



# Working in Rural Communities

*Climate Resilience Webinar Series*



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

# Disclaimer

- This presentation is intended to provide communities and states with the tools and information to help in climate resilience planning and activities.
- Information presented in this webinar is independent of the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). While we expect that this information will be useful to interested communities and eligible applicants, *it should not be construed as the definitive word on any singular approach to resilience.*
- No NOFA NDRC questions will answered during this presentation.
- All NOFA NDRC questions should be sent to:  
[resilientrecovery@hud.gov](mailto:resilientrecovery@hud.gov)

# Presenters

- *Chris Beck, Senior Projects Advisor*
  - *Office of the Under Secretary, USDA Rural Development*
- *Brett Schwartz, Program Manager*
  - *NADO Research Foundation*
- *Kevin Geiger, Senior Planner*
  - *Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission*
- *Jen Horton, Program Manager*
  - *National Association of Counties*

# Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Federal Resources
3. Resilience in Small Town and Rural America
4. Flood Buyouts in Vermont
5. Counties and Disaster Resilience
6. Questions

# USDA Rural Development



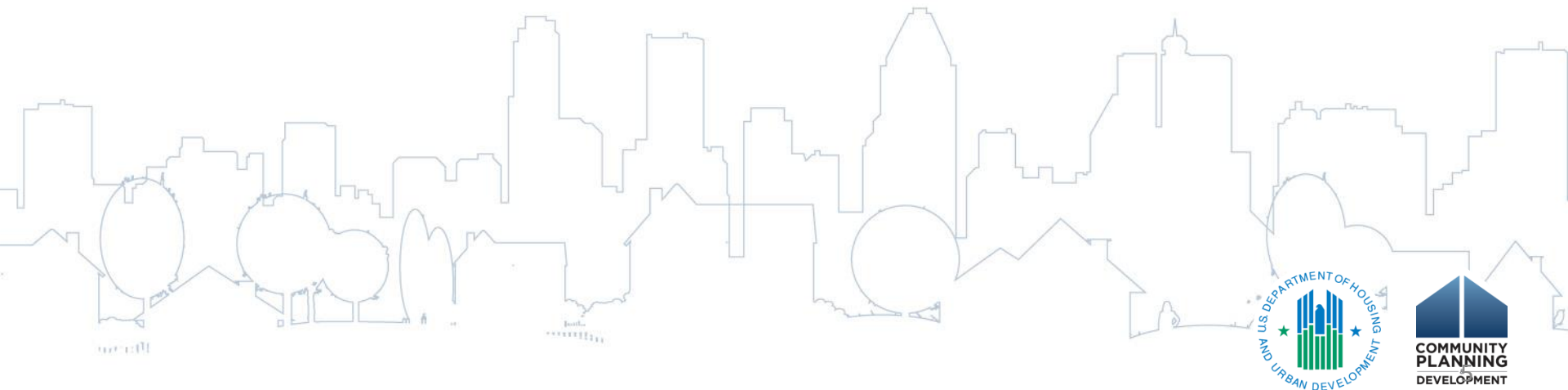
Committed to the future of rural communities.

Infrastructure bank for rural America.

In 2013, \$33 billion investments

Serves rural communities with populations under  
50k/20k/10k

Some grants for planning and capacity.



# Rural Development Programs

Portfolio of loans (and some grants) for:

- Affordable housing (single family, multi-family, rental assistance, renovation)
- Utilities (electric, water/sewer, telecom/broadband)
- Business development (loan guarantees)
- Assist ag producers and cooperatives with infrastructure
- Alternative energy
- Community facilities (e.g. schools, hospitals/clinics, civic, incl emergency services)





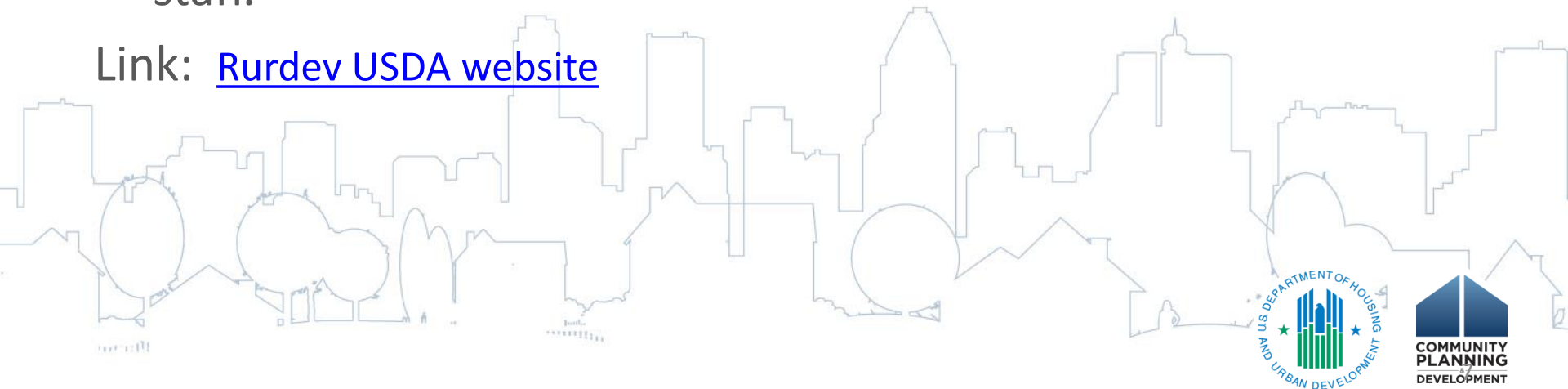
Committed to the future of rural communities.

Large field operation (47 state offices) with regional offices in each state.

Many programs are administered by state offices.

Build relationships with State Director and field program staff.

