the governor's homeland security advisor. I hope you can take in some things you didn't already know these next few days and take in the City of Boise.

**Paul Brennan.** This is my third year on the NAC. I spent 40 years in emergency management service in Massachusetts. The NAC was a great opportunity for me to see how things work on at the national level. You work in your bubble, but you don't really have an idea on what is going on nationally until you have something like this to see it through.

**John Grathwol.** This is my fourth year on the NAC. I spent 40 years in the New York City Mayors' Budget Office. New York City received \$10 billion for Hurricane Sandy and over \$4 billion for mitigation. My experience with disasters is in a budget office setting, with the primary concern being the financial stress for small jurisdictions that are dealing with disasters, especially long after the disaster response. Briefly with FEMA, because of my work stopping due to COVID, I moved over to the private sector. Federal funding comes with a lot of rules and regulations which are on top of local rules and regulations. Therefore, it is important to get budget people involved. That's money you will not need to get from your tax base to recover when multi-jurisdictional, multi-federal agencies involved. The regulations and requirements are not just squared, they are cubed.

**Donald Bliss.** This is my fifth year on the NAC. I retired at the Vice President for Field Operations of the National Fire Protection Association. I have worked on standardization and accreditation on the NAC. I have 30 years prior to that as the local fire chief and New Hampshire State Fire Marshall and Emergency Management Homeland Security advisor.

**Brian Strong.** I am the Chief Resilience Officer for San Francisco. I am also the first Chief Resilience Officer on the NAC. I am excited to learn from those around me about resilience, adaptation, and recovery. We have an Emergency Management Office and an Office of Resilience and Recovery in San Francisco. Air quality and heat events make it difficult for communities to recover and thrive. We had schools shut down, direct health impacts on our communities. Training on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) came from my fire service background. Also thinking about stressors to communities; interesting that Hurricane Katrina spurred the NAC.

**Tim Gleason.** I am a City Manager in Bloomington, Illinois; and spent 25 years in law enforcement. The City Manager Association knows very little about emergency management, a level of knowledge is lacking about that profession. I have been active with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and we got the attention of FEMA in 2018 with our just-in-time training program.

**Ryan Lanclos.** I am the Director of Public Safety at ESRI, disaster response program, activities overseas in Ukraine, flooding in Florida, etc. I got started in geographic information system mapping (GIS) with a passion of data science information systems and natural systems through geography. What can we address through funding like mitigation to be better prepared?

Geospatial decision support is not just spreadsheets and points of interest, but ownership of land, fuel moisture, asking and interrogating data through a map interface. That includes analyzing and asking tough questions. Many of you who have used Uber or Yelp, have used GIS, perhaps without realizing.

**James Waskom.** I am retired full-time from the National Guard, active duty, etc. I then became a prosecutor and defense attorney. I was Louisiana State Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. I also did

appeals and arbitration work. I started at a consulting firm a few weeks ago. I have been with the NAC for five or six years. I also practiced law for about six years.

**Tonya Graham.** This is my first year on the NAC. I serve on City Council in Ashland, Oregon, and on the Wildfire Safety Commission. The Alameda Fire lost approximately 1,300 homes in 13 hours. Even though Ashland proper did not have those impacts, we came together as a whole community in southern Oregon. We focused on communities with less resources to aid them in climate resilience. This included focusing on how much of climate resilience is emergency management.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** This has been such an interesting intellectual exercise. In a crowded space and the volume of things we must deal with, what is my contribution to the NAC? It is the sharing of experiences and putting those things together like extreme heat, impacts, and accelerants. Heat costs \$11 billion to the U.S. last year, and it's a massive killer. iPhones can't work at 95 degrees; planes can't fly at 120 degrees. I lived in Miami during Hurricane Andrew, working in the Office of Chief Financial Officer (CFO). I am the Director of the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center. Like hurricanes, we want to name heat waves, A through Z to bring awareness. This state that we're living in, and the state of divisiveness is something we can get around. Funding is a solution. Insurance as an approach. What are those risk transfer approaches? First heat wave is usually where most people die because they aren't prepared.

**Sue Anne Bell.** I am from Tallahassee, Florida originally, and a professor at the University of Michigan. I work to determine how to support older adults to use less healthcare resources, as well as climate resilience and improving healthcare systems. I also have training as a nurse practitioner. I have worked during Hurricane Maria, Paradise Fire, COVID, etc. I've been on the NAC for about five years in a health scientist position. I am also the Vice Chair of the Equity Workgroup (WG) and a member of the Readiness Subcommittee (SC).

**Jeanne Abadie.** I work for the Louisiana Department of Health, specifically working with people with disabilities. I am an Access and Functional Needs (AFN) representative on the NAC. 51% of people we serve have AFN, so we are really talking about most of the people.

**Tina Titze.** I am the State director for South Dakota. I have over 20 years in emergency management. I have been on the NAC for about five years NAC, this is my second term. I am the Vice Chair for the Readiness SC. It is nice to get some immediate feedback to give to FEMA right off the bat.

#### Related Information

- [National Response Coordination Center \(NRCC\) \(https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0101c/groups/15.html\)](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0101c/groups/15.html)
- [Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act \(https://emilms.fema.gov/is\\_0822/groups/20.html\)](https://emilms.fema.gov/is_0822/groups/20.html)
- [The Federal Advisory Committee Act \(FACA\) \(https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/federal-advisory-committee-management/advice-and-guidance/the-federal-advisory-committee-act-faca-brochure\)](https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/federal-advisory-committee-management/advice-and-guidance/the-federal-advisory-committee-act-faca-brochure)
- [Urban Search & Rescue \(https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/urban-search-rescue\)](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/urban-search-rescue)

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## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

**Justin Kates.** I would like to hear thoughts on how to engage the regional advisory committees (RACs), at least from Region 1's perspective, we don't have the structure and formality of the NAC. Perspective would certainly be welcome at the regional level.

**Rob Long.** There is currently no functional relationship the RACs and the NAC; but that will likely change. We do see RACs as natural information and member feeders to the NAC. RACs are not FACA bodies, so RACs are entirely comprised of emergency managers. The Office of the National Advisory Council (ONAC) is currently working on ways to touch base with the Chairs of the RACs on an annual basis to determine what ideas and needs should rise to the national level.

**Sauda Yerbati.** I would like to bring some awareness to global problems and environmental health. Clean air, safe water, drinking and wastewater. Debris builds up during earthquakes, vector control, hazmat and beyond. Every jurisdiction deals with environmental health when disaster strikes. Local and environmental health is often left out of the loop in preparedness. Often no manpower or resources or direct funding of any kind. There are no domestic preparedness easy answers. Would love to hear the ideas from the NAC for states and locals.

### Related Information

- [National Advisory Council \(https://www.fema.gov/nac\)](https://www.fema.gov/nac)

## NAC EQUITY WORKGROUP: PRIMER FOR SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

**Sue Anne Bell.** I am presenting on behalf of the Equity Workgroup (WG), which is not a subcommittee – an important distinction. The Equity WG is chaired by both Dr. Nicolette Louissaint and me. We are a new WG that was formed with members from the other subcommittees. Our role is to think about the FEMA Strategic Plan Objectives 1.2 and 1.3 and how we can bring an equity focus up in all the other NAC Subcommittees. The Equity WG is tasked with bringing a people first mindset to all subcommittee discussions and identifying and suggesting how equitable outcomes can be achieved. We spent some time at the beginning of the Equity WG studying the lessons learned from the prior Equity SC. We decided not to pick up any of their tabled recommendations.

We have coordinated with FEMA's Equity Enterprise Steering Group (ESG) and received a presentation from them about the work they are doing. We received briefings from subject matter experts connected to the Equity ESG but also external to FEMA, like Dr. Melissa Finucane at RAND. One key point we learned from Dr. Finucane is to moving our focus to procedural equity, in that policy and planning processes can foster inequity by the nature of how they are designed. Another point we learned from Dr. Cassandra Davis, is around identifying valuable communication methods within communities, and creating tools that foster trust. For example, the Readiness SC gave feedback on the State and Local Elected and Appointed Officials guide. For our anticipated activities, we would like to shift our input away from annual recommendations, and instead look for more opportunities to provide briefs and recommendations to SCs and FEMA, whether in-cycle or not. In general, the Equity WG is still growing and learning. We are interested in hearing more about how we can better support the other subcommittees and be of service.

**Jeffrey Hansen.** This has come up before. The big challenge of equity is often forgotten. I think that the Equity WG plays an important role by simply bringing the issue to the forefront.

**James Waskom.** One of the things we talked about last year, the communities that keep getting hit over and over again cannot afford the 25% cost-share match. This is inequitable. The people that live there, keep living there because they can't go anywhere else. We worked on this in Louisiana.

**Sue Anne Bell.** Thanks. If that is a critical issue you all have identified in your SC that related to equity, we would love to hear about that. That could be a project we work on.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** Jim, you just identified a clear gap, so what happens with that? Can we write a recommendation that results in policy change, whether in FEMA or by Congress?

**Rob Long.** One of the roles of the NAC that is implicit, but not explicit, is point out where an issue lies even when it's out of immediate FEMA control. A couple years ago, we did attempt to organize which recommendations were policy, regulatory, or statutory. We found that this was a difficult exercise that the NAC was not well-suited to determine. One of three basic things can happen when the NAC recommends something that is not within immediate FEMA control: the public becomes aware and calls upon their elected officials to do something about the issue, associations or other lobbying bodies pick up on the issue, and once a year the NAC submits a report from which issues can be viewed by or pointed out to Congress.

**John Grathwol.** The Workforce SC has been looking at the FEMA workforce, which is very complicated topic. We wanted to get a readout from you all about the variety of issues progressing across the agency related to equity, so we aren't duplicating work. Also, I think some of the work we are doing around BCA discount rate has direct ties to equity. If there is a high discount rate, it is hard to overcome that and it limits the number of communities that can benefit funding.

**Nicolette Louissaint.** Thanks to Dr. Bell for her brief and leadership of the WG. I think it's important to contextualize our work as a continuation of all that Lisa Jones has done. We are in a difficult position with equity because everything and nothing relates to equity. We are trying to balance that we have primarily looked at this from the lenses of race and economic status. Perhaps there are ways to broaden this, but perhaps we should maintain a narrow focus. From a tactical perspective, what does it look like for us be optimally helpful to each of the SCs? It seems like equity efforts at FEMA are evolving much faster than other topics we have seen, so we need to keep a good pulse on what is happening.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** In my center we have built a cost-benefit analysis tool that incorporates gender and social vulnerability while looking at several different hazards. I hope we can find ways to tap into this effort because it may be useful.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** We could alternate responsibilities for the Chairs and the Vice Chairs calling into the Equity WG, to keep SCs plugged into the WG.

#### Related Information

- [FEMA and Equity \(https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/equity\)](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/equity)
- [Building Alliances for Equitable Resilience \(https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_rnpn\\_building-alliances-for-equitable-resilience.pdf\)](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_rnpn_building-alliances-for-equitable-resilience.pdf) (FEMA Resilient Nation Partnership Network, 4/2021)

## NAC WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE: WORK PROGRESS REPORT

**John Grathwol.** The Workforce Subcommittee (Workforce SC) – with the support of the FEMA Human Capital Governance Board (HCGB) and the Training, Education and Professional Development Enterprise Steering Group (TEP ESG) – is working on Objectives 1.1 and 3.1 of the FEMA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. What we are trying to solve for is what workforce improvement outcomes best support preparedness for more frequent disasters and how do we attract talent, retention, development.

**Donald Bliss.** FEMA has already been looking at many of the issues we have been analyzing in our SC. The FEMA Field Operations Directorate gave us a presentation on their workforce makeup, challenges, and strategic direction. They told us about their readiness model and how they think about short-term versus permanent field assignments for response and recovery. FEMA has developed a Professional Development Pathways Assessment (PDPA) Tool, which helps emergency managers find a path to take in their career. We also heard a lot about the resilience of the FEMA & SLTT workforce and how critical incident stress impacts people working in emergency management. Jeff Stern talked to us about how career development can be enhanced through different strategies around certifications, licensure, and accreditation. Lastly, we are trying to be better coordinated with the Equity WG.

**John Grathwol.** For short-term versus permanent field assignments for response and recovery, I think of it as the response environment is very different than the recovery environment. Recovery could last 10 years, or more. My experience working with billions of dollars, in partnership with multiple state and federal agencies, on very complex projects is that everything takes a long time. If we run this scenario in FEMA's paradigm of deployment, it means there will be significant turnover with potentially 12 different teams coming in over a 10-year period.

**Donald Bliss.** One more comment – we also found that smaller jurisdictions are also dealing with a severe lack of depth on their bench.

**John Grathwol.** Some of our actions, efforts, and completed tasks include developing a better understanding of the make-up of the FEMA workforce; developing a better understanding of efforts to promote FEMA career pathways; identifying workforce resilience challenges, focused on SLTT perspective on short-term rotating assignments of FEMA field staff; and identifying unique SLTT staffing practices.

**Donald Bliss.** We've got some preliminary ideas on where we could go with our recommendations. For example, how can emergency management be promoted as a desirable public sector career? This covers a lot more than just emergency responders – legal, grants, IT, et cetera.

**John Grathwol.** I came into this field by accident. I worked on the efforts to re-build the Office of Budget Management after we were uprooted by 9/11. We have a great message we can share. U.S. Postal Service is making recruitment ads that unite their employees around their mission and the spirit of public service, but we don't see those in emergency management.

**Donald Bliss.** Some of our other questions and ideas include: What additional steps can be taken to further professionalize emergency management? How can FEMA field staff rotations be stabilized? How can the psychological, emotional, and performance impacts of frequent, long-term disaster on the FEMA and SLTT workforce be mitigated? What workforce equity issues need to be addressed? Is the current FEMA workforce makeup optimized to handle the disaster environment of the future?

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** Does FEMA do a survey of employees?

**Rob Long.** There is the OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, from which FEMA receives data.

**John Grathwol.** FEMA has done a pretty job of helping us understand the challenges surrounding this topic. The FEMA workforce is very complicated.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** With respect to your idea on more permanent staff for response and recovery, I think that would address a lot of issues. I want that to be expanded to preparedness and mitigation.

**James Waskom.** We have explored that idea in Louisiana and Texas now has an integrated Recovery Office. We are internalizing those two models for those regions that get habitually hit by incidents. FEMA does response well, but it's around that line of where response transitions into recovery that things get difficult. That's when FEMA's 50-week rule comes into play, and we see staff turnover.