Link: [Rurdev USDA website](#)



## Other agencies and resources which might have impact on disaster resilience strategies:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (soil, water, wetlands, farmland preservation, watershed mgmt)
- US Forest Service (trees, watershed mgmt)
- Also, Cooperative Extension staff in land grant universities. [Csrees USDA Website](#)







Pennyrile Area Development District

# Promoting Regional Resilience in Small Town and Rural America



Brett Schwartz  
Program Manager, NADO Research Foundation  
December 15, 2014



# Presentation Overview



East Central Iowa Council of Governments

- Introduction
- NADO and the NADO Research Foundation
- Defining Resilience / A Regional Perspective
- Case Studies of Regional Resilience Efforts in Rural America
- RDO Roles in Promoting Regional Resilience

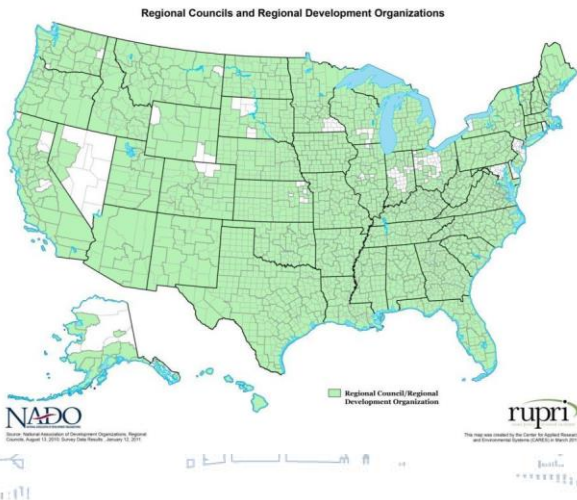


# NADO and the NADO Research Foundation



The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) is a membership organization for the network of over 520 **regional development organizations (RDOs)** throughout the U.S.

RDOs are **also known as** “Councils of Governments,” “Regional Planning Commissions,” “Economic Development Districts,” and other local names



Promote efforts that **strengthen local governments, communities, and economies** through regional strategies focusing on economic development, infrastructure, housing, transportation, regional planning, disaster resilience, and other areas





# NADO and the NADO Research Foundation

Founded in 1988, the **NADO Research Foundation** is the non-profit research affiliate of NADO

Shares **best practices** in latest developments and trends in small metropolitan areas and rural America through training, peer exchanges, publications, and other resources

## Focus Areas:

- Rural Transportation
- Regional Resilience
- Sustainable Communities
- Capacity Building
- Organizational Support

Resources available at [NADO Website](http://www.nado.org)



# NADO's Definition of Resilience

The ability of a region or community to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from shocks and disruptions, including:



- ☐ Natural disasters or hazards
- ☐ Climate change impacts
- ☐ The closure of a large employer
- ☐ The decline of an important industry
- ☐ Changes in the workforce



# Why *Regional* Resilience?

- Nearby communities often share similar risks/hazards
- Disaster impacts cross jurisdictional boundaries
- Communities are interdependent
  - Vulnerabilities in one community could impact another.
  - Mitigation investments in one community could impact another (positively or negatively).
- Economies are regional in nature
- Communities can accomplish more when they work together



# Case Studies of Regional Resilience Efforts in Rural America

The NADO Innovation Awards is an annual awards program that since 1986 has acknowledged our members' creative approaches to regional community and economic development. Over 1,500 projects have been honored to date. Featured in this presentation:

- Highway 169 Reconstruction/Flood Mitigation Project (Region Nine Development Commission, MN)
- Emergency Operations Center (Ark-Tex Council of Governments, AR-TX)
- Spanish Language Severe Weather Early Warning Notification System (Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, TX)
- Eastern Kentucky Disaster Case Management Program (Big Sandy Area Development District, KY)
- Built to Weather Any West Texas Storm Project (South Plains Association of Governments, TX)
- Comprehensive GIS Data in Disaster Recovery Project (Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District, AR)





# Highway 169 Reconstruction/Flood Mitigation Project

## *(Region Nine Development Commission, MN)*

- State Highway 169 (a major regional transportation artery) has been **flooded** seven times in the past 20 years
- Flooding has caused road closures and detours that crippled local and regional businesses. (Freight corridor carries **700 truckloads per day** of fertilizers, seed, corn, and soybeans)
- **Region Nine Development Commission** worked with **MnDOT** and the **Economic Development Administration** to broker a deal to fund the reconstruction of a little over three miles of highway 169 that will raise it one foot **above the 100-year flood elevation**
- Construction will begin in 2016, allowing freight and vehicle traffic to continue along important arterials during disasters, **supporting regional recovery and resilience**





# Emergency Operations Center

*(Ark-Tex Council of Governments, AR-TX)*

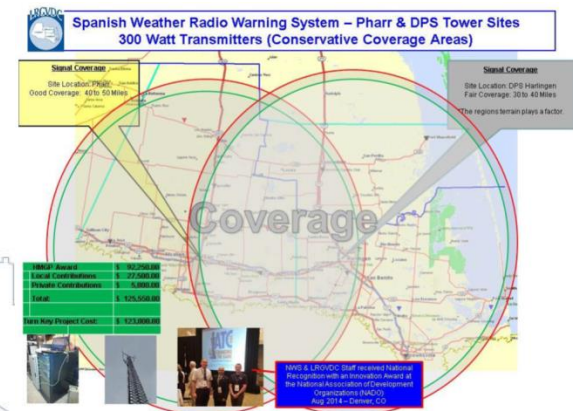
- Through funding from FEMA, ATCOG constructed a regional **emergency operations center** available for use by jurisdictions serviced in the ATCOG nine-county region during and after disasters
- **Building features** include sleeping quarters, showers, a full kitchen, bathrooms, an interview room for interaction with the media, a briefing room where the EOC commander can brief oncoming staff, and an operations room
- Facility also used for **training** purposes
- No other facility like this exists in the region and **no single jurisdiction** could have afforded to build it on their own



# Spanish Language Severe Weather Early Warning Notification System (Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, TX)



- In the LRGVDC's three-county service area, language has been a **barrier** for effective early warning notification in this border region
- The LRGVDC **partnered** with the City of Weslaco, TX; City of Pharr, TX; Texas Department of Public Safety; the National Weather Service; and elected officials in order to successfully implement this regional project that will benefit a population of over 1.2 million.
- The system **will translate into Spanish** imminent early warning message dissemination of impending severe weather as well as relaying other important information such as mandatory coastal and inland evacuation to the over 90% Spanish speaking population within Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties



# Eastern Kentucky Disaster Case Management Program

## *(Big Sandy Area Development District, KY)*

BIG SANDY AREA DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
*Serving Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin and Pike Counties.*

- Following 2012 tornadoes that impacted its region, BSADD recognized that **case management services** were needed to address unmet needs of residents
- Established a partnership with the Regional Kentucky Works Program to assist residents with **individual and household recovery plans** and navigating services available
- **Examples of assistance** included facilitation of home repairs, replacement of personal items, and making connections with appropriate service agencies
- Regular communication with families resulted in direct services to meet basic family **needs not previously addressed** in the days and weeks following the disaster





# Built to Weather Any West Texas Storm Project

## *(South Plains Association of Governments, TX)*

- SPAG's region averages around **19** tornadoes per year
- SPAG applied for and received funding from the State of Texas's Hazard Mitigation Division to develop and implement a **Safe Room Program**
- The Program provides **rebates** up to \$2,500 for residents to build an approved safe room in their homes
- The **location** of each safe room has its grid coordinates recorded and provided to the local Emergency Management Coordinator to improve emergency response post-disaster
- Construction contractors all received **special certification** through the American Tornado Shelter Association or the National Storm Shelter Association to ensure quality



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# RDO Roles in Promoting Regional Resilience

- Regional planning and analysis
  - Hazard mitigation planning
  - Vulnerability assessments
  - Economic development/resilience
  - GIS mapping
- Building/enhancing local capacity
  - Technical assistance
  - Grant writing
  - Revolving loan funds
  - Sharing staff
- Coordinating federal, state, and local government partners
  - Allocate funding (i.e. recovery)
  - Connect local governments with assistance opportunities
  - Translate national and local priorities
- Convening stakeholders in a neutral forum
- Contributing regional, long-term perspectives





# FLOOD BUYOUTS IN VERMONT

**The Best Bad Option  
for Permanent  
Protection After  
Catastrophic Flooding**



**Kevin Geiger, AICP CFM, Senior Planner**

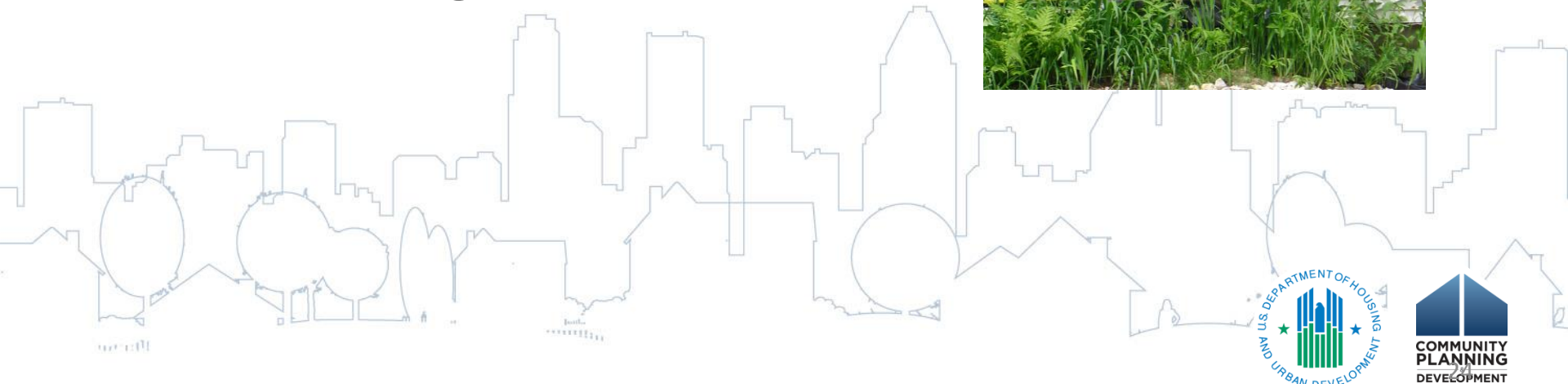


**Two Rivers-Ottawa-Quechee  
Regional Commission**



# Immediate Experience Post Irene

- Hundreds of homes damaged
- No established buyout program
- No immediate funding
- Fall weather approaching
- Mostly very small towns
- Hazard Mitigation Plans





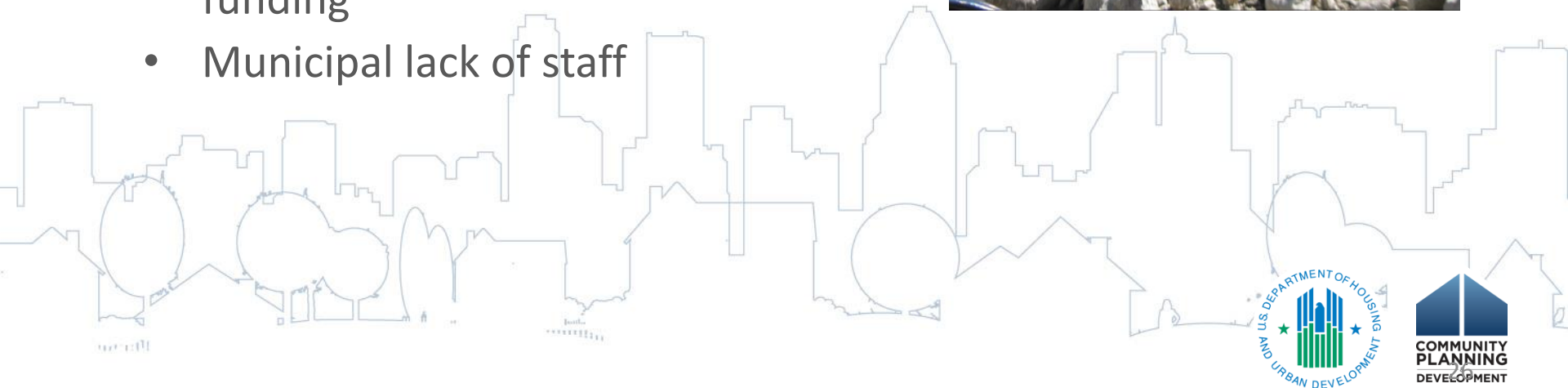
# Strengths

- Very good relationship between TRORC and state emergency office (DEMHS) and state CDBG agency (ACCD)
- Grant experience with both HMGP and CDBG
- Immediate assistance to towns with recovery
- Consolidation of damage data to help ACCD with unmet needs
- Great and flexible staff

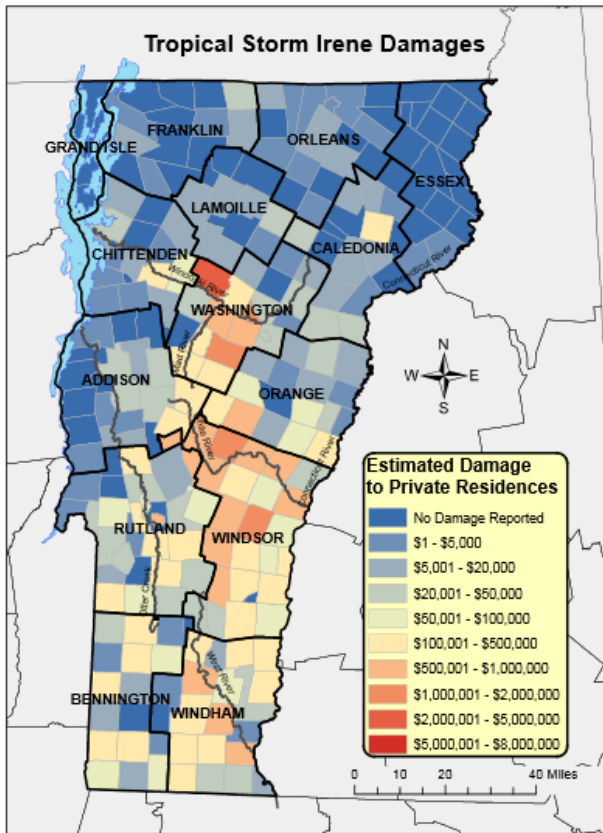


# Weaknesses

- Timeline to roll out both HMGP and CDBG-DR funds
- Uncertainty for owners
- Only 75% funding at first
- No standing process folks are familiar with
- Lack of Hazard Mitigation Plans and funding
- Municipal lack of staff



# Buyout Program



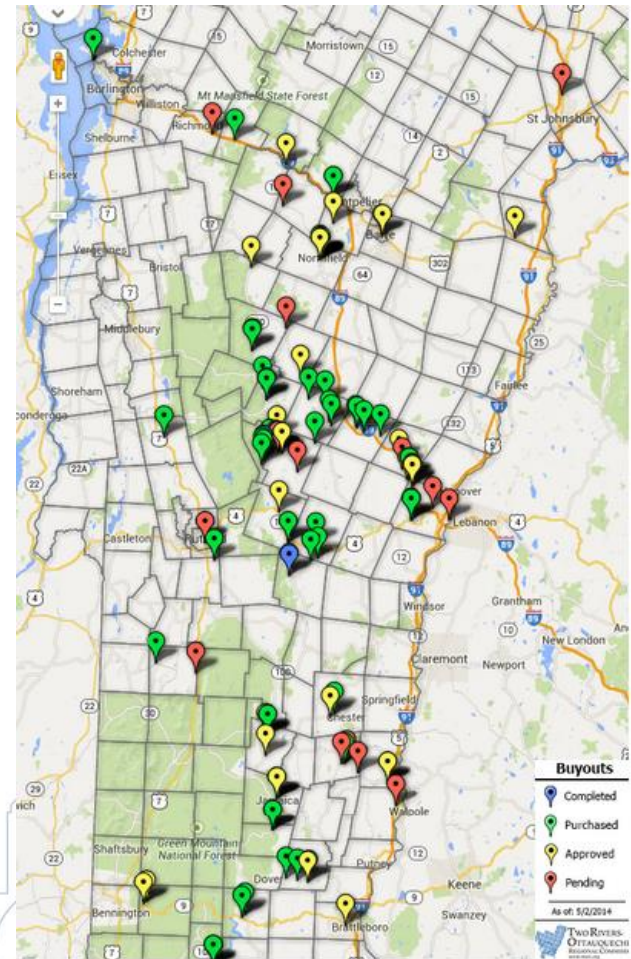
Produced by Nancy Greenwalt at the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office  
Source: FEMA - Individual Assistance, as of April 11, 2012

- Assistance to towns and owners with HMGP applications
- Discussions with banks
- Assistance to towns with “substantial damage” determinations and rebuilding options under NFIP
- Formulation of Unmet Needs for CDBG-DR plan
- Formulation of buyout plan for non-HMGP buyouts and site with brownfields
- Dedicated new TRORC staff
- Town and owner handholding all the way
- Person-to-Person
- Regional Planning Commission network



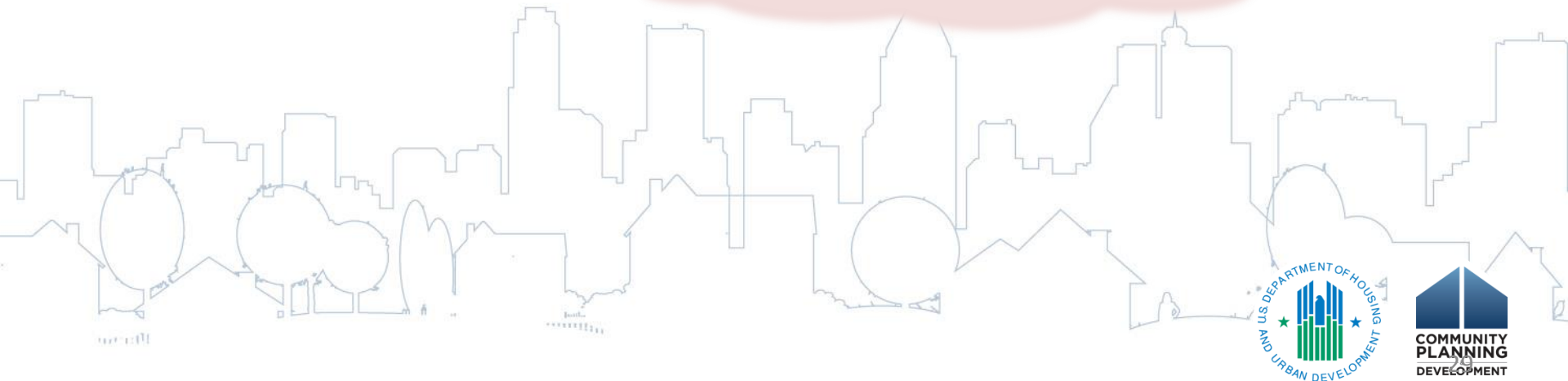
# Success to Date

- 100 out of 135 homes bought
- HMGP + CDBG-DR enabled 100% funding for most
- Park site reuse planning underway
- Increased flood channels
- Next flood less tragic
- Owners credit maintained