**Jeanne Abadie.** You may want to talk to the FEMA Equity ESG about workforce intersections.

## NAC CLIMATE SUBCOMMITTEE: WORK PROGRESS REPORT

**Ramesh Kolluru.** Climate Adaptation SC has focused on Objectives 2.1 – 2.3. Objective 2.1 focuses on increasing climate literacy among the emergency management community; Objective 2.2 seeks to build a climate resilient nation; and Objective 2.3 seeks to empower risk-informed decision making.

We split into three task forces to discuss and advance the three objectives. Members of the NAC and FEMA were the breadth of our subject matter experts. This process has been productive.

Objective 2.1 calls for increasing climate literacy, with the goal of outlining success for implementing a climate literacy program. The Administrator challenged us with determining what that looks like. We wanted to go beyond training how to manage disasters based on forecasts so we can plan around future conditions. The idea is to partner with the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and university-based partnerships to create a climate curriculum and a pipeline of knowledgeable emergency managers. We envision having an emergency management workforce on all levels get educated on climate change by having a series of certifications and workshops.

We want to incentivize behaviors and normalize climate discussions and may even broaden the lens of what emergency managers look like focusing on partnerships. The Administrator challenged us to define what climate resilience means. This requires SLTT hazard mitigation plans and subsequent support to create them. Climate change and future.

Recommendation two is how we support SLTTs, requesting the use of EMPG to incentivize behaviors and normalize climate discussions in the emergency management community. We want to ensure FEMA has a strong foundation data repository available for use at all levels to create hazard mitigation plans

Objective 2.2 has two more recommendations. Build capacity and provide technical assistance to support SLTTs in hazard mitigation planning, project pipeline development, and funding projects that focus on climate justice. The goal of objective 2.2 is to define what climate resilience looks like from a local perspective.

Objective 2.3 to empower risk-informed decision making had two recommendations which ensure that risk models get incorporated into planning. Recommendation two asks that we enhance the Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT) to include and ensure we are addressing all-hazard climate disasters, with the goal of answering how well does RAPT facilitate climate risk-informed decisions.

**Anna Lang.** If we are just communicating about hazards, it is not as useful to ask where the hazard is and what we expect to happen. That goes along with Objective 2.2 with creating a data repository and operationalizing

that data. Leveraging our community stakeholders, groups, and leaders to not lead from the top down, as one size does not fit all.

Objective 2.2 Recommendation 2. Rethinking the benefit cost analysis (BCA). As we have this conversation on many fronts, the BCA is not supporting community resilience. We want to better guide programs to impactful work. We have identified the need to drill into that and for funding technical assistance programs. The goal is to make BCA criteria more flexible to not just go after property values, but also include social and cultural equities.

**Ramesh Kolluru.** We look forward to continuing to incorporate equity so as not to add it on as an afterthought. We are working to define success metrics.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** In the climate world, the word “Mitigation” means something different – the reduction or storage of greenhouse gases. There are human elements to data, so this is a complex recommendation. Do you know what you are looking at, do you know how to test it?

**James Waskom.** Want to further the discussion to using the Annual Planning Guidance (APG) to incentivize people to engage in education. I don’t think the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) budget has changed since I was a state director. Saying that you’ll use that as a budget, state directors get nervous because it is already being used to pay their professional emergency managers.

**Rob Long.** This is good point to not call out and identify specific avenues to fund things. We should try making that aspect of the recommendation more general.

**Brian Strong.** It is about capacity and not about just one program but expanding capacity at the state and local level. We don’t want data for data’s sake. Often it is our own data that people repackage and sell back to us. We need to know what problems we have so we can be part of the solution.

#### Related Information

- [Building Alliances for Climate Action \(https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_building-alliances-climate-action.pdf\)](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_building-alliances-climate-action.pdf) (FEMA Resilient Nation Partnership Network and NASA, 6/8/2022)
- [Hazard and Climate Resilience Institute \(HCRI\) \(https://www.boisestate.edu/research-hcri/\)](https://www.boisestate.edu/research-hcri/) (Boise State University)
- [Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan \(https://doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/bil-5-year-wildfire-risk-mmt-plan.04.2022.owf\\_.final\\_.pdf\)](https://doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/bil-5-year-wildfire-risk-mmt-plan.04.2022.owf_.final_.pdf) (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 4/2022)

## NAC READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE: WORK PROGRESS REPORT

**Brad Richy.** The Readiness SC has had collaborative calls, more than any other time in my history on the NAC. We were tasked with addressing the posture of FEMA to meet their current and emerging threats and unify coordination and deliberate federal assistance. We approached those assignments by working with the National Integration Center (NIC) to provide feedback on the Local Elected and Appointed Official Guide (LEAOG) and reviewed options from a Homeland Security Operations Analysis Center (HSOAC) report.

We reviewed the LEAOG and found that it was extremely thorough in its approach to emergency management response personnel. We had to consider, as the Governor said this morning, you may not have time to sit down and read a 60-page document like the LEAOG. That is something to consider because while this information is

appropriate, how do you consolidate it down into a one-pager or flow sheet? Something that a first-year official will have time to pick this Guide and review; and understand who on their staff are the emergency managers and what that staff does. The feedback was received well; when we said to reduce it down or accompany it with a one-pager or flow sheet.

The next review was of the HSOAC report. We prioritized what we'd like to discuss and provide feedback on. The report was thorough and there were 15 initial recommendations. at the report looks at Community Lifelines, Lines of Effort, how they overlap, and how they fit together. While some things were found to be integrated, others overlap, and certain FEMA programs are fragmented.

Another example that came out of the 15 recommendations to change was the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA). These are different programs but require almost identical assessment work from SLTTs. The issue that comes from combining it – combining is not necessarily the right approach – you need to understand what you want to get from the THIRA and HIRA. We could look at the funding streams and determine where the mitigation funding could go; amongst the committee, we ranked each recommendation in order of priority for the subcommittee. We mostly came back with the same top topics. We will continue working with the NIC on this.

**Tina Titze.** We've been working hard and had a lot of calls. We appreciate getting to provide immediate feedback and not waiting a year. Hopefully some of our comments, like having more brevity and one-pagers, will be taken to heart moving forward.

**John Grathwol.** Have you considered on-call emergency contracts for a Readiness program?

**Brad Richy.** Not at this point. The Equity WG integration has been incredibly helpful in our work on the LEAOG.

## UPCOMING COORDINATION WITH NAC ON HSOAC OPTIONS

**Rob Long.** Readiness SC and Equity WG are experiments this year. Readiness SC has, for the first half of the year, been successful. We may expand some of those activities to the rest of the SCs. We have only tangentially engaged with the National Integration Center (NIC) in the past.

**Joel Doolin.** [Thanked the NAC for their work so far.] It is not just the cost and magnitude of disasters, but also the proliferation of doctrine. All well-intended, but now more than our SLTT partners can be expected to handle. The work with RAND HSOAC was a 12-month effort to look at the constructs, examine documentation, interview personnel, and the resulting document was ultimately 34 pages. The Administrator has identified my next steps. We must visit the relevant committee at the National Security Council and see that go live on the RAND website. The direction the agency is taking on the study was shaped by the NAC.

With that in mind, I come back to ask for another favor. In April, I was briefing the Administrator on the NAC's approach to the 15 recommendations. We discussed how we will implement the five focus areas selected. She said to ask the NAC about continuous improvement as an agency. After an evaluation of exercises, we could be a better partner in this area for our SLTT partners. We would like for you to in the future consider: What kind of products does the NAC think are most helpful? If each of you could give us your thoughts, it will shape what we will do.

**Rob Long.** Thank you to Brad Richy and Governor Brad Little for kicking us off; and thank you to Idaho Public TV.

## Day 2 – Wednesday, June 8

### PARTICIPANTS

<b>NAC Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Nim Kidd, Chair	Yes, Virtual
Jeffrey Hansen, Vice Chair	Yes
Carrie Speranza, Secretary	Yes
Jeanne Abadie	Yes
Kathy Baughman McLeod	Yes
Sue Anne Bell	Yes
Donald Bliss	Yes
Donna Boston	No
Paul Brennan	Yes
Paul Downing	No
Charles Esteves	Yes
Jody Ferguson	Yes
Timothy Gleason	Yes
James Gore	Yes
Tonya Graham	Yes
John Grathwol	Yes
Brian Hastings	Yes
Lisa Jones	Yes, Virtual
Ramesh Kolluru	Yes, Virtual
Ryan Lanclos	Yes
Linda Long	Yes, Virtual
Nicolette Louissaint	Yes, Virtual
Dr. Anna Lang Ofstad	Yes
Kelly McKinney	Yes
Paula Pagniez	No
Jimmy Patronis	No
Brad Richy	Yes
Carol Salas	No
Brian Strong	Yes
Tina Titze	Yes
James Waskom	Yes
<b>FEMA Participants</b>	
Sara Andresen, NIMS Implementation Branch	
Aitor Bidaburu, U.S. Fire Administration	
Rebecca Bobrow, Office of Response and Recovery	Virtual
Sarah Byrne, Office of the National Advisory Council	Virtual
Ashlie Chandler, Region 10	

Laura Cirillo, Resilience	Virtual
Lynda Cortes-Avellaneda, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	Virtual
Jacquelyn Dewey, Readiness	Virtual
Catherine Dluzak, Integration and Technology Branch	Virtual
Joseph Dolinger, Office of the National Advisory Council	
Elizabeth Edge, Office of Regional Operations	
Jeremy Edwards, Office of External Affairs	
Mary Jean “MJ” Edmon, Region 10	
Travis Gaines, Office of Chief Counsel	
Anna Gonzalez, Office of External Affairs	Virtual
Todd Hoose, Office of External Affairs	
Hallie Huffaker, Office of Response and Recovery	Virtual
Liz Jackson, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	Virtual
Kimberly Keblish, Region 2	Virtual
Leslie Klein, Partnership and Engagement Branch	Virtual
Benjamin Krakauer, Office of the Administrator	Virtual
Nicole LaRosa, U.S. Fire Administration	
Meghann Lee, Office of Response and Recovery	
Kennedi Locus, Office of Response and Recovery	Virtual
Jeff Markham, Region 10	
Joshua Markman, Doctrine and Policy Office	Virtual
Vincent Maykovich, Office of the Regional Administrator, Region 10	
Jennifer Patterson, Region 10	
Michael Plostock, Office of Response and Recovery	
Eli Pushkarewicz, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	
Lydia Sanchez, Office of Regional Operations	Virtual
Robert Schroder, Operational Planning Branch	Virtual
Melissa Sedlacik, Readiness Office	Virtual
Megan Smernoff, Office of Response and Recovery	Virtual
Zach Smith, Office of Response and Recovery	
Rebecca Soulen, Workforce Generation Branch	Virtual
Thomas J. Swint, Region 8	Virtual
Marc Tagliento, Office of External Affairs	
Rachel Tranchik, Office of Response and Recovery	
Lynsey Wallace, Resilience	Virtual
Lt. Col. Walsh, Military Advisor, Office of the Administrator	
Elaine Zhang, Office of the National Advisory Council	Virtual
<b>Non-FEMA, Non-NAC Participants</b>	
Noah Aiona, California Department of Public Health	Virtual
Thomas Balint, U.S. Department of the Interior	Virtual
Valerie Brown, United Policyholders	Virtual
Tim Campbell, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria	Virtual
Jeffrey Cavarra, Bridger Aerospace	Virtual

Nzinga Dyson, Lewis-Burke Associates LCC	Virtual
Karl Fippinger, Fire and Disaster Mitigation, International Code Council	Virtual
Luke Harrison, Office of the Florida chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Virtual
Dennis Hawthorne, Department of Defense	Virtual
Justin T. Kates, International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)	Virtual
Jessica Leins, On Target Preparedness	Virtual
Cardamon Nothissea	Virtual
Monica Radman, California Department of Health	Virtual
Rachel Rexford, Office of the Florida Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Virtual
Michael Russo, University of Michigan	Virtual
Jason Tama, National Security Council	
Sauda Yerabit, California Department of Public Health	Virtual
<b>Speakers</b>	
Rob Long, Director, Office of the National Advisory Council, FEMA	FEMA
Deanne Criswell, FEMA Administrator	FEMA
Michael Coen, Jr., Chief of Staff	FEMA
David Bibo, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Response and Recovery	FEMA
Justin Knighten, Director, Office of External Affairs	FEMA
Willie G. Nunn, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region 10	FEMA
Victoria Salinas, Deputy Administrator (Acting), Resilience	FEMA, Virtual
Cynthia Spishak, Associate Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Analysis	FEMA
Mike Zupko, Executive Director, Wildland Fire Leadership Council	
Brian Ferebee, Chief Executive Intergovernmental Relations, U.S. Department of Agriculture	
Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration	FEMA
Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior	
Brad Richy, Director, Idaho Office of Emergency Management	NAC
Christina Curry, Chief Deputy Director, California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services	
Sara Hartley, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Montana Disaster & Emergency Services	
Aaron Miles, Natural Resources Director, Nez Perce Tribe	
Dr. Anna Lang Ofstad, Zylent	NAC
Dan Gorham, Research Engineer, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety	
Tyre Holfetz, Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program Manager, Idaho Dept. of Lands	
Ali Ulwelling, Forestry Assistance Specialist, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources &	
Pam Williams, Assistant Administrator, Grant Programs Directorate	FEMA, Virtual

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## OPEN MEETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Brad Richy.** I hope everyone enjoyed the tour out of National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and speech from Governor Little yesterday. It is important that people understand why we are here to talk about wildfires. I think we all learned a lot about what the NIFC does, but we did not hear a lot about what they do not do. Hopefully we can see some of that in the panels today.

**Rob Long.** Those of you joining us online, yesterday you saw how subcommittees inform the full Council, and today you will see how the Council has an opportunity to inform the FEMA Administrator. Any individual online can add questions to the chat, and we will also hold a public comment period.

Unfortunately, NAC Chair and head of the Texas Department of Emergency Management Chief Kidd was unable to join us today. Our hearts go out to the folks in Uvalde, and to those suffering in the heat wave in Texas today. This is a public meeting so we will have people online including NAC members who were not able to join us in person.

I direct the Office of the National Advisory Council (ONAC), which supports the Administrator and the NAC. This is a Federal Advisory Council Act (FACA) body comprised of emergency managers and other related personnel. We are in FEMA Region 10, made up of the northwest states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

Today, NAC Vice Chair Jeff Hansen (Director of the Choctaw Nation Emergency Management) and NAC Secretary Carrie Speranza (Deputy Director of District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency) are present to introduce the Administrator, after our public comment period.

## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

**Nim Kidd.** The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) report to the Regional Administrators. If we could have more interactions with the RACs and the NAC, it would be a less steep learning curve for the NAC to learn.

**Karl Fippinger.** I support the NAC as a resource given the agency's push on building codes. Hopefully you all had a great visit to NIFC yesterday. I had an opportunity to present to Jim Pauly and the plaque for their 125th anniversary. The education has been great as always. Looking forward to the conversation today on wildfires.

## INTRODUCTION OF FEMA ADMINISTRATOR

**Jeff Hansen.** I serve as the Director of Community Protection and wear many hats. I am going on eight years serving the NAC, serving under several administrators. This Administrator is one of the most engaged that I've seen since I've been serving. Deanne Criswell, FEMA's 12th administrator, was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate. Ms. Criswell started her career in Aurora, Colorado. The joke has been that the NAC is the recruiting pool for FEMA. She was briefly a member of the NAC. Prior to becoming the Administrator, she served as the Commissioner of the New York City Emergency Management Department.

**Carrie Speranza.** Thank you, it means the world to us that you have spent so much time here.

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## FEMA ADMINISTRATOR DISCUSSION WITH THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Deanne Criswell.** Most of the recommendations FEMA agreed to or partially agreed with. Most of the recommendations to which we agreed, the agency is already on the way to implementing. The NAC made recommendations for changing the documentation collected and taking on a bit more risk. As a result, 75,000 more families have been made eligible for assistance resulting in awarding \$350 million to people that would have been denied in the past.

We have added a climate resilience position to the NAC. I believe that FEMA has such an opportunity to lead the conversation in climate resilience. FEMA can bring the right stakeholders together to have dialogue. I was fortunate to travel to Belgium recently and meet with our NATO colleagues and learn about how they are facing many of the same climate challenges that we are.

We are going to do a couple things to create an environment in which we can best retain our employees. I have asked the team to look at the different training and learning opportunities we have across the agency. We don't really have a way for employees to map out which opportunity is right for them given the point they are at in their career. If employees have a tool to develop their career, I believe there is opportunity to retain more talent.

There were a couple of areas in which FEMA and the NAC disagreed. FEMA does not have the authority to activate Individual Assistance (IA) for every disaster declaration. I believe the recommendation was that every declaration with Public Assistance (PA) should include IA. We need to develop criteria that considers more than just the numbers. I have asked Recovery to look at the soft factors. One example is: in Boulder, Colorado they had the fire on December 30, 2021, wherein 1,000 homes burned down in just a few hours. Boulder is a wealthy place so if you were to look at the macro numbers alone, you may have missed that there were many pockets of people who were uninsured and suffering greatly. Another recommendation you made is around Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA). It is not within our power to change, but the agency will continue to work with Congress.

You had a recommendation on the FEMA GO program. We are working to streamline the application process and I think it is making a difference. I would love to hear from the NAC about that.

I know you may not have had enough time to look at the full response report, but I am happy to schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss the FEMA Response to the NAC recommendations further. I want to conclude by saying thank you – the energy and time that you put into making these recommendations truly makes a difference.

**Nim Kidd.** I want to thank the Administrator. The FEMA Response to the NAC 2020/2021 Recommendations included 35 recommendations in all, most of which were agreed to or partially agreed to. I also want to thank Rob Long and ONAC for including FEMA staff who can provide feedback and educate us on many different topics.

**Rob Long.** Each NAC subgroup will now present to the Administrator. In February the Administrator came to the subcommittees (SCs) and made specific requests of the NAC. This is the opportunity for each subcommittee and the Equity Work Group to discuss what they have been spending time on and discuss where they should head from here.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Thank you to the Administrator for your presence and approachability. Across the three objectives we have, there is a broad theme that seems to be emerging – getting operational and intentional data to folks on the ground. We have tried to identify possible programmatic changes that would align with this. Moving forward, we plan to be intentional and lead from the back. We realize that FEMA is not the only entity trying to do this. How do we get the programs and funding and backing to the folks who are already working on these topics? I would like to also be more intentional about working with our Equity colleagues on the front end.

**Deanne Criswell.** Thank you for that. I had an interesting conversation with the students at Boise State University (BSU) yesterday. They asked: Where is the intersection between emergency management and climate change that are not solely focused on natural disasters? For example, heat waves or migration from other countries. I think that is something the NAC could think about.

**Sue Anne Bell.** The Equity WG is not a subcommittee. It is a new endeavor this cycle to try to integrate equity into each of the subcommittees. All the Equity WG members also have a place on one of the subcommittees. Some of the things we have accomplished: reviewing previous work of the past NAC equity subcommittees; coordinating with the FEMA Enterprise Steering Group (ESG) on current progress happening across the agency; and hearing from other subject matter experts. Moving forward, we would like to create a stronger feedback loop between the subcommittees and the working group.

**Deanne Criswell.** I love the way that you all organized this. That integrative approach is how we need to implement equity considerations across the agency.

**Nim Kidd.** The work that you all did in making IA more accessible for people with legacy homes is amazing. How can NAC members assist with getting the word out about this?

**Deanne Criswell.** We are using every platform we can to get information out there – conferences, congressional hearings, and more. I am happy to brainstorm with you Nim about what more we can do.

**Nim Kidd.** I need something I can get into the hands of lower-level officials – mayors and local city elected officials. I look forward to discussing this more.

**Brad Richy.** I will present for the Readiness SC. Thank you to our partners and collaborators. We have been working with the Office of National Assessments and Integration (ONAI) and the Readiness Enterprise Steering Group (RESG). We reviewed the officials guide – we were very impressed with its thoroughness. Joel Doolin has been great to work with. Secondly, we reviewed the RAND HSOAC report. Our subcommittee prioritized the 15 recommendations. It was amazing to be able to provide feedback in real-time, rather than waiting for years.

**Tina Titze.** Good morning, I want to reiterate that we really appreciated the chance to provide immediate feedback on the RAND report.

**Deanne Criswell.** I am excited that we were able to do this – to tap into an amazing group of individuals and consult their knowledge and experience. You can count on me continuing to try and do that and offer those opportunities to you all. If there are parts of the review process we need to improve, let's talk about that.

**John Grathwol.** Donald Bliss and I will present for the Workforce SC. I am very excited about the attention that you and your administration you have given to the NAC. On the Workforce SC, we have received support from FEMA subject matter experts to help us understand the complexity surrounding the FEMA workforce. I will run through a list of issues we have identified. The first is the Field Operations Directorate help with understanding readiness and sustainability. My experience is largely with long-term recovery, and I found that there was a lot of turn-over among FEMA staff on projects which span several years. Next is promoting emergency management careers. I stumbled into EM from the budget world. We think the career path in emergency management could be better sold. Connected to that, is the professionalization of emergency management.

Lastly, workforce resilience – we are concerned about critical incident stress issues and the depth of bench at the state local tribal territorial (SLTT) level.

**Donald Bliss.** For the next half of the year: First, we would like to better integrate with our equity colleagues. Second, we have started to collect best practices from different jurisdictions but would like to do more with territories and tribes. Lastly, we would like to look further into hazard-centric regional field offices to address staff turnover issues within long-term recovery.

**Deanne Criswell.** Thank you all. I challenged our Field Operations Directorate to throw out our old planning assumptions because we are in a new world now. I like the idea about the hazard-centric regional offices and would like to hear more about it as you do further research.

**Rob Long.** We will now enter a question-and-answer period.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** My question is hazard specific. This focus on fire at this meeting has been phenomenal. I have a particular focus around extreme heat. Heat is driving so many of the climate impacts and it has consequences for how we design our cities and infrastructure. I would love to see future NAC meetings place a focus on this. Heat is not a topic that many people are aware of us as a hazard. How can we be helpful in this area?

**Deanne Criswell.** We have put a lot of focus on coastal areas because we can see the hurricanes coming. I return to that question that Boise State University students posed to me – where the intersections between emergency management and climate change beyond natural disasters are. Heat is a primary killer compared to other natural disasters and yet we do not talk about it. We are currently working on a climate series. This would be a great area for the NAC to provide recommendations on.

**Kathy Baughman McLeod.** We have been working on a system where I work that incorporates a lot of heat hazard data. Would love to discuss further about how we can utilize that going into the summer season.

**Deanne Criswell.** Yes, I will connect you with Justin Knighten who leads the Office of External Affairs.

**Ramesh Kolluru.** I saw that the next national-level exercise will be focused on climate adaptation. I am very excited to see that.

**Tonya Graham.** My question is around climate resilience – resilience is bigger than emergency management. It seems we need to help people stay where they are when they are threatened, but I know that is outside of FEMA's mission. How is interagency coordination working to address this?

**Deanne Criswell.** I think the first place I would point you to is the Climate Action Task Force led by Gina McCarthy. They have four subcommittees that are cross-cutting across the entire federal government. I have not seen progress reports from that yet, but it will be interesting to see what they recommend. Secondly, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a big factor here. There was a lot of funding given to many agencies, and the White House is ensuring that we are not operating in silos to roll that out.

**Nim Kidd.** I wanted to say thank you again to the Administrator, her team, and Rob Long. This has been the first time I have seen this level of engagement with the NAC. Having your folks engaged with us from the very beginning makes a real difference.

**Jeffrey Hansen.** I will echo Nim Kidd. The engagement we are seeing now is better than ever.

**Carrie Speranza.** Lastly, I want to thank the NAC members for their effort and engagement.

**Rob Long.** I will conclude by also thanking the liaisons who are embedded within program offices across the agency. They really shorten the feedback loop for us, and it improves our ability to do our work.

#### Related Information

- [FEMA Response to NAC Reports 2020-2021](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_response-2021-nac-report.pdf)  
([https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_response-2021-nac-report.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_response-2021-nac-report.pdf))

## PANEL INTRODUCTIONS

**Rob Long.** The FEMA Mission Statement is “helping people, before, during and after disasters.” Our next panel includes speakers leading various components of FEMA which must coordinate to make this mission work.

## FEMA LEADERS PANEL DISCUSSION WITH THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

#### Panelists

- (Moderator) Michael Coen, Jr., Chief of Staff
- David Bibo, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Response and Recovery
- Justin Knighten, Director, Office of External Affairs
- Willie G. Nunn, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region 10
- Victoria Salinas, Deputy Administrator (Acting), Resilience
- Cynthia Spishak, Associate Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Analysis

**Michael Coen, Jr.** I am the Chief of Staff at FEMA and work for the Administrator to make sure she has what she needs to meet the mission. We have a diverse team to lead FEMA, our programs in the Regions, and at Headquarters. We will start with Region 10 with Mr. Nunn and how we support our states, tribes, and locals.

**Willie G. Nunn.** I am the politically appointed Regional Administrator for Region 10. Yesterday, I completed my 100th day in this position and cannot think of a better way to celebrate than being here. I am not new to FEMA. Spent 15 years as a Federal Coordinating Officer after 27 years in the Air Force. It is about collaboration and coordination, partnership, and relationships. We cannot do anything in a silo. Everything we do has to be integrated. What I tell Region 10 is that we are one FEMA in service to you; we are not just the Joint Field Office or a Joint Recovery Office.

**David Bibo.** I have the pleasure of serving as Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Response and Recovery which is led by Associate Administrator Anne Bink. She sends her best. I’ve had the pleasure of knowing three of the four panelists since the beginning of my 13-year career. ORR has about 12,000 employees across the country with reservists and intermittent employees who are the backbone of the mission.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Thank you. Mr. Knighten joined FEMA just over a year ago and challenges FEMA leadership. I have learned a lot from him about community. He is the Director of the Office of External Affairs.

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**Justin Knighten.** It is a pleasure to be here and with my colleagues. In working with External Affairs, we operate as a big ship. We have work with Congressional Affairs, Tribal Affairs, Intergovernmental Affairs, and other coordinating programs. Each Regional Office has an Office of External Affairs, and we remain in sync with all of them. We manage our External Affairs Cadre, around 500 people, and they are doing extraordinary work.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** We will now hear from Cynthia Spishak who heads the Office of Policy and Program Analysis and leads the Strategic Plan efforts.

**Cynthia Spishak.** Thank you all. The Office of Policy and Program Analysis (OPPA) reports to the Administrator and supports meeting the strategic goals outlined by the Administrator and support driving the Agency through evaluation.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Victoria Salinas is a political appointee and the Acting Deputy Director of Resilience.

**Victoria Salinas.** I am joining from Washington, DC. Resilience at FEMA is a new organization and was developed about four years ago by a prior Administration. Risk is the foundation of what we are working on within Resilience and have many grant programs focused on reducing risk. There are billions of dollars going through Resilience. We also help the community prepare and build, we have [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) and an exercise program. We also support some aspects of Recovery, such as Federal Insurance Management Agency (FIMA) and Environmental Preservation to make sure we are supporting appropriate recovery efforts, while still being culturally aware. We are not as large as ORR, but we are executing a number of opportunities on climate change.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Want to recognize Jason Tama, Director of Resilience and Response from the National Security Council and thank him for his partnership. I would also like to recognize Jeremy Edwards, our politically appointed Press Secretary. He supported our press event yesterday with the Administrator which was covered by local news. Thank you to Mr. Richy, the State of Idaho, and City of Boise for the support and partnership during this event. We will focus on our priorities at FEMA and then will go to questions and answers. I would like to start with equity and want you to hear about our work directly from FEMA leaders.

**Cynthia Spishak.** It is a focus of this Administration and is goal one in the Strategic Plan. There are several Executive Orders that we are continuing to implement. A lot of the focus is on customer experience, and we are working to implement actions that will make the experience better for those interacting with FEMA programs. We are making a lot of progress and have experienced challenges.

**David Bibo.** Will mention again that some of the changes that we have made without regulation or statute changes were within the Administrator's authority. The Administrator changed the requirements for proof and documentation of home ownership, which allowed for an increase of Individual Assistance by \$350 million and 10,000 households were positively impacted by the Administrator's decision. The Administrator also changed the rate for direct housing programs which allowed us to support additional applicants. We are continuing to reevaluate existing regulations impacting IA.

Disaster impact profile is a qualitative analysis which allows us to look indicators, like poverty. It allows to better evaluate recommendations on IA and support the Administrator's recommendations to POTUS on which programs to approve to allow us to better meet the needs of the underserved. During the Biden Administration, we have become more fluent in meeting the needs of underserved communities. During the COVID Vaccine Mission, we were meeting the needs of people of color at a higher rate than the national average based on the outreach the Agency was doing in a trusted manner with people working with local community leaders. We got better results by focusing on serving the underserved.