# The Next Time

- **There will be a next time, or two or three**
- Push for ongoing buyout program at state level
- New FEMA guidance on elevation and buyout BCA
- Avoiding pitfalls (early demolition, duplication of benefits, etc.)
- Personal fantasy      state buyout bridge loans





# About NACo.

Represent 3,069 counties

Provide advocacy, research, training, peer networks

Focus areas:

- Health Care
- Justice
- **Community and Economic Development**
  - Resilient Counties
  - Coastal Counties



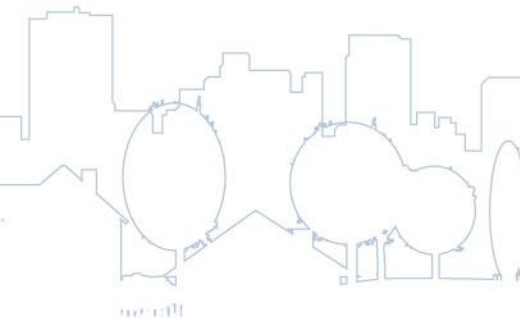
# Counties and Disaster Resilience.

- Provide resource support to counties in adopting innovative management approaches.
- Highlight best practices for resiliency related to:
  - Infrastructure improvements
  - Environmental restoration
  - Long-term planning efforts



# Coastal Communities.

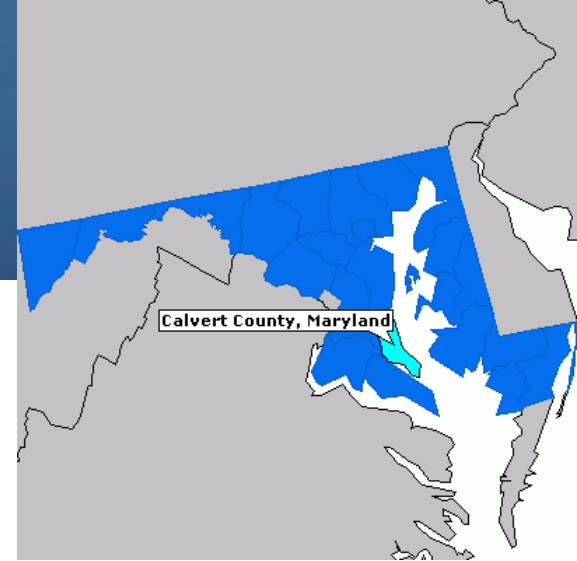
- Home to **nearly 40%** of Americans
- Over half of Americans live within **50 miles** of the coast
- Population grew faster than national average over last **40 years**
- Contribute more than **55%** to the U.S. GDP





# Calvert County, MD

- Regional sea level rise – **3 to 4 times faster** than the average global sea rise rate
- Pilot project to enhance outreach and communication about hazard impacts and resource availability
  - Sea level rise trainings
  - Sharing Army Corps of Engineers' info
  - Online and interactive shoreline development tool for property owners

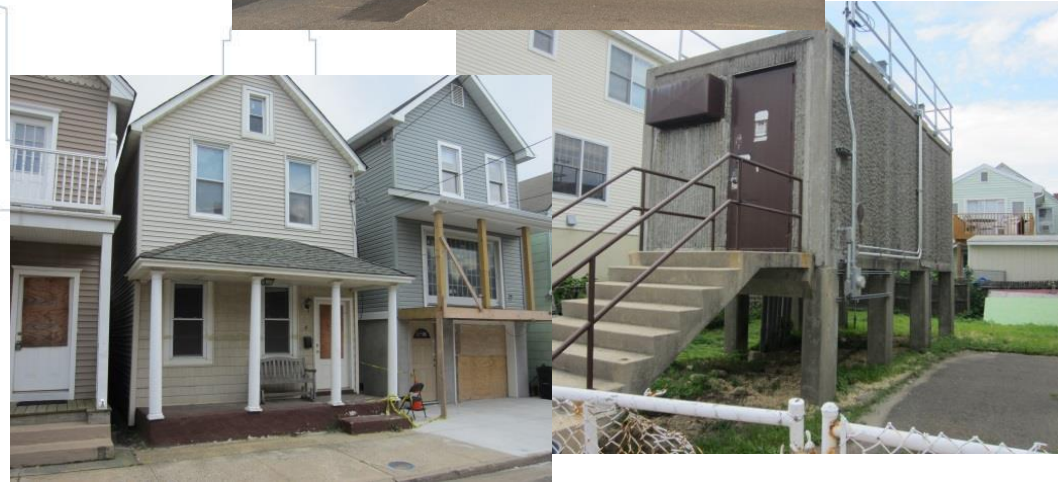
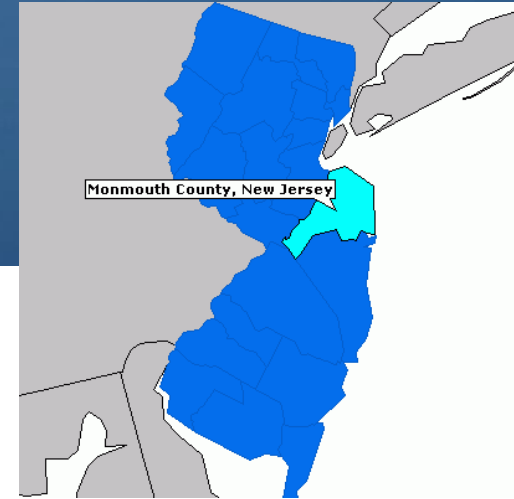