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**Cynthia Spishak.** We do have a working group in the Equity Enterprise Steering Group evaluating which data we need to better serve communities and support decision making. We are working this in Region 10 and Federal Coordinating Officers to work on this issue.

**Victoria Salinas.** There is an intense focus on outcomes. We will know that we have achieved equity when demographics are no longer an indicator of your potential disaster risk. On the awareness side, there has been a lot more outreach and thousands more attended webinars about grants because they knew about it. As for applications, there are deserts where we are not getting applications, so we are now instituting a data standard and adding points for socially vulnerable applicants. Eligibility requirements can make it more difficult to access and apply. There's this methodic approach to address these equity challenges.

**Willie G. Nunn.** Using community-based organizations and meeting people where they were helped us build trust with the local community to bring the resources to them. With the equity, this is an integrated process, diversity equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We try do this through data-driven decisions.

**Justin Knighten.** What was amazing was the work that the Agency was doing across the board during the vaccine mission was the work with communities, faith-based organizations, and other trusted local organizations. We need to take these lessons learned and put this into action in the future for the next event. I was tasked with figuring out how to operationalize this in External Affairs. We captured the lessons learned and developed some guiding principles to engage with communities who are not a part of the conversation already. It is not about us; we are asking people if they are prepared, how they are preparing, and how we can meet their needs. We've done sessions in the Regions and then turned it around to develop the lessons. Regional Administrator Nancy Dragani hosted an event in Region 8 and it was a success, and the plan is to expand this. Region 5 and Region 3 want to emulate this model. Ultimately, we want to audit the entire enterprise about how we engage with the communities. Everyone's doing outreach but we are doing it in silos and not necessarily talking to one another about these conversations. How can we streamline these discussions?

**David Bibo.** We are a bureaucracy so change can take time, but we have tools to bake in what is important to us. At the beginning of 2021, it was clear that equity was important. The instruments are policy and doctrine. We started seeing things come thru with equity only mentioned on the first page so you send it back to determine how it can be further built in and what equity means. We had some answers but some questions, we could not answer. We want to develop a clear picture of the PA Enterprise. Equity is there but we need to place our most experienced public assistance program delivery managers (PDMGs) to our most underserved communities to better support and increase their chances of accessing programs. Starting to see more that organically in the Agency. Thus, we are making progress.

**Willie G. Nunn.** All of these are good initiatives, we want to do these things with excellent coordination with our states and tribes because there needs to be buy-in.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** One of the programs we are continuing with COVID is the Funeral Assistance program. I would like Justin Knighten to touch on our outreach and the layer with Equity.

**Justin Knighten.** This came from a conversation I had with Michael Coen Jr., and it granted permission to better coordinate. Took to heart Administrator's statement that we needed to meet people where they are. We also had to make sure we were balancing being a good steward of taxpayers' dollars and meeting with the communities and being on the ground. The strategy is how to use an effective use of resources to target communications to communities. With some funding, we evaluated the communities with high mortality rates from COVID and low applications for funeral assistance to develop a campaign with social media, bus shelters, community-based organizations and state and local emergency managers to educate communities about the Funeral Assistance program and improve access to applications. We had to reimagine cultural competency and

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Administrator recently did an interview about this topic and stated we need communities to see themselves in our messaging. We went thru several iterations and discussions about the message and tone. We needed to call people to discuss how to message. We are noticing that where we are running these targeted ads, we are seeing spikes in interest in the websites and resources.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Victoria Salinas has taken the initiative to build our workforce with a diverse and inclusive team in Resilience. Can you expand, Victoria Salinas?

**Victoria Salinas.** Received several presentations when I joined and met with the Office of Chief Component Human Capital Office (OCCHCO) team. We discussed that we were lacking diversity across Resilience, and we had granular data. We did a deep dive on our priorities and if we want to be an Agency that better serves, we needed to do better. We have put it in performance plans about ensuring a more diverse workforce, analyzing at the program-level. One of the most important factors is inclusion and we are developing a career pathway to better support the team we have. We have data and can get specific to become actionable.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Cynthia Spishak, can you provide an overview of FEMA Employee Resource Groups (FERGs)?

**Cynthia Spishak.** We have 10 FERGs that are employee led and homegrown. They represent a broad diversity of the Agency, and we are starting to utilize them to review policy and support Agency-wide initiatives. There are several culturally focused FERGs that are assisting us in being better culturally competent. These groups support us in improving our programs and meeting the mission.

**Michael Coen, Jr.** This is your opportunity to ask FEMA leaders your questions.

**Donald Bliss.** What keeps you awake at night and how can we help you as the NAC?

**Victoria Salinas.** One is that we have an enormous opportunity with the Strategic Plan, Equity initiatives, etc. The way you institutionalize change is vision, resources, and capacity. We have vision and recently has \$1 trillion come through various programs so there's more money through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES), etc. Capacity is constrained post-COVID and there is fatigue. How do we meet the needs when we are struggling with the human element and the fatigue? How do we build up capacity, not just at FEMA but with other partners? And how do we do that quickly? Recently had a conversation about a need for permittees and they asked what program would fund that. Took a few weeks but we were able to answer that question.

**Willie G. Nunn.** In the Pacific Northwest, every day is earthquake season. We are coming up on fire season, but we are due for an event with Cascadia, and it is my duty to make sure we are ready to respond. We must do that through our preparedness and mitigation plans. This past May, we had a drill for that type of event, and we wanted to do a full-scale exercise, but our partners were tired with COVID, so it was scaled down. We must plan for the wraparound and the fact that there will be responders who are victims/survivors as well. We got better our plan and we are still meeting the Strategic Plan by discussing the workforce and equity as well as being climate resilient.

**Justin Knighten.** Coming from California and California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), wildfire is top of mind. It is great to be here immersed in this space after being in a Hurricane conversation last week. Also, FEMA brand keeps me up because FEMA is a household name, and many agencies will never achieve that. It is for positive and negative reasons. There are expectations tied to our brand and they are often mis-aligned. How do we tap into that reality to build the narrative about FEMA? We have set and correct expectations, but we cannot focus on only doing that. Chief Kidd talked about Individual Assistance, and we need to promote that messaging. The NAC can support by presenting strategic and actionable plans that we are not thinking about.

**David Bibo.** Talked with leadership about our Mission. People highlighted that there were things outside of our scope. And Administrator stated that we need to give people the FEMA they deserve, and it have engaged the

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NAC in that conversation, working on a Ready FEMA Framework on defining readiness at FEMA, and building a workforce readiness model which considers how much busier we are and the need to sustain operations in a world that is no longer seasonal because we need to reimagine how we do business. Administrator has asked for immediate NAC feedback on those topics.

**John Grathwol.** The question of meet people where they are being data-driven and turning towards efficiency, you have an opportunity with data in your purview. Encourage you to listen to applicants. How does FEMA leadership capture information about when you say no to applicants, appeals, change decisions? How can we learn from that, so we are making the right decisions? Especially if we can accept a little risk. How much risk tolerance can there be/gray area?

**David Bibo.** The good news is that we now have a system being developed to look at this but need to get there. We need to go back and look at where we determine ineligibility, not just appeals, because some will not appeal. In the past, there was a system that automatically checked individual assistance eligibility and if you failed, you were denied. We found that many will not appeal so now if an applicant fails, it triggers a call from a FEMA employee to check eligibility. We are working through being risk adverse.

**Victoria Salinas.** We are working through a place-based approach. After disasters, we typically see the federal government get more creative about resources and we are trying to emulate in the pre-disaster activities. There are several federal programs that can fund preparedness activities. We are also sharing leads on funding and resources, and it is important that FEMA do that as a lead federal agency for disaster response.

**James Waskom.** Thank you to Administrator and Bibo for the travel trailer program that we were allowed to run in Louisiana. There's a big gap between temp housing and allocation for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Funds (CDBG-DR) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). And there's a gap between sheltering and permanent housing construction. We think we have a solution that may require legislation action so wanted to get your take on that.

**David Bibo.** It is a challenge and there is a huge gap. Our authority at FEMA related to this is in the law and explains why we cannot do this. It is very restrictive. We need authority to provide more assistance to people with uninsured losses and the habitable regulations limits what we can do. The resources are there but we need the legislative change to close the gap. Appreciate the efforts from Louisiana and others.

**Jim Waskom.** Dr. Crystal Lopez will be presenting to House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Chairwoman Dina Titus later this month.

**Victoria Salinas.** In the pre-disaster space, you can use our dollars to bring things up to code, but we need better building codes.

**Jeff Hansen.** FEMA has improved relationships with tribes but there is a gap. We found out about surveys being conducted and not including tribes. We have had EM organizations that do not allow tribes to engage because they are not "legitimate" and/or paying dues.

**Willie G. Nunn.** From FEMA Region 10 and FEMA as a whole, we want to operationalize our Tribal Strategy. Region 10 had a regionally specific tribal strategy and in my time, we have had reoccurring calls with tribal leaders. Also, all our employees are tribal liaisons.

**Justin Knighten.** We need to have intention before we can improve. Administrator has said that tribal communities are a top priority. We need to make sure we are listening and learning. We are on the verge of having a FEMA Tribal Strategy and working group to make sure we are convening programs across the enterprise to ensure we are meeting the mark. The institution of emergency management is square and tribal

communities are a triangle and try to force the two together instead of creatively thinking through how to bridge the gap. This is a huge focus and what you mentioned are substantive issues we must solve.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** On behalf of Brian Strong and myself, glad you brought up Cascadia and want to highlight the great work from the FEMA team to amplify the work on earthquake readiness. Curious about lessons learned from seismic and wildfire because they are no notice/low notice. On the mitigation side, we know that Masonry will completely collapse. Paradise, there was not shelter in place. Structural engineers determined that all the structures are uninhabitable. How can lessons learned by amplified from these types of events and what challenges do you see in applying these programs for wildfire space.

**Willie G. Nunn.** Thank you, it is a team effort. Building codes work. In Alaska, we saw that with schools in 2018. The way we are implementing our programs, we are reimagining it. What equates to a standing wall to a destroyed home?

**Victoria Salinas.** As the former Chief Resilience Officer in Oakland, California was big on being ready to be self-sufficient for 72 hours. That looks different in different places. There something to pull from seismic safety for wildfire and other hazards.

**Cynthia Spishak.** Also thinking about supply chain issues and working with private companies to be ready.

**Justin Knighten.** Need to be intentional about how we are working with people because being 72-hr ready is sometimes inaccessible. We need to be mindful about getting back to basics. Someone at one socio-economic level will need something different from another.

**Brad Richy.** Victoria Salinas highlighted some of the things that keep me up at night. One of the things that is lacking is vision, resources, and capacity to do a lot of things. Have seen some incredible changes in the last year, Administrator is listening, people are changing and that is impressive. Would ask about what communications capability we need to ensure the vision, resources, and capacity are there for a community?

**Michael Coen, Jr.** Thank you all for questions and challenging us. FEMA is a continuing learning agency and get the privilege of working with this team every day and don't have an issue sleeping at night because I believe emergency management has made significant strides. Travel with Administrator and she likes to engage with students and optimistic about the future based on those conversations. In the past, we didn't have emergency management programs and people weren't necessarily thinking about emergency management as a career.

#### Related Information

- NOFO – Notice of Funding Opportunity
- [FEMA and Equity \(https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/equity\)](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/equity)
- [2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan: Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves \(https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan\)](https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan)

## WILDLAND FIRE AND FEMA RESOURCES

**David Bibo.** Good afternoon I will be brief but wanted to share a little bit about how FEMA’s support to combatting wildfires. In the past five years we have seen an increase in average acres burned by 8.1 million acres. This is a 1.2x increase. In 2022, we have already seen 1.8 million acres burned.

Fire management assistance grants. This is one the main tools that FEMA has. Many of you are likely familiar with the declaration process – a governor requests an emergency or major disaster declaration, which goes to a Regional Administrator, and then to FEMA Headquarters, et cetera. Sometimes this can take days or weeks, but in the case of FMAGs, this often takes hours. Former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate delegated this down to improve the speed in which we can approve/deny requests. FMAGS aid with equipment or supplies, support for evacuation, communications, and more. Any questions?

**Carrie Speranza.** Is there a threshold for how big a fire must be before an FMAG can be granted?

**David Bibo.** Evaluation is typically centered around that question – if we don’t do something, will we end up with a major disaster?

Beyond FMAGs, we can also utilize more typical emergency and/or major disaster declarations. For fire, we do not usually have emergency declarations because they do not provide much more beyond what we can supply via an FMAG. That said, the difference between an FMAG and an emergency/major declaration is that under an FMAG we cannot provide direct federal assistance. We are entering peak FMAG activity season now (June, July, August, September). There has also been a steady increase in FMAG obligations. In fact, 65% if all FMAG obligations have come in the last five years. Similarly, we are also seeing an increase in fire major disasters over the past decade and, not only that, but those incidents also that are getting declared are becoming more costly. Further, 90% of IA obligations for fire incidents in the past decade have happened in the past five years, and most public assistance obligations have also happened in the past five years.

## WILDFIRE PANEL 1 – FEDERAL FIRE RESOURCES PANEL

### Panelists

- (Moderator) Mike Zupko, Executive Director, Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC)
- Brian Ferebee, Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration (USFA)
- Willie G. Nunn, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region 10
- Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior (DOI)

**Mike Zupko.** I am the Executive Director of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC). It operates similarly to the NAC, with differences. Most of these panelists have been around for a while. We are not a FACA construct, have 19 members, and our seven non-federal members are elected officials. These include representatives for National Association of State Foresters (NASF), National Governors Association (NGA), and fire chiefs working on behalf of their elected mayor for International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). Work includes the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy (also referenced as the “Cohesive Strategy”).

**Brian Ferebee.** My job involves maintaining resilient landscapes in our national forests. As you've seen, we need to work with partners to shift how we're approaching the wildland fire crisis in the context of all lands. We are one of many agencies working to learn, grow, and improve response. Communities are learning to accept and live with fire and helping people to understand their risk and exposure. We need more concerted effort, such as regarding community development.

**Willie G. Nunn.** For the Cohesive Strategy, collaboration and coordination is a shared responsibility for us all. FEMA's preparedness and mitigation programs need to be intentional so that when we do that mitigation, we build fire adapted communities. We need partnership at all levels. Near and dear to my heart there are 31 recognized tribes, bring them in as resources and a knowledge base. Bring them to the table. Keep that mantra of nothing for us without us.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** We are inside FEMA, and we come alongside FEMA's mission. Our mission is to support responders, the space right before FEMA is on the ground. We talk a lot about building codes. FEMA's building code is all fire and wind based. We are creating fire building codes in parallel. Another place is the effective and safe response, the third of the cohesive strategy. Through training, technology and data how do we prepare our boots on the ground.

When we look at resilience, we're looking at before the disaster, risk reduction. Then the environment into which our responders are going is a lower risk environment. If we have resilient infrastructure, lowering event impacts, it is not as impactful to put our responders into place. If we have resilient buildings, recovery needs and time can be reduced. Matching resources to risk and understanding gaps and those gaps are where we are vulnerable. When we don't reduce risk, we see civilian injury and death, responder injury and death, and property damage and destruction.

**Jeff Rupert.** Brian mentioned the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy; no single agency can solve these issues. The Cohesive Strategy has been very useful on things like budget formulation. Some of that consistent foundation has been exceedingly helpful for us. We administer organizations that have responders and if the safety of our responders isn't our highest priority, we probably aren't doing a great job at administering these programs.

That resilient landscape piece. The Department of the Interior (DOI) is mission driven and focused on land management, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), etc. On the one hand, responding to wildfire; and on the other hand, trying to meet the mission of those agencies. We want healthy lands.

Third goal is interaction with communities. We have some close community relationships with tribes. But most of our relationships with communities are adjacent communities. Over multiple years, impacts and risk we are looking at adjacent communities to reduce that risk before the fire hits. But we aren't necessarily organizing those grants. Fire adapted communities make much stronger connections and have much stronger coordination to produce more leverage.

**Mike Zupko.** It's not just three separate goals, it's how those goals interact. WLFC is going through a refresh now. Things are different even in the last 10 years. How do we help you all, for example with BRIC? How do we deal with what's going on in our climate? I want to move to an interagency policy look. We've been around since 2002. It's a whole lot more interesting than in the past year.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** The interagency coordination, we have several different venues where that takes place. Someone needed to draw me a picture to see how many wildfire groups there were. Federal meeting, work with NWCG to create training. We just released our WUI report? This has in it the problem set and recommendations written for decision makers and policy makers. You can already see its multi-factorial. Most people say wildland.

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Wildland is a place; wildfire is the problem. Intermixed communities building partially in. Had nothing to do with the WUI, but it was a grass fire. Wildfire is what we're talking about, where it occurs is a whole different discussion. Who is responsible for it where? Terminology matters.

One thing we are working on is we work with NIST. NIST is doing a lot in the WUI space. How does it move structure to structure? The interface is burning inside the structure and burning to the outside. How do we translate that message then? We can't just quote science. If I can't explain why they can't have wood fencing 10 feet from their house or need a metal structure over their vent... Superior and Louisville relaxed building codes to build back faster in a fire vulnerable area that just burned. Those structures are going to burn again, and we are going to pay to replace them again.

**Willie G. Nunn.** Dr. Moore as you said, words matter. Wildfire. In our region, Colorado fire, interagency that FEMA responded to that, how did we bring in the rest of the community. I wanted to bring back the mission statement. Building back fire adapted communities who have expressed interest in those codes that are not being relaxed. When I talk to members in the community, they talk about the development in the Pacific Northwest. It comes into play the speed, the lack of a fire station, the local interaction that must take place. On mitigation plans, of course the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). I just met a NAC member from Oregon, and we talked about the message, the managing of expectations as we talk about these programs. We need to manage expectations. For 404 and 406 mitigation programs, we must reimagine how to do these programs in a cohesive timely manner. Isolated communities where 406 and 404 built back that community along the Yukon River with other nonprofit organizations.

**Jeff Rupert.** Regarding policy and mitigation, there is no such thing as no fire. We will always be interacting with fire. The trend right now is that we're interacting with mega fire. Weather, topography, and fuel. Fuel is the one primary factor that we can address and interact with on a short time frame. Infrastructure, interior, we've got good infrastructure support. Five years. As we bring this initial support on trying to get that support on the ground. Really well aligned with some of our fire reduction activities and post-fire activities. It's clearly very supportive and there's real opportunity to implement many of the things that we have talked about for many years at DOI.

I get excited talking to groups like this because there are other focus priorities outside of this and my head goes to that policy lens. What is the low hanging fruit? There's a lot of interaction. Technology is our friend, a lot of that is on geospatial reporting. DOI is taking a much closer look at the NRI. FIRE hazard potential on developing national scale wildfire vulnerability with lots of stakeholders. With risk work that FEMA does, how can we connect those efforts. My gut tells me that most of the areas intersect. A lot of that translates up into policy. I think there's great opportunity there.

**Brian Ferebee.** I live in Colorado, and it only takes a couple minutes for a fire to cross jurisdictions. The long commitment of relationships and training and resource sharing is why we can show up when we show up. I would also talk about our agency has long been in suppression and getting upstream of that to mitigate has got to be part of that conversation. Spending our time in the right places, we can mitigate those impacts for natural resources. The one we can have influence over is the fuel piece. Look at it from every lens, it has to be part of the equation. It's not as glamorous as suppression. We respond well but if we can get upstream on those actions, its important.

**Mike Zupko.** Staying on the interagency lens, maybe bringing in the NDRF, what are some of the other agencies working on this? Boise working on wildfire smoke. Interagency collaboration piece.

**Willie G. Nunn.** Fire suppression not as glamorous. Once our motto was: we can't fail response. Now our motto is: we must be prepared. It will help us to have a better success rate of response. We look at lot at interagency

recovery. Make sure we use whole of community and whole of government to try to get things back to pre-disaster conditions to make things more resilient. We know we can't do it alone. Our job in FEMA is federal coordination. We bring the fire service there who have appropriate funds. The whole of government has the solution to do that. The interagency piece we've embraced at FEMA. It's about getting back and doing it better.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** When we say interagency. We work a lot with our national stakeholder groups. IFF, IAFC, et cetera. There are a lot of interactions. Who is going to get that to the communities? But understandable We collaborate not just these groups, but we hire firefighters. We have wildland firefighters working with forestry, and they train differently than structural fire fighters. What happens when those two come together? Large fires. We do cross training. With structural fire fighters, one of the problems we've been having is protective gear and carcinogens. Wildland fire fighters don't have appropriate PPE. We hope its non-carcinogenic. We're talking to EPA and NIOCC about the effects of smoke. How does that affect the wildland fire fighters and how does that affect those communities?

**Jeff Rupert.** We are better understanding the horrible impacts to broad communities across the nation. I see the science and it makes me cringe. Huge need to start to solve the real issues there. EPA has a laser focus on that. Smoke management is a huge focus for incident response? There is another aspect of community management, there is one of the important tools, perhaps the most important tool to reduce the risk of wildfire to broad areas. Prescribed fires. Putting fire on the ground when conditions favor moderate fires. As we go down this road as a society, it's going to be important for us to recognize the tradeoff. Under managed conditions, we need to create smoke to mitigate the unmanaged smoke that is affecting our nation for months at a time. A few acres to hundreds of acres. A complex prescribed fire could be 1000 acres or so. Maybe a month long. These affect millions of people. We have this capability, we are coordinating strategies, it's a challenging sort of topic and subject.

**Brian Ferebee.** It's interesting we said the words matter but on the other hand its communication. Many of the public don't understand it at that level of detail. What we need to do is not what we are doing, and I don't think we have the social acceptance to do it. We have a lot of science but it's also going to be tolerant of the community. This social piece, it is a territory we are stepping into that we haven't before.

**Willie G. Nunn.** The Pacific Northwest depends a lot on the private sector. We work a lot to give them access. What is their access to the EM space?

**Brian Ferebee.** When I'm thinking about partners, it goes well beyond our federal partners. We must acknowledge private land and private sector partnering. If it wasn't for entrepreneurship, we wouldn't see the kinds of successes we are seeing today.

**Jeff Rupert.** Local community, local community local community. Risk reeducation needs to occur at the local community partnership level. We can't solve this at the end of the day without that local engagement

**Mike Zupko.** We have some money with infrastructure. People just don't want to work in rural grasslands now. Let's talk about some of your key SLTT partners. From a national level, what are some of those groups that can build the capacity we need.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Where Jeff left off, we need to be engaged with local fire chiefs and departments. They are integral to fire suppression, and we need to get ahead of this to the risk reeducation. That is solely dependent on our local resources so that the community can do their own risk reduction, police their own homes, understand their own building materials. It must start with the local level. If we continue to build in continuous fire affected areas, we need to be prepared for that. I won't harp on building codes again but if we're not there, there's no way to get ahead of this.

**Brian Ferebee.** What can we do to help facilitate a different outcome? Western governors have always been interested in policy and how we show up. Some of these national groups, American land forests, and several NGOs like rocky mill that would take us years to facilitate. Reinsurers and insurance companies, it's been a different experience for them for the last 2-5 years. They are changing the game on who they are not going to insure, it becomes a different conversation quickly.

**Jeff Rupert.** National association of state foresters. Most of the state forestry programs, wildland fire programs, association of fish and wildlife agency, if you ask me what my 1 ideal outcome is, we do this a lot more. Keep breaking down the stovepipes.

**Willie G. Nunn.** The Caldwell tribe in 2015 and 2021, we take that opportunity to meet what we can offer. We made sure we don't dumb it down but make it digestible and make sure the juice is worth the squeeze for the local jurisdiction. And volunteer agencies coordination. Congregate and non-congregate sheltering. Lean forward I see in our strategic plan. Every time we come to work, we need to be working toward climate resilience, equity, and inclusion, multiply resources in the right place, hiring right and main what we need. From the boots on the ground, continue interagency collaboration and coordination.

**Mike Zupko.** One last question to wrap this up.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** What is limiting the scaling of prescribed burns?

**Jeff Rupert.** Capacity and smoke management are probably the "big two" issues. DOI infrastructure is improving.

**Chad Fisher.** Practicality of implementation – there is always a risk with that.

**Jeff Rupert.** Add to that social acceptance.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Can we break the agency and grant silos for Mitigation – BRIC, fuels reduction? Based on the Incident management system from wildfire. Are there any other best practices that fire could share with the all-hazard world?

**Brian Ferebee.** One thing we do that I find with great value is our preseason get together. We do sandbag exercises. What does that term mean to you? How might we look at fire and our suppression. It builds relationships, helps with communication, and helps us understand where each other sits prior to the emergency. I think they've gotten better over the years, and it is now a requirement. Like Jeff just alluded to breaking down silos. It's those kinds of things, plus appreciating policies that keep us from working too close.

**Mike Zupko.** We do response well, but how can we do the rest well? How can we use that team concept outside of response? Both the suppression and pre-disaster side.

**Willie G. Nunn.** Region 9 called together all the Regional Administrators to talk about wildfires, about how we do PPDR, how we coordinate our FMAGs and do that between and not in silos.

**Ryan Lanclos.** Understanding risk. You said we need to look at the local level. You see all these different data discrepancies, house by house defensible space.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** I think that baseline community build and the infrastructure of the data sets and ESRI has been a big part of this, FEMA released last week US Structures database, even down to mobile homes will help us communicate risk. The other piece is how do we better inform and layer resources, fuel loads, and DOI AND USFS. Each of us has fabulous data sets. We need to put all these data sets together. We need the intelligence out of those data sets.

**Jeff Rupert.** Interagency wildlife decision support, we have a shared wildfire information technology (IT) governance that supports that IT enterprise across the community. The Wildland Fire Council meeting is next

week, and one topic is data. A lot of the secret sauce in ICS is standards, data standards so that our data can interact, and we can start to use the power tools that are available.

**Brian Ferebee.** We have a lot of data, but this interchange that can take place is very important. There other important thing is to have the communities use the data. Pleading with National Association of Counties (NACo) to use our data. People buy data through their insurance company, but we offer it for free; there is a lot of free data.

**Mike Zupko.** I'm looking forward to the panels this afternoon to see what these people can do on the ground. Would love to expand those relationships.

#### Related Information

- [U.S. Fire Administration \(USFA\) \(https://www.usfa.fema.gov/\)](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/)
- [Wildland Fire Leadership Council \(WFLC\) \(https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/leadership/\)](https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/leadership/)
- National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) – <https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/cohesivestrategy.shtml> and <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/>
- "Wildland Urban Interface (WUI): A Look at Issues and Resolutions" (<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/stories/wui-report/index.html>) (FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration, 6/2022)

## WILDFIRE PANEL 2 – STATE AND TRIBAL PERSPECTIVES ON RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

#### Panelists

- (Moderator) Brad Richy, Director, Idaho Office of Emergency Management / NAC Member, Chair of Readiness Subcommittee
- Christina Curry, Chief Deputy Director, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- Sara Hartley, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Montana Disaster & Emergency Services
- Aaron Miles, Natural Resources Director, Nez Perce Tribe

**Rob Long.** We are moving from the federal focus to the next two panels with a focus on state, local, and tribal perspectives. The next panel will be chaired by Brad Richy, Director of Idaho Emergency Management.

**Brad Richy.** In our next panel, we have Aaron Miles, Natural Resources Director with Nez Perce Tribe; Christina Corey, Chief Deputy Director from California Governor's Office of Emergency Services; and, Sara Hartley, State Hazard Mitigation Officer from Montana Disaster & Emergency Services. They represent Western state and tribal nation perspective on response and recovery, and the changes we've seen over the past couple years.

I was selected by Governor Roger in July 2012 to be the emergency manager and his homeland security advisor. Later in July we had several fires affecting 1.2 million acres across the state. In 2013 it was about 1.8 million acres, and it goes on and on. We're going to have wildfires every year in Idaho. But what I've seen over the past several years is the things have begun to change. In the first couple years, it was really eye opening at the response that happens to wildfire at the local level.

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Those of you at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) received a briefing yesterday about Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG). They talked about the different geographic areas and the coordination centers there. Idaho is unique. Two thirds of the land is owned by the federal government. We have two different geographic areas in Idaho, and we have all different federal agencies within the state as well as a land agreement. We have more federal land in the south and more state land in the north.

When we look at the Northern Rockies as being the northern back that we work with, Department of Lands has responsibility to take care of federal land. Also, the Timber Protection Associations are responsible for a lot of the private timber area there. Down in the south, we have more federal land, and the Forest Service is responsible for taking care of state and local areas in the south. So how do you sort through that?