- Housing elevation project for most flood-prone areas
- Becoming more educated about changes to flood insurance due to Biggert-Waters Flood Act



# Monmouth County, NJ

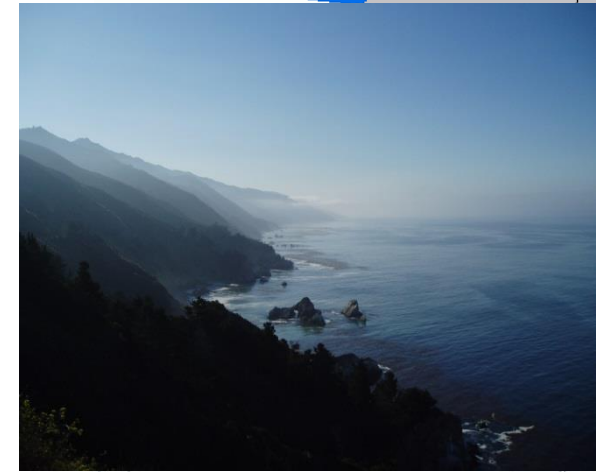
- Lack of municipality capacity to implement **NFIP Community Rating System (CRS)**
- March 2014 – Monmouth County created the **CRS Assistance Program**
  - Provide technical assistance – mapping services
  - Lower insurance costs
  - Facilitate a regional forum
  - Created participation guidelines
  - Convened meetings
  - Established online library
- Went from **8/53 to nearly half** of all municipalities participating
- Public outreach – critical role of county's strategy



# Monterey County, Calif.



- Needed new, updated hazard mitigation plan to consider **41** natural hazard events - **\$32 million** in damages
- Worked with municipalities to update plan and integrate with local plans and future development
- Used **NOAA Digital Coast** resources to shape the planning process
- Process for updating plan established – sharing GIS documents/tracking flood-related projects
- Community participation was key to success of new 2014 plan





# Digital Coast.

- Suite of tools, data and training
- Focus on coastal management

<http://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/>



**DigitalCoast**  
OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT

Data

Tools

Training

Stories

Apply It

GeoZone Blog



Search

## More Than Just Data

Dive into the Digital Coast to Get the Data,  
Tools, and Training Communities Need to  
Address Coastal Issues.

DATA

TOOLS

TRAINING

STORIES



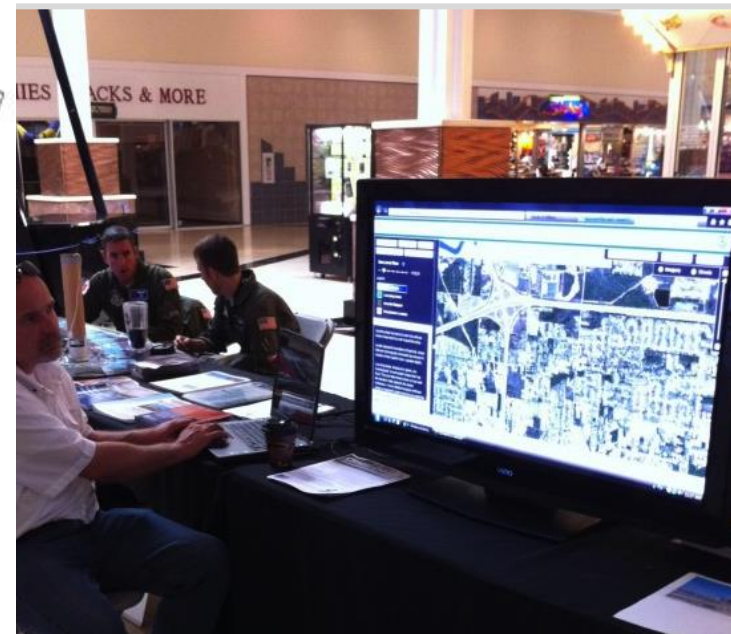
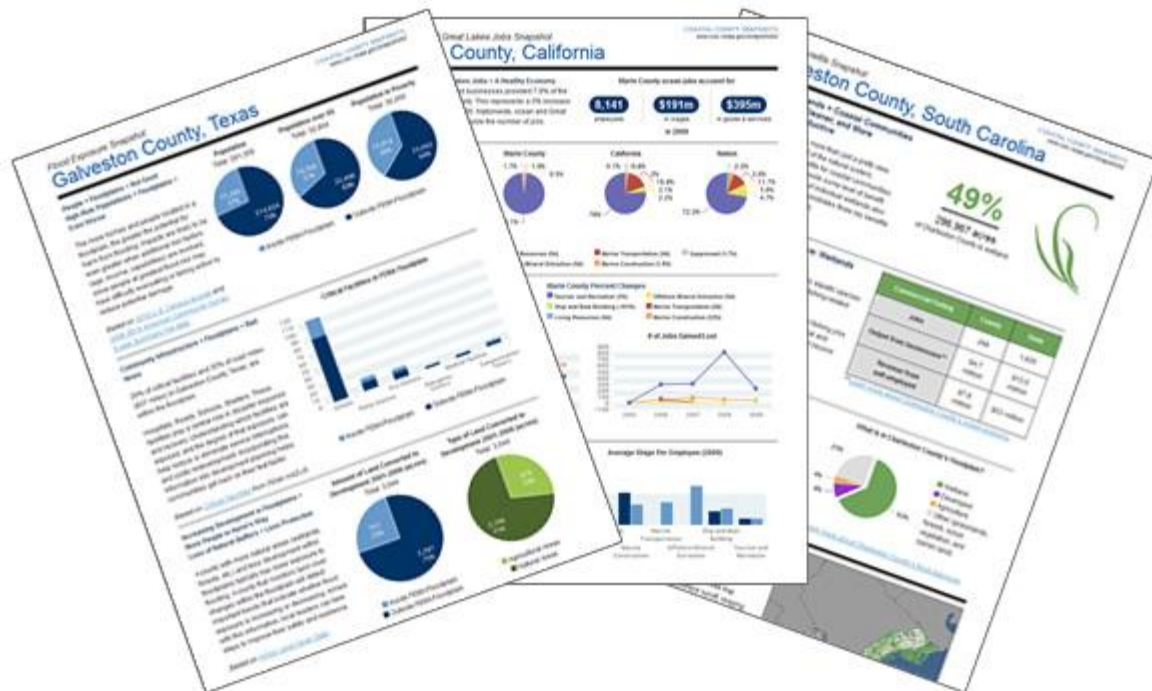
# Digital Coast Tools.