Wildfires is a very complex issue. Two geographic areas mean two different responsibilities, and Forest Service asking for local support in the south. That's not the way we normally work, but that's the way we work in Idaho. In the north we've got private land and the protection areas up north that ask for support. How do we do that? When we start talking about ownership, we have to think outside the box because the normal approach to fighting wildfires cannot meet the new challenges.

Wildfire readiness to a community is issue. Who's responsible?

If the federal government owns 50% of a county and the fire starts on federal land, and then it bleeds over into the community? Who manages that when it cuts across federal land, and what are the challenges? How do we prepare? A lot of that starts with land ownership. I really appreciated Brian Ferebee's presentation earlier when he talked about where we were, where we're going, and what we will never achieve. Sometimes we talk about what we can officially accomplish. That's the biggest thing – never give up.

I can tell you when an FMAG never happens. I've never had an FMAG request at nine o'clock in the morning. It happens most of the time when you're at home. You're either in bed or just went to bed, and you get a call from a local community saying the wildfire is going to burn down a town. You're going to get up and do everything you can to get through the FMAG process to get the funding approved.

Then I reach out to Willie Nunn, FEMA Region 10 Administrator, and ask for the FMAG. He's going to work with his staff to try to get a good understanding of what's going on.

Once Willie says "yes" for the FMAG request, the community will get funding. They are not going to get any other resources. It's going to be up to the local community to reach out and get people and resources to come in and help offset the fire. It's going to be up to the local fire departments and the regional fire departments to work together to understand what mutual aid is there, and how can they support that community in need. Money is much needed, but it leaves many gaps. If you look at the amount of money states spend on fire, I think you would be amazed.

Mitigation is another real challenge. When you have a project for a protected stream or an endangered species approved in 2022 while you applied in 2015, how effective do you think that mitigation strategy was in 2015?

There are opportunities to combine federal funds or combine federal agencies to talk about products and figure out how we can do a better job to get mitigation work done right away.

Wildfires are complex. The relationships, the interagency, the working-together ability to get a lot of things done are all important. It's time-essential and critical for the local communities. Even if the fire is maintained on either state or federal land, we still have a responsibility to take care of that community, if something happens in the future. That's why we have this panel today to talk more about these and other challenges.

**Aaron Miles.** I want to describe the tribal standpoint as a tribal emergency responder (Slides are shared on screen). We're learning how to live with different incidences, whether they're flood events or fire events. Tribes didn't have the jurisdictional issues of boundaries like the counties did. We had different abilities, but we also had obstacles. The tribe doesn't pay taxes on the reservation. Our fire management and tribal police respond to our tribal trust lands. And then you have the counties to respond to non-native or private property. The Idaho Office of Emergency Management is a central piece to everything that we do in managing different catastrophes.

Last year was tough. We're in the era of mega fires. Idaho had Washington, Oregon and Idaho come together. In the Snake River complex there were 110,000 acres burned. And then we had the Washington side on fire. The fires merged eventually. So, we had two different fires going on at the same time. Last June there was a 10-day period of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, which is unprecedented.

The emergent management capacity has been stretched so far. We are going to see the cyclical events every three to four years, and we're going to be up for another big burn. Meanwhile, the fuels keep coming.

We're going to be in a stuck situation. After fires, you go into the flood season. Then you have serious problems: you have no water for vegetation.

I went up to the Snake River Complex this past weekend. If you look at the forest timber types, mostly firs and trees with very thin bark. They're not fire resilient. Ponderosa pines have thicker bark, but they can burn in the severe event. The ponderosa pines and larch can withstand low intensity burns. They get burned and scarred but can live, and there must be enough space between them for them to be resilient. In drought situations, we will have beetles that come in and prevent a tree's nutrient uptake. This is concerning because these trees quickly become good fuel for fires. We have some very scary situations because of the lack of management in fires. This is just to give you an idea for the areas going down to the Snake River from between the Nez Perce reservation.

In the Craig Mountain area, for years, our management depends on our general fund to create revenue.

In the early 1900s, there was a survey done on the Nez Perce Reservation which showed the composition of the species was almost 90% saplings. Now it's pretty much all inversed. We must figure out how we can get back to a manageable situation.

Another issue is air quality. Last year and in 2015, people with asthma or any chronic lung conditions couldn't go outside. People stayed in. The whole summer was pretty much wasted by being indoors. For our timber units, new technology is moving us in the direction we need to go. The air quality program received a \$419,000 grant from EPA. We need to look at how we move forward with smoke management as well, not just the fire.

**Christina Curry.** Thanks to Aaron and the panels from earlier. With fire, we keep breaking records year after year – 15 of the 20 most destructive fires in California have happened in the last few years. In 2020: 4.2 million acres burned in California. In 2021: 2.5 million acres burned.

If you haven't experienced wildfire: it takes everything, not just the homes. They are gone, and there's nothing to fix. It's the infrastructure, the schools, the post offices, and the gas stations. Time is essential because we must build back safely to keep that community together. Our traditional disaster services programs were not helpful enough. They just don't have the nimbleness and the speed that the situation calls for. In our state we have some challenges with housing; there is nowhere to go, especially in old communities.

Most survivors of fire have insurance and they figure out their own way. It's a very small set that is looking to us for the state and FEMA programs for assistance, and it's got to be quick. We've gotten quick on certain things;

like debris. We need to couple the speed with the great stuff that we're talking about here, the big changes, equity, and delivery of disaster systems.

I want to thank the NAC for focusing on wildfire in this session. I appreciate what everybody's trying to make changes and to rapidly grapple with this new normal. But we need some things to change more rapidly. The cycle of wildfire destruction is upon us again. We have our communities in California wondering who's next to go into disasters from wildfires. People are counting on us, the emergency management professionals.

Countering a wildfire is not one solution. You need to work on response and better mitigation and preparedness. The public has a role to be prepared and help themselves. We're fortunate to have a very long standing and robust mutual aid system. We have signed with our federal partners on firefighting. It's not easy. We're having resource challenges. We're investing to improve and leverage technology. We're getting intelligence, early in making decisions about how to fight the fire. We're establishing an Intelligence Center for Fire in California to create a threat picture beyond existing prediction and preparedness. We're trying to give the public more decision tools; harnessing technology achieve parity with hurricanes in the prediction and public understanding of what that means.

We talked about reforming the criteria and looking at equity in earlier sessions. They are all right on focus. We are on the front lines serving people every day and need to deliver more quickly to get people back on their feet and communities restored. We should have the nimbleness and the flexibilities in the programs now.

**Sara Hartley.** People's memories of disaster are short lived. How can you jump on them when people are interested following a disaster event and get money into their communities and get them to invest in resiliency? That's the mark that we're really missing in mitigation.

Everybody on the panel hits the nail on the head. We talked about at a national level, the importance of mitigation and the investment in resiliency. We're getting \$6 return on investment for every \$1 spent on mitigation, yet policies and guidance interpretations keep us in this reactive state. We're not able to get funding on the ground quickly enough to make an effort.

When we talk about these programs, there are some significant limitations. One of the limitations is under the FEMA program when you apply for physical projects. If you want to do a hazardous reduction project, you must go through an Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) process. My understanding is that other federal agencies can circumvent that process, due to previous rulings. What does it take for FEMA to adopt a similar mindset?

Another barrier: our communities have state lands and private lands, but also federal lands, where we can't use FEMA funds. With other federal programs you can use federal dollars to do work on federal lands.

We appreciate the FMAG program; we can get funding into a community quickly with FMAG. However, your emergency measures are really assigned under the FMAG. If you choose to go for a presidential disaster declaration to get public assistance, those potential Category B projects that were covered by the FMAG can no longer be applied under the presidential disaster declaration.

When you get an FMAG designation, you get a set dollar amount per fire; roughly \$787,000 for a state that doesn't have the enhanced plan status. However, if it's a large enough fire event, under a presidential disaster declaration 15% of the estimated costs associated with that disaster goes into the mitigation's post disaster mitigation funding.

To truly create resilience in our communities, we wouldn't limit ourselves like this. Currently, under the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs, you can't burn brush piles or prescribed burns as part of the mitigation

activity. When you look at the number of acres of unhealthy forests, there is no way we can gain traction on improving forest health or creating effective forest management if those activities are not allowed.

## WILDFIRE PANEL 3 – FIRE MITIGATION

### Panelists

- (Moderator) Dr. Anna Lang, Zylent / NAC Member, Vice Chair of Climate Subcommittee
- Dan Gorham, Research Engineer, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS)
- Tyre Holfetz, Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program Manager, Idaho Dept. of Lands
- Ali Ulwelling, Forestry Assistance Specialist, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** This panel will allow us to digest what we learned today and yesterday and understand the various levels engaged in fires. This is an historic time for us to focus on wildfires. Thank you to Brad for suggesting a disaster-specific meeting so we can dive into it. Challenge the NAC members to bring your subject matter expertise with your questions and specificity to support actionable and specific recommendations. Will turn to questions and answers midway. I am not a fire expert but grew up in California and in southern California, experienced the Cedar Fire and we were evacuated to Del Mar to the ocean. Between graduate school and engineering and now, fire is a major topic. I am a science person and while we can't build our way out of a fire risk, we can build safely. I want that to drive the NAC recommendations and find recommendations that are hazard agnostic.

**Dan Gorham.** I'm a Research Engineer, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), sister institute for Crash Test Safety. We look at weather events and how they impact structures. We have a research facility in Richmond, Virginia. We look at the building as a system and try to understand the vulnerabilities and susceptibilities as well as the strengths. My background is firefighting and that is my focus at IBHS. My work is to better understand how the natural hazard impacts us and destroys infrastructure. Wildfire serves a purpose but when it impacts homes, it becomes news because it is a home ignition problem. There is a lot of work by Jack Cohen and others on this topic. We also consider the individual building components and the susceptibility of these components, such as a roof. We discussed embers getting into vents and we also consider the areas around a home and ignition materials. Mitigation is about what can be done, what we can do to harden the homes and parcels for resiliency, and also the resiliency of the community with regard to housing density.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Can we redo fortified for fire protection? And can we look at hardening of homes?

**Tyre Holfetz.** I am the Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program Manager for Idaho Department of Lands, as well as a remodeler, economist, and technical expert. I started in 1995 in fire with boots on the ground and then moved to graduate school and studied wildland fire ecology and wildland fire economics. I have a number of roles but also administer the planning endeavors for wildlife planning at the community and county level. I oversee the federal funding that comes in which are passed through the local cooperators for lands. There's about \$17 million across many 70 programs and 30 cooperators so I spend a lot of time traveling. Additionally, I sit on many state-level committees. One is the Resource Coordination Council which is an advisory group to Idaho Department of Forestry. I sit on a few other groups such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Silver Jackets. We are working on mitigation and planning and recovery. We are trying to figure out how to work with the system to have the biggest bang for our buck on programs.

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I have several recommendations. We need to do a better job of full integration across the federal family on wildfire because FEMA is not necessarily in lockstep with other departments and agencies. National Environmental Planning Act (NEPA) creates challenges as it doesn't exist in other programs which allows for faster work. Planning documents are not in alignment. State of Idaho allows us to integrate our county plans into FEMA Mitigation Plans. The last recommendation is alignment of equity and related to Executive Order 130985. Wildland fire means you're working with several departments and agencies and they each have different definitions of equity. Would encourage that it should be at the state-level for consistency.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Sara Hartley highlighted that Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) called for economic disadvantaged and rural communities, but the rural community indicator is not accurate.

**Sara Hartley.** Yes, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) does not accurately capture rural designation in the State of Montana.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** Same issue in Idaho.

**Ali Ulwelling.** I am a Forestry Assistance Specialist, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation and help deliver all the forestry assistance programs. We are focused on insects and disease, forest products, the stewardship – which is a lot of grant funding to be delivered on the ground to private landowners – urban and community forestry, and fire protection bureau. I started in operations and hotshot fire. Decided that I didn't want to suppress fire and decided we needed more prescribed fire. And part of a local firesafe flathead group. We serve private landowners and community organizations, so when we talk about the cohesive strategy. For example, when we look at the landscape behind us. One side, the people are busy while another community is focused on fire safety and building with ignition resistant materials. So, we as resource managers, we have to go in and tell people what needs to change or be fixed. If a landowner calls, I will ask questions and offer a home risk assessment. We meet where they want to meet and do a walk around. We want to help build a fire adaptive community and it is about the mindset. We take what we can for data, we look at watersheds and fire threats and look at priority areas. We understand a little bit about the social science to know we cannot just go I there. We start building relationships to work together. We have local officials who are aware of the programs and funds available, you can make things happen. We are look at cross-boundary opportunities and adjacency. Ideally, I like to think that if we've done that work and engaged with this community that sits adjacent to federal or state lands, we will have safer and more effective response and recovery. We draft proposals, meeting landowners, we are hosting events, we are trying to do the "doing."

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Curious how data can facilitate and help what you do with an eye towards identifying the most vulnerable communities, not necessarily the ones calling your office.

**Ali Ulwelling.** The equity issue is an interesting one because those who are calling us are aware but may not necessarily need us the way others who are less aware needs us.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** The education arena is important for us to use language that connects with the community. When we talk about mega-fire, and where there are events that are catastrophic, what does that mean to people? To the community, wildfire is wildfire and people die. In the Great Basin, we should have controlled fires of 5-7 million acres. How are we educating and building resilient communities ahead of events?

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Want to switch to the homeowners' experience with this and recovery, as well as insurance. In the homebuying process, there's disclosure of risk, so thinking about what we can do to better support and bring that data piece of informing individual property owners. Do love the idea of fortified inspections but have known individuals who are dropped by their insurance for their risk which is not necessarily allowed. How do you appeal that when you are attempting to do the hardening of your home and insurance certification?

**Dan Gorham.** I don't know California law but for the physical phenomena, I have learned that wildfire vulnerability and risk is at a more granular level than zip code but that is often the most granular level for business decisions. Without knowing the law, it is important for a homeowner's perspective to demonstrate what they are doing to their insurer and prospective insurer. Fortified is a designation for buildings and will say that it meets the IBHS standards (higher than state/local building codes typically) for the purposes of insurance. It hasn't done this for Wildfires. But when you are fortifying for other events, typically what you can do to a building to fortify it has already been done. But with a wildfire fortification, there is an everchanging mark because of the materials could be changing. They need to demonstrate over the three-year designation that they are meeting the requirements and there is an annual landscape review. The insurer does not necessarily know what the risk is, and we are trying to show through science that if a homeowner takes all these actions, the risk is reduced. Believe that this would be helpful to the industry as a whole and insurer. We will be launching the program in California, Colorado, and Montana.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** Visit <https://wildfirerisk.org> and there are wildfire risk portals for citizens to garner information about their risk and many states are attempting to streamline for a more complete mapping and view for homeowners about all of their risks, not just wildfire.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Would like to turn to the NAC and take a pulse check on your thoughts. Is this a "we don't know what we don't know" situation?

**Tonya Graham.** We have done a lot of work in to harden homes. We have found that there are some things that are difficult, such as one unfortified home in a community could put the community at risk. This is difficult when individuals are responsible for this, and many want to know how to pay for this. FEMA is helping us to remove the last few shake shingle roofs but that is just a small part of it. What can be done at scale to make those inspections possible? We just trained our first corps of six volunteers on assessments but how can we connect that to getting help to get the work done when the risk is rising?

**Ali Ulwelling.** Are you a part of the Fire Adapted Network for Ashland? I go that group with questions about programs and funding. All we have goes to fuel reduction.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** We have two designated areas where we expand effort to leverage expertise on a local scale. So, there might be a local person presenting to an homeowner's association (HOA) or a forest collaborative. We need to work on scalability, and this is only two years old and are about to go statewide to show that collaboration increases effectiveness.

**Jim Waskom.** Sounds like a Fire Voluntary Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD).

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Sounds like a great opportunity across hazards.

**Jeff Hansen.** One of the things we've seen and have a BRIC program to retroactively fortify homes, we are hoping that leads into another BRIC grant. Oklahoma has a voucher program for tornado shelters (Sooner Safe). It would likely be helpful to have a voucher program for removal of fire.

**Ali Ulwelling.** I was simply unaware of a program like that. One thing that gets highlighted is that there are holes everywhere. From a local level, sometimes what we need is consistency and structure so that we are not spinning our wheels trying to figure things out. What keeps me awake is that while I feel there are a lot of great people doing great work but there are landowners who are simply unaware. How can we be better with our marketing, messaging, and outreach? How can we deliver and do better? We are here because and for taxpayers.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** The take way conversation was that you do a little bit of it at a time.

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**Brian Strong.** Agree with the comment on certainty. We also talk about managed retreat in SF, and I know New Orleans has experience with that. Do you believe that those types of solutions could be deployed in this situation?

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** is there an opportunity for community relocation while also maintaining the community fabric?

**Jim Waskom.** South of New Orleans there is a Native American tribe (Charles), we had to move the community because of sea level and there was a community outside of Baton Rouge that was built on a former trash dump, and we got an appropriation from Congress to move that community. But we had to go individual to individual to get buy in and then show the community what would be built so it took a couple years. So that is the retreat part. How do we convince folks to move after repeated events?

**Tyre Holfeltz.** In the engineering realm, we can build a structure that won't burn but how many people are willing to do that? There's no place in the U.S. that won't burn at some point in time in history, so where would we move them?

**Brian Strong.** We would have to make decisions about low-risk areas. The concept here is that you would allow the natural systems to come back so we don't get long-term fires so it may mean we have more compact communities or something else. It really means that we come down to the wealthy homeowners being able to take on that risk.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** Most of the wildfires are not in tree-types, it is usually in grassy areas in the United States. We are trading one risk for another so how do we get more educated about the risk that is associated with our location and getting comfortable with the risk. That is a paradigm shift that the government is not responsible for me or my community.

**Ali Ulwelling.** We should have landscapers and construction teams and others who approach projects with wildfire in mind and should consider what should and should not be built, planted.

**Dan Gorham.** Building codes and fire codes are a minimum standard so agree that that we need to engage with builders, construction, contractors to educate.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** If we use 1980 as the baseline, we have 60% fewer personnel in fire so need to consider that.

**Ali Ulwelling.** Need to consider where resources go in wildfire season, it goes to more populous areas and not to smaller, rural communities. Those smaller communities need to be better prepared.

**Sara Hartley.** We talked about how we fund these projects. If there isn't an emphasis on underserved and rural communities, is there a cost-share program? Not necessarily just at the federal level but also at the state level to bridge that gap, which is happening in Montana. Some of these program costs are significant for these communities' budgets.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** We need to deal with the maintenance as well because we are talking about vegetation.

**Brad Richy.** Under the storm act, states can apply for low interest loans for community offset.

**Jim Waskom.** Talked about mitigation and building codes, but the other thing is the zoning because there's a lot of politicians that a developer cannot build in a certain area, and we've had issues of flooding because of that in Louisiana. What is your take on zoning?

**Dan Gorham.** I believe that there are some places that have a history of burning and we should choose not to build there when it comes to new construction. It is a challenging but important conversation.

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**Anna Lang Ofstad.** We need to have continued conversations like this, and your unique perspectives are essential.

**Ali Ulwelling.** “Wildland Urban Interface: A Look at Issues and Resolutions – A Report of Recommendations for Elected Officials, Policymaker and All Levels of Government, Tribal and Response Agencies.” FEMA released it yesterday and this gets to consistent messaging. How can we with all the agencies be more aligned about our recommendations?

**Tyre Holfeltz.** We shouldn’t just do hard stuff; we need to do the right stuff in the right place for the right reason. We need to cross boundaries and do the right thing for the communities. Fire doesn’t care about political boundaries.

**Dan Gorham.** The right stuff is doing things to homes and parcels which can be difficult but would rather have 10 homes out of 90 than zero. As well as controlled burns.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** This is a historic opportunity for us. We need to have hazard specific meetings. Thank you for making this happen Brian. I challenge my NAC members to bring your perspectives, bring your disaster specificity. I would like you all to bring your perspectives and questions. I am not a wildfire expert. Don and I just ask a lot of questions. I grew up in California around red wood trees. I moved to southern California. They evacuated an entire urban landscape to the ocean. Wildfire became a point at every coin. We can’t engineer our way out of this and we can build in the WUI, we can mitigate the disaster impacts that we expect through home harmony, through prescribed fire. What can we apply across the board, hazard agnostic? We have had so many engaging conversations over the preceding weeks. We will try to take advantage of the expertise.

**Dan Gorham.** I am a research engineer at IBHS, a 501c3, we have a research facility where we try to recreate these hazards with real size hazard structures to understand the vulnerabilities and what makes it less susceptible to those hazards. Background in fire service. The natural phenomenon of wildland fire, how it can cascade to how that hazard impacts us. It’s not a wildfire problem, it’s a home admission problem. When wildfire burns forests, it doesn’t really make the news, when it burns 10 homes it does. It makes a big difference when you have a wood shingled roof. Dr Lori Merrell-Moore talked about embers getting inside the home and having metal vents. What can we do to harden individual homes to make them more resilient to fire? We get to that community level resilience, hardening individual parcels and so none of those individual parcels ignite to start that bigger disaster.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** individual home hardening is possible, but we also need to look at the community level planning.

**Tyre Holfeltz.** Started boots on the ground. Wildland fire ecology in Idaho. Federal funding for implementation; mostly the dollars float through to other organizations. \$17 million to 70 projects and 30 cooperators in the state of Idaho. I see what’s going on across the state and some of the hurdles that they deal with. National forestry council – as it is directed by the state forest action plan. State hazard mitigation working groups. USACE silver jackets. How do we engage and work to participate in this? A couple recommendations for the NAC: We need full integration across the other agencies with wildfire. FEMA is not lock step with the other actions. NEPA: those requirements don’t exist. Idaho has the opportunity to integrate county plans with hazard mitigation plans; no longer a duality of effort. Equity: alignment of equity across the federal family, delivery of plans. They all have their own interpretation. Suggest allowing governors to interpret state to state what equity means.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** Sara Hartley noted to me that a scoring mechanism used rural and impoverished communities as an indicator. But SVI misses many rural communities, e.g. Montana and Idaho counties do not qualify under that. Now to welcome and introduce Ally Ulwelling.

**Ali Ulwelling.** Canada, Idaho, northwest Montana. We're really into insects and disease, forestry program, urban and community forestry. My background did start in hot shot crew in fire and in aviation. I think we need more prescribed fire, and outreach to people who choose to live in those environments. We serve private land owners. We're working with communities. When we talk about the cohesive strategy, and when I meet with landowners, that's a community and they're busy. This community over here, they are fire resilient, built with ignition resistance in mind. We as resource managers tell them what it takes to build a fire adapted community. It's the mindset of the community because they are the ones making the choices to do the things that need to be done. Resilient landscapes, we probably don't mine data very well, but we do what we can. Where are the priority areas where we should be working. We need someone in that community to invite us in, we do education, outreach and grant proposals; and we try to make it happen. When you have fire management officers, we're looking at connecting across landscapes. Ideally, I like to think if we've done that work, if we've engaged with this community that is adjacent to federal or state lands. Will we have made a difference. When we're talking about local practitioners on the ground, we're presenting, meeting wherever they can in garages, converging, hosting events to educate.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** How can we use data to identify the areas that truly need those programs, not just the ones who know about it?

**Ali Ulwelling.** The equity issues. We can always use better data.

**Tyre Holfetz.** We have instances where we will burn or not. We should be burning 6-7 million acres a year in the great basin. The presence of people is something that we must deal with, that is why the presence of fires is tragic.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** I'd like to switch to the homeowner's experience and insurance. IN the home buying process, there is no information about your flood, seismic, wildfire risk. I do love the idea of fortified and inspection programs. A friend of mine in San Diego, insurance companies are not allowed by law to do assessments for individual hazards. In that cycle of building, recovery, etc. Anecdotally insurance providers are pulling out. How do I go to my insurance provider, they're going to the fire chiefs? NFPA fire.

**Dan Gorham.** I'm not an insurance expert and I don't know California law, but wildfire risk is more granular than zip code, but I understand that it is often used to parcel out divisions. I would want if I've done the right thing to know where the science is and what's important. FORTIFIED is a program run by IBHS. This designation is a standard that is often greater than the minimum state building code. In Alabama, there are regulations on how insurance needs to do their business. It hasn't existed for wildfire. Wind and rain hazard. Once you have built your home, the things you do to your home for its resilience are mostly set. But that isn't the case with wildfire, e.g. building sheds. Our standard is a suite of actions, such as a five-foot combustible zone, annual landscape review, accessibility of insurance, and more. We're trying to provide the science-based risk reduction. IF you do all these things, you're better off than a house that didn't. There's work we've done in IBHS to recognize the risk?

**Tyre Holfetz.** Wildfire risk assessment portals for people to see their risk. Some communities (like Colorado) are working to combine hazards in assessment to give an assessment for many hazards for potential risk.

**Tonya Graham.** We've done a lot of work in the interface and work to help people harden their homes. If our entire neighborhood engages except for one person, our whole community can still be at risk. This is difficult when it's individual homeowners. Who pays for that? FEMA is helping us to get rid of the last few shingle roofs in our town which has helped. What can we do at scale to help get the work done when local governments are increasingly squeezed and our risk is rising?

**Ali Ulwelling.** Are you part of the Fire Adapted Learning Communities group? I often ask them and often the answer is fuel reduction.

**Tyre Holfetz.** We bring together expertise to speak to communities to create scalability and replicability. We have a website that we modeled after Montana. Collaboration creates more opportunities.

**Jeff Hansen.** We currently have a BRIC program using the fortified homes idea, we're hoping this leads into another BRIC grant for vouchers. Oklahoma has another voucher program through grants to fortify homes for tornadoes.

**Ali Ulwelling.** Thank you for highlighting your experience, Jeff. I think these haphazard regulations, the holes are all over the place. At the local level sometimes, we just need some stability and consistency and structure. You haven't asked me what keeps me awake at night, but I think there are a lot of people who are well intentioned to do good things, how can we be better with our marketing and messaging. I work with great people but I'm so surprised when I talk to homeowners, and they have no idea of their risks.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** The takeaway is we do it a little bit at a time.

**Brian Strong.** I'm with the city of San Francisco. Certainty for homeowners. How can we compare this with other disasters? One of the things we've talked about is managed retreat. I know Jim in New Orleans you've done that a lot. Can you comment on that?

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** How can you do community relocation?

**Jim Waskom.** We moved a whole tribe because sea level rise wiped out their entire community. Another community was wiped out in Baton Rouge because they were built on a trash dump, and they couldn't come up with a mitigation match. We had to go house to house to get them all to agree to move, telling them that this is the community we are going to build for you. How do you convince communities to then move as an adaptation measure?

**Tyre Holfetz.** Individual or community building, we can't build it to a standard that won't burn. There is no place that will never burn.

**Brian Strong.** The concept is that you are considering the risk and that may mean we have more compact communities, because otherwise it may just mean that only the wealthy people can build in that resilience.

**Tyre Holfetz.** In most of the places that most of the homes are lost, it's the lower risk areas in the grasslands and shrubs. Be comfortable with the fact that I am responsible for my stuff and my community. We are trading risks.

**Ali Ulwelling.** If you decide to do any landscaping, they will know depending on your community that maybe you should plant some junipers or avoid wood mulch, etc.

**Dan Gorham.** Building codes and fire codes should be a minimum standard.

**Tyre Holfetz.** If we use 1980 as a baseline, we have 65% less people in the fire service than we did back then.

**Ali Ulwelling.** If we're talking about living in the Northern Rockies, they go to higher population communities, they aren't going to the small rural communities. It benefits people in those rural communities, to work things out on their own. The resources are not available, prepare to be a little more available to withstand.

**Sara Hartley.** FEMA does have an increased cost share if you can meet certain criteria of vulnerable populations. The state of Montana is looking for ways to partner into the remaining cost share. Something to note, yes federal government provides support, but in Montana we're thinking of how to close that gap. A construction project is still a big endeavor.

**Tyre Holfetz.** We need to deal with the maintenance as well because we're talking about vegetation.

**Brian Richy.** Keep in mind funds for the offset.

**Jim Waskom.** Spot on with Louisiana mitigation. But the other elephant in the room is zoning. People don't want to tell others that you can't build in a certain area. Building may cause flooding in another area. Acknowledge the challenge.

**Dan Gorham.** New construction needs to be at that minimum code.

**Anna Lang Ofstad.** What's the takeaway?

**Ali Ulwelling.** I think the WUI Report addresses what I'm saying when I think of consistent messaging and communication. How can we be a little more in line with recommendations?

**Tyre Holfetz.** Don't let policy be the barrier to do the right thing in the right place.

**Dan Gorham.** The right stuff is doing fortifying individual homes and parcels. There's still the possibility that one home doesn't participate, and you can lose the whole community, but it's still worth getting every home to that can do it.