## Coastal County Snapshots Tool

- Allows users to tell a story about their county

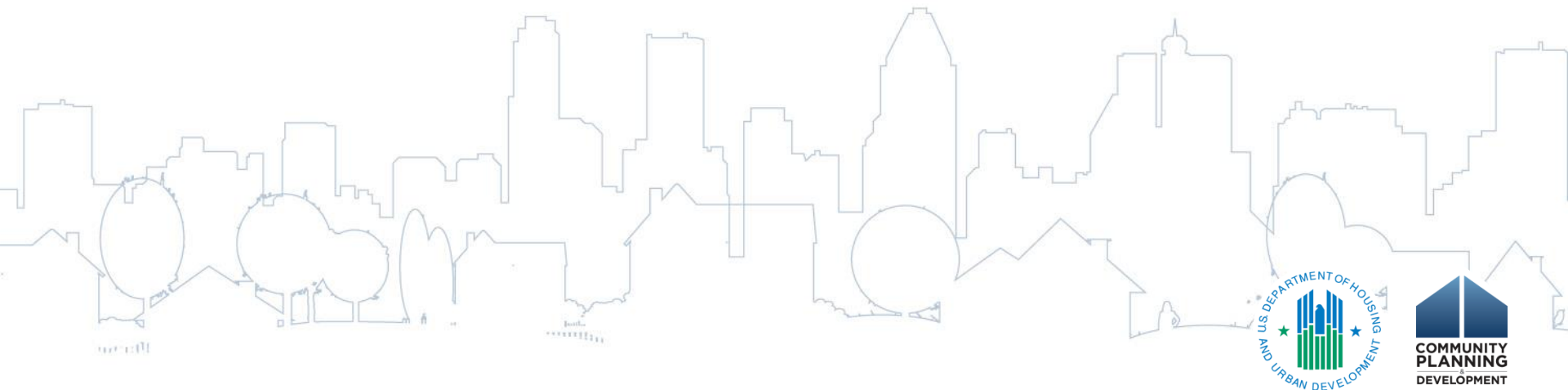
## Sea Level Rise Viewer

- Observe varying scenarios and impacts to infrastructure

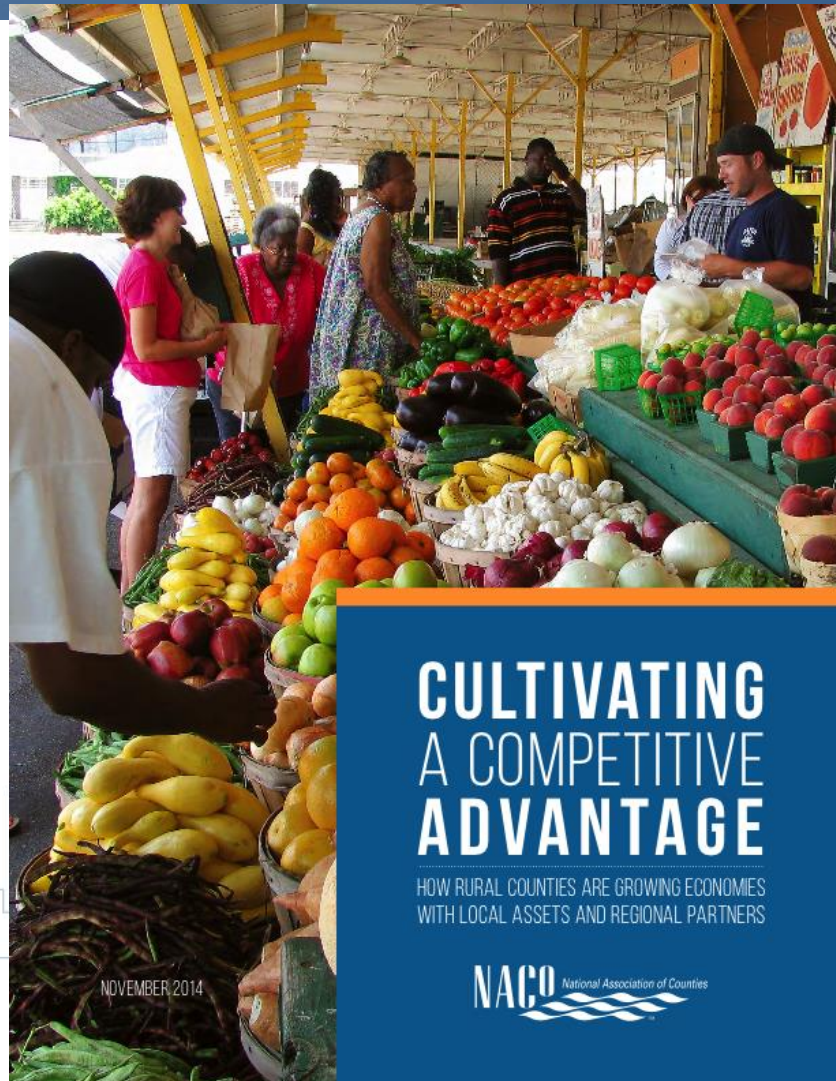


# Economic Resilience.

- Identifying or reimagining existing assets.
- Leveraging partnerships to maximize economic resources.
- Pursuing community planning efforts to take strategic advantage of all community assets.
- Investing in quality of life to attract economic growth.



# New NACo Report.



## NACo Report

### FEATURED COUNTIES

#### BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT 5

CASCADE COUNTY, MONT.  
GRAFTON COUNTY, N.H.  
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONT.

#### COMMUNITY PLANNING 13

MADISON COUNTY, N.Y.  
PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARK.  
RANDOLPH COUNTY, W.VA.

#### FOOD SYSTEMS 23

COFFEE COUNTY, ALA.  
HOOD RIVER COUNTY, ORE.  
POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY, IOWA  
YOLO COUNTY, CALIF.

#### RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND REDEVELOPMENT 33

BENTON COUNTY, IND.  
MAUI COUNTY, HAWAII  
NYE COUNTY, NEV.

#### TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 41

DINWIDDIE COUNTY, VA.  
RENNVILLE COUNTY, MINN.

### CULTIVATING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

HOW RURAL COUNTIES ARE GROWING ECONOMIES WITH LOCAL ASSETS AND REGIONAL PARTNERS





# Benton County, Ind.

- Used a year's worth of wind farm tax payments to pay off its decade-old debt.
- 495 wind turbines on 3 farms; annual power for 250,000 homes; created hundreds of construction jobs and 95 permanent jobs.
- Using natural resources and existing assets to promote economic growth and diversification.
- Investing in renewable energy as effective strategy to create more jobs, increase tourism, greater revenue.



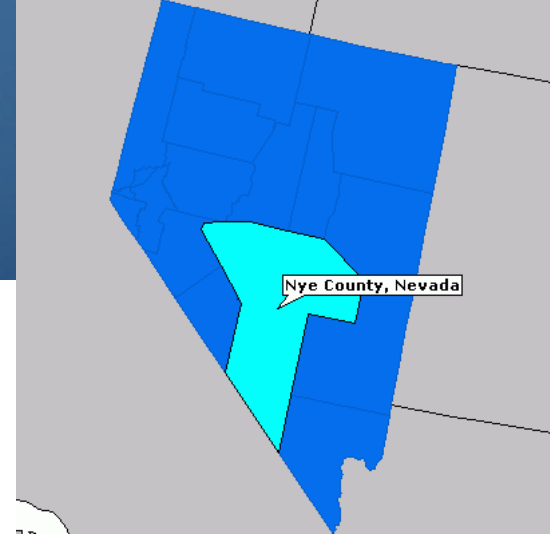
Photo credit: Benton County

*A tour group explores one of Benton County's wind farms.*





# Nye County, Nevada



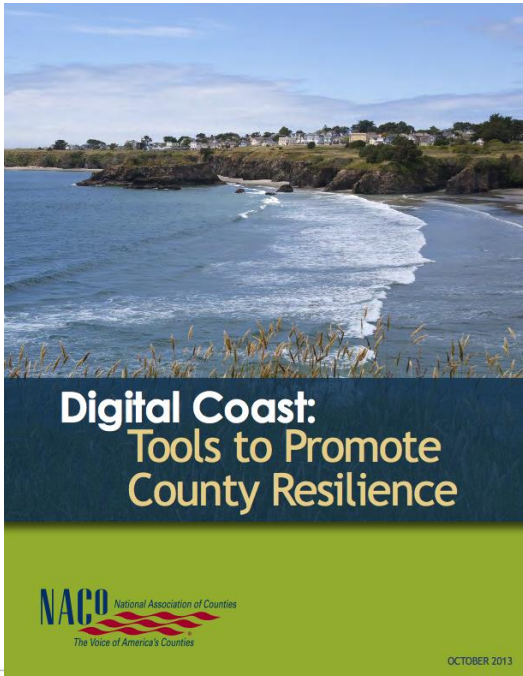
*Before and after of a Nye County brownfields redevelopment site.*

*Photo credit: Nye County*

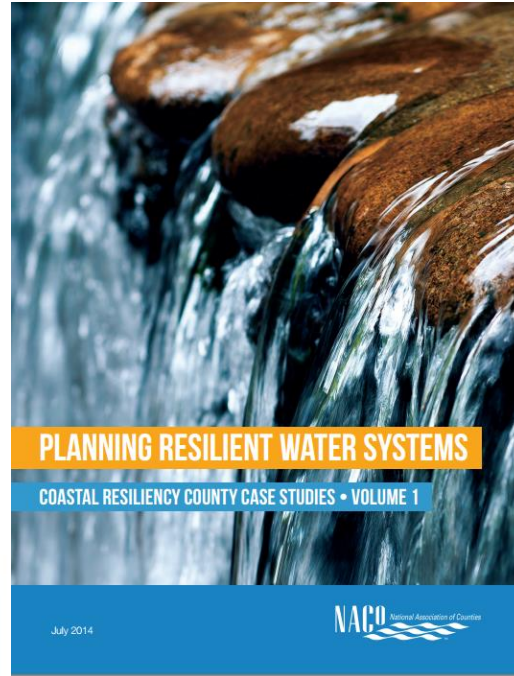
- Cleanup and reuse of approx. 50 properties with real/perceived contamination.
- Used EPA grants in 2008 & 2012 to prepare 134 county residents for brownfield redevelopment-related jobs.
- Emerged as a national model for rural brownfield redevelopment.



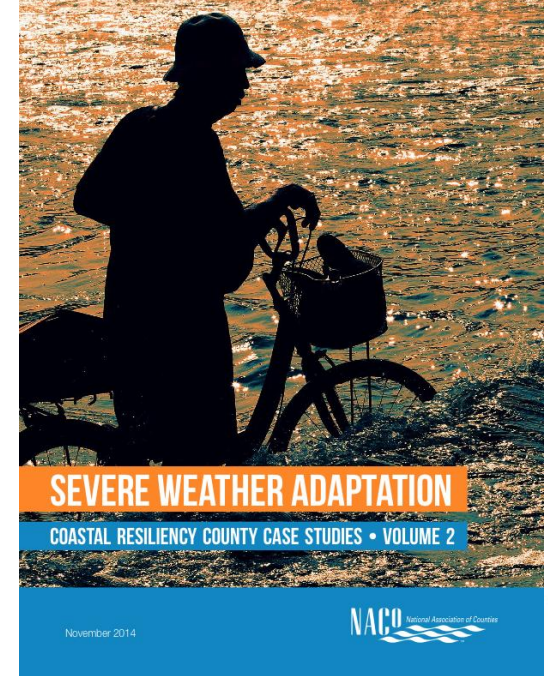
# Resources.



[Digital Coast Publication](#)



[Planning Resilient  
Water System  
Publication](#)



[Severe Weather  
Adaptation  
Publication](#)



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# Questions?