#### Related Information

- [FEMA and Climate Change \(https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/climate-change\)](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/climate-change)
- [Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) \(https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/\)](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/)
- [Wildfire Risk to Communities \(https://wildfirerisk.org/\)](https://wildfirerisk.org/) (USDA Forest Service)
- [Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety \(IBHS\) \(https://ibhs.org/\)](https://ibhs.org/)
- [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\) \(https://www.nfpa.org/\)](https://www.nfpa.org/)
- [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network \(https://fireadaptednetwork.org/\)](https://fireadaptednetwork.org/)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\) \(https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html\)](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html)
- [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters \(NVOAD\) \(https://www.nvoad.org/\)](https://www.nvoad.org/)

## WILDFIRE PANEL 4 – WILDFIRE ISSUES AND THE 2022-2026 FEMA STRATEGIC PLAN

#### Panelists

- (Moderator) Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration
- David Bibo, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Response and Recovery
- Cynthia Spishak, Associate Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Analysis
- Pam Williams, Assistant Administrator, Grant Programs Directorate

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** We are going to be expeditious in this panel. I want to circle back, bring it all home, and give you helpful ideas for your recommendations. To do that, we are going to structure this panel around the strategic plan and break them down categorically a bit. I will have Cynthia run through those first.

**Cynthia Spishak.** Appreciate the opportunity to have this continued dialogue with the NAC that builds off of our conversations we had when developing the strategic plan. The three big goals are instilling equity as the foundation of emergency management, leading the whole of community in climate resilience, and promoting and sustaining a ready FEMA and prepared nation. The goals are structured to support FEMA mission delivery, and goal 3 encompasses how we should be interacting with the federal family.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Cynthia and her team were the driving force behind the strategic plan. We are going to stay on the equity issue first. A lot of time we confuse equity and equality.

**Cynthia Spishak.** The executive order focused on. We are basing our definitions from that executive order. When we think about. That have been systemically denied. How do we do this consistently across programs and what does that look like. There is a great graphic of the giving tree that paints the difference between equality, equity, and justice.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** I love the example with the giving tree. A good fire example would be turnout gear – I could give all firefighters the same size gear and that would be equality. When we think about workforce inclusive and representative.

I think it's important. We talked about the FERGs a little earlier and we want to lean in on how we leverage those. Those groups help us leverage programs in ways that communities need and deserve. We are coming in as the content experts, but the communities are the context experts.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Dave, in ORR with wildfires, there are assumptions that everyone affected had insurance.

**David Bibo.** It's hard and it gets to the questions that Jim Waskom posed earlier. We saw data on this earlier, that we are seeing more impacts to people and communities. When we dig into the data on what FEMA is actually paying for, more than 90% of the time we are helping people with rentals and repairs, but we are not seeing a large portion of max grants. For which, I believe the number is \$39,700 this year. There are still restraints on what we can provide around habitability. We also see, anecdotally, in fire scenarios a lot of full destruction which we believe are insured because of relatively few max grants. But we need to understand this better and need more data around what is happening here. It clear that we need more tools than we have today to meet folks where they are at after fire.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Dave mentioned tools, and one of our big tools is grants. What grants do we have in the Recovery arena? And then please talk about what you are doing to ensure they are being distributed equitably.

**Pamela Williams.** Thanks. We are taking a similar approach to how the NAC has formed their Equity WG. 40% of our Hazard Mitigation grants need to be focused on underserved communities. With respect to fire, we have assistance to firefighters grant program, we have the SAFER grants, and FPMS fire grant. We provide assistance to both volunteer and full-service fire agencies, but we recognize that working through the grant process is a huge burden. We have tried to give communities who have never applied or rarely do more incentives for seeking out assistance. We are looking at the NAC to understand how we can better leverage our grant-making abilities. Dave brought up the vaccine mission earlier. CDC SVI data is a blunt instrument, it is not surgical, and it is not perfect, but it is helping us get to a better answer. We are also taking a hard, comprehensive look at where resources have gone in the past and why.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** I want to shift from equity context to climate resilience context. Dave, from your perspective where is the disconnect between Response and Recovery and Resilience?

**David Bibo.** I keep hearing more and more often that the Resilience team is looking to take the Response and Recovery office out of business, which I support. The more we can do on the front end, the better. One thing we started doing last year, using authority we've had but never utilized, is providing funding to those recovering

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from floods to build back with greater resilience. We want to expand this beyond the flooding hazard to other incidents. We need to be consistent in our messaging about the simple things that can be done by homeowners to build back more resiliently. Another thing we are taking a look at is the fact that we are historically undersubscribed with respect to wildfire mitigation.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Cynthia, how do we make the paradigm shifts within FEMA?

**Cynthia Spishak.** Part of the conversation is continuing to reiterate that this is about future risk not past risk. We are also making sure we continue show up on an international level. The Administrator just had a meeting the European Union discuss lessons learned. In terms of resilience conversation, I think we need to continue to stay focused on the outcomes we desire.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Pam, in the same context of climate resilience, are there grants that address climate resilience, especially in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

**Pamela Williams.** I will go back to Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) and our Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Mitigation at its heart is about climate adaptation. It is up to us to build capacity in our local government levels. We need to make it easier for these communities to build that capacity and make investments. But I think it's also worth asking, what role do our fire grants have in building resilience? Because this is ultimately a whole community issue. We have the ability to stoke that activity through those investments. With preparedness grants, that stemmed from 9/11, you have to invest in systems that are not hazard specific. Capabilities built for domestic terrorism may be able to be utilized for other hazards. I want the NAC to continue to think about where FEMA's authorities tie our hands. Where do we need to push our policy makers vs. tackle something internally?

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Thank you. I now want to move to the third leg of the strategic plan – readiness. Cynthia, what is going on to prepare the workforce now?

**Cynthia Spishak.** Part of the work we are doing to achieve this goal of the strategic plan is organizing under our Readiness Enterprise Steering Group, to ensure that we are posturing the agency appropriately.

**David Bibo.** Unfortunately, we have more and more experience with fires, but we don't have nearly as much experience with this type of hazard as others – like hurricanes or flooding. We need to bridge this gap. We have systems in place that allow us to adapt more quickly. Our consolidated resource centers west have a lot more experience with fires coming off the last five years. They can share their lessons learned with our other consolidated resource centers. Our largest mission right now in New Mexico with individual assistance and reaching out to folks who need support. Individual assistance experience is transferable across hazard.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** Thank you. I appreciate you mentioning New Mexico but it is going on even now, and it could last into July. Pam, I want to come back to you – let's talk BRIC again, because I think it connects really well with this part of the strategic plan.

**Pamela Williams.** BRIC is focused on our state and local government partners but can also be used by non-profit partners and even some private sector partners. There are only two hard and fast rules associated with BRIC, the outcome must be cost effective and risk reducing. So, that really leaves the door open for a lot of different opportunities and we encourage folks to bring creative solutions to bear. BRIC really rewards efforts surrounding the implementation of strong building codes, which I recognize can be a tough conversation in some places. There is also an aspect here around individual residence perspective but also commercial property perspective. How can BRIC support states to give individual homeowners the ability to strengthen their homes?

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** I think BRIC is one of our most under-utilized grants in this space, so great point.

**Cynthia Spishak.** I love that the NAC has organized itself around the goals of the strategic plan because it will make it so much easier for us think through how we are implementing recommendations and achieving outcomes.

**David Bibo.** This is the best NAC meeting I've ever been to. I feel truly advised and have learned a lot. It has been particularly useful to focus on specific topic, while also being supported by the context and location. This meeting has really taken advantage of the unique space. First, we committed earlier to engaging the NAC directly before decisions are made, to receive your advice and wisdom on a number of readiness related items. Secondly, we need to follow-up on how the federal family works together and provides resources. Finally, I want to commit to making progress on funding mitigation measures through the individual assistance program.

**Pamela Williams.** To build on what Dave said, I have never seen an opportunity like what the NAC has – to have direct access to the administrator and shape the direction of our agency in a time of great change. In resilience, we need to do today what we know will bear fruit down the road. I promise that we are listening, and we will continue to plant seeds as you advise.

**Lori Moore-Merrell.** To the NAC – I want to thank you all for your curiosity and attentiveness. I think this day has shown how nuanced and layered the wildfire problem truly is.

#### Related Information

- [2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan: Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves](https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan) (<https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan>)
- [FEMA Grants](https://www.fema.gov/grants) (<https://www.fema.gov/grants>)
- [BRIC Grant Program Resource List](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities/resources) (<https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities/resources>)

## ZOOM CHAT (DAY 2)

### FEMA Administrator Discussion with the National Advisory Council

**Ramesh Kolluru.** The Administrator's comment re. her interaction with the students yesterday is gratifying. Second and third order Issues of food scarcity, health impacts, population migration, geo-political unrest/conflicts are the cascading effects that are worth studying.

### FEMA Leaders Panel with the National Advisory Council

**Sarah Byrne.** NOFO = Notice of Funding Opportunity

More information about FEMA's Equity Initiatives available at: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/equity>

2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan: Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves – available online at <https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan>

**Rob Long.** Folks online! Please pose any questions you would like to have considered to be asked. While this is NAC's Q&A, particularly good questions can be harvested from this chat and addressed to the FEMA leaders before you... time permitting. Thank you!

**Linda Long.** Is it possible that you know of research being done outside the government in the areas of wildfires that may help us?

**Rob Long.** Thank you Linda – this is a good question for this afternoon. We currently have five people in line (in-person) asking question.

**Linda Long.** No problem. I am happy we have a lot of questions.

**Cardamon Nothissea.** In New Mexico, there are many “ranches” that are multigenerational families who own land but aren't ag producers whose structures were burned, it says they don't qualify for FEMA if they are structured as LLC. But many of us need help. Is it possible to allow multi-family but same family LLC be included for help? Not SBA loan? Not a real estate company.

### Wildfire Panel 1 – Federal Fire Resources Panel

**Sarah Byrne.** U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) – <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/>

Wildland Fire Leadership Council – <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/leadership/>

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) – <https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/cohesivestrategy.shtml> and <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/>

"Wildland Urban Interface (WUI): A Look at Issues and Resolutions" (June 2022, from FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration) – <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/stories/wui-report/index.html>

**Valerie Brown.** They are asking for the codes to be relaxed because most people were significantly underinsured, by half a million dollars or more

**Rob Long.** Greetings all! I am the Designated Federal Office for the National Advisory Council (NAC) – a FACA body. These panels are to educate the NAC, who advises the FEMA Administrator. While this is a publicly viewable event, this is not a public hearing. As is always the case, we welcome public comments to the NAC during the schedule time, and when the commenter has properly registered to make those comments. As possible, we will try to connect folks in the chat with FEMA SMEs who can address your individual concerns. And frankly, if I see a great question, and time permitting, I may ask that on behalf of the NAC. I hope that this helps everyone understands what this event is, and what this event is not. Thank you for being here!

**Cardamon Nothissea.** I am writing on behalf of the folks in Las Vegas, New Mexico who have been impacted by the Calf Canyon and Hermits Peak fires. We are having a very difficult time navigating FEMA and all of this. We have a number of questions and the bureaucracies are not helping us, it is too much to navigate.

We need help for multigenerational families with burned homes to get FEMA aid and not be all referred to Small Business Association (SBA) loans when we aren't businesses. We need people to come out and check the air in our houses.

Forestry and other debris clean up says they will come, but you have to sign for them to come anytime, and you waive all your rights. It says they will come anytime and take away anything they want and people worry they will probably destroy your private road and bridges with big trucks and you will just have to deal with it. How is that help?

And finally, they say we have to get flood insurance right away because of the monsoon coming. But then we apply, and they say if we have more than one building (like outhouses or anything that people in rural New Mexico have) they will not insure them.

We are scared and can't get thru to anyone to help.

When there has been insurance they say the air where we have had fire is fine and there is no smoke, even though there is ash everywhere and we don't know how to get it tested. We can't get FEMA and no electricity so how can we clean anything or get any help.

The biggest fire in the US in New Mexico was set by the forestry dept, this is unreal to see this conference where they are saying one thing and the very opposite is happening in real life.

**Sarah Byrne.** Cardamon – Thank you for sharing your experience and need for support. We want to be of assistance, and have sent additional information to the email address you used to register today, so that you can speak with a FEMA representative knowledgeable about your specific area and disaster regarding the assistance and resources needed and available.

**Cardamon Nothissea.** Thank you!

**Bob Schroder.** Everyone is doing a great job and there is excellent discussion. Thanks to everyone.

### **Wildfire Panel 2 – State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Perspectives on Response and Recovery**

**Cardamon Nothissea.** Was the last slide on air about increased formaldehyde from forest fires or urban fires?

**Sarah Byrne.** Cardamon – We will follow up with you on the slide question following today's event. Thanks for joining and asking great questions!

[There was no slide directly mentioning “increased formaldehyde.”]

### **Wildfire Panel 3 – Fire Mitigation**

**Sarah Byrne.** Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety – <https://ibhs.org/>

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is hosting a meeting this week – <https://www.nfpa.org/>

Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network – <https://fireadaptednetwork.org/>

FEMA and Climate Change – <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/climate-change>

Additional USFA / FEMA resources on Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) – <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/wui/>

**Linda Long.** The insurance companies in California are no longer insuring some people. Pulling out in California too. [Law Protected Wildfire Victim After Insurer Ended Policy \(govtech.com\)](https://www.govtech.com/news/insurance/law-protected-wildfire-victim-after-insurer-ended-policy).

Do you think we may be able to increase controlled burns with Native American partners?

**Valerie Brown.** As Linda mentioned, insurers in California have been leaving the market but are now coming back. Both CAL FIRE and the CA DOI are rolling out programs focused on mitigation and insurer rewards.

How to Shop When You've Been Dropped: Buying home insurance in crisis conditions (for California homeowners) – [How to Shop When You've Been Dropped](#) (United Policyholders)

#### **Wildfire Panel 4 – Wildfire Issues and 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan**

**Sarah Byrne.** 2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan: Building the FEMA our Nation Needs and Deserves – available online at <https://www.fema.gov/about/strategic-plan>

Resource List for the BRIC Grant Program – <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities/resources>

FEMA Grants – <https://www.fema.gov/grants>

**Rob Long.** BRIC – Building Resilience Infrastructure & Communities.

SAFER – Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response.

**Karl Fippinger.** Dave – thanks for everything you’ve done for FEMA and the nation! We appreciate you. Looking forward to working with you in your next role!