

NDRC Working in Rural Communities Webinar

Transcript

Monday, December 15, 2014

3:00-4:30pm EDT

George Martin: Good afternoon everyone, welcome to today's NDRC topical webinar; today's topic is working in rural communities. My name is George Martin, I work for TDA, we are a HUD technical assistance provider and I am going to be providing technical support for today's webinar. In just a few minutes, I am going to turn it over to our wonderful presenters that we have today, but I am going to spend a few minutes going through some technical instructions for today's webinar.

I want to start by reminding everyone to please give your undivided attention to our presenters today. Please close e-mails and other programs on your computer and whatever phones that might be in your office that you are not using right now, to be connected to the teleconference, please silence them.

If you're having technical issues joining the teleconference, or viewing the webinar, please feel free to call my colleague Vickie Grim at her office. That number is on the screen, it is 443-875-8477, or if you can access the webinar and are having trouble with something, feel free to send a chat message and address that message to the host. I am the host and I can help you resolve your problem.

Everyone has been muted on the call. We do this so that if somebody barges into your office and starts making a lot of noise while you are on the call, we all will not be disturbed. Despite the fact that you are muted, you are going to be able to ask your questions at the conclusion of today's presentation. You can do that in one of two ways. You can ask written questions using something called the Q and A tool on the Webex, or you can ask questions verbally via the conference call. I will go through instructions on how to do both of these right now.

Feel free to ask written questions whenever they come to mind. To do that you're going to use the Q and A tool, so please look on the right hand side of your screen, there's a number of tabs and one of them is called Q and A. you can open up that panel if it's not open. The way that you would open it up if it's closed is just by clicking on the triangle to the left of the Q and A. you should see something like the image on your screen right here. You can type your question into the text field, and then it asks you to select who you would like to send the question too. Please select all panelists, and then click send.

You can also ask questions verbally. Chances are there is probably one-step you are going to have to take care of before you have the opportunity to do that during the Q and A portion of today's session. You start off doing that by looking at the participant panel on the right hand side of your screen under the word attendees. You should see your name, and if you look to the left of your name, you need to check to see if you have a little telephone icon there to the left of your name, as the name Kathy Kaminski does on the image on the screen. If there is a telephone icon there, then you are ready when the time comes to ask a verbal question. If not, then you need to go find

something called the identity code in Webex and enter it on your telephone keypad. You do that by clicking on a tab at the top of your screen that is called event info. When you click on that tab, you can do this at any time, you will see a series of information about today's webinar, and one of the things you will see is something called an identity code. It will have the pound symbol, and then a series of numbers, and then another pound symbol. You need to take that number and enter it into your telephone keypad including the pound symbols. After you do that, you will hear a slight click, and then you will see the telephone icons to the left of your name on the participant panel. When you have done that, you are ready to ask a question verbally.

During the Q and A session, if you would like to ask a question verbally, there is a small hand icon at the bottom of the participant panel. You can select that and then the panelists will know that you have raised your hand and we can unmute you and call on you to ask your question.

Just some notes when we get to the question portion of today. We are going to answer all questions verbally over the phone, even if you have written in your question. So if you want some sort of written response, you'll have to let us know and we'll work on getting that to you. Depending on how many questions folks have, we may not be able to answer all questions, and we are going to try to answer them in an order where the most common questions are addressed first.

Finally, if you have any questions that are about the NDRC, or about today's topic that are not covered here, you can send them to resilientrecovery@hud.gov and we'll try to answer them as quickly as possible. On that note, I am going to turn over the presentation to Lynsey Johnson from HUD.

Lynsey Johnson: Great, thanks so much George. George you want to push to the presentation too?

George Martin: Yes, I just did and I made you the presenter, Lynsey. So if you were having trouble, you should be good to go at this point.

Lynsey Johnson: Sounds great, thank you. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Working in Rural Communities Webinar; my name is Lynsey Johnson and I work in HUD'S Office of Economic Resilience. Thank you for joining us for this seventh topical webinar in the Climate Resilience webinar series. This series is running concurrent with the National Disaster Resilience Competition. We hope that this series is an opportunity for communities to learn about nine key components of climate resiliency planning and projects. Just a few reminders, these webinars provide tools, best practices and ideas, but you should tailor the approaches to what works best for your jurisdiction, and if you have any specific NOFAs, which is the Notice of Funding Availability, National Disaster Resilience Competition questions, please e-mail resilientrecovery@hud.gov. We will not be answering any technical NOFA questions during this webinar.

Today we have four subject matter experts to discuss working in rural communities in resiliency. First Chris Beck is a senior projects advisor at USDA's Rural Development Agency. He works on a number of place-based initiatives and is devoting more of his time to the department's efforts to partner with foundations. He has been with the administration since 2010. We also have with us Brett Schwartz who is the program manager at NADO Research Foundation, which is based in Washington DC. Brett leads the research foundation's capacity building and training programs supporting rural communities and small towns. He organizes training peer exchanges and workshops; and develops webinars, publications and other resources in areas of regional planning,

economic resilience and sustainable communities. To kind of give us a local perspective on resiliency in small towns and counties, we have with us Kevin Geiger, who is the senior planner at the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. He has worked in regional and community planning in Vermont since 1990; and is a former National Parks Service Wild Land Firefighter. He is a certified flood plain manager, and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Last but not least, we have Jen Horton with us who serves as the program manager for the community and economic at NACO where she provides country governments with solutions and best practices related to asset building and economic resilience. Before joining NACO, Jen served as a planning and policy fellow at EPA's office of sustainable communities where she managed technical assistance programs for local governments and communities related to land use, smart growth, and economic development.

Today, our four presenters will be going over federal resources and Brett will talk a little bit about resilience in small towns and rural America. Kevin will talk more about what flood buy-outs in Vermont, the specific project that he worked at, and then Jen will follow up with how counties are working with disaster resilience. Then, at the end, we will address any questions that come up. So, with that, I'll turn it over to Chris Beck from USDA.

Chris Beck: Great, thanks Lynsey, you are going to give me the baton here to move my slides.

Lynsey Johnson: George will do that for you.

Chris Beck: Okay.

George Martin: You should be good to go Chris.

Chris Beck: I am not seeing arrows.

George Martin: Little arrows at the top of the slide show.

Chris Beck: Nope, that is not working.

George Martin: If you go back, I think you just did something called full screen view. If you go back to the regular view, you should look at the slides and then directly above the slides, right below where the tabs are, you should see a drop down. Right now, it says "4 - agenda," and then the little arrows to the right and the left of that drop down.

Chris Beck: Yeah, I am seeing them, there we go. Thank you. All right, thanks for getting on the call everybody. I am just going to give a very quick overview of USDA Rural Development Agency. We like to say we are the infrastructure bank for rural America. I sometimes tell people we are kind of like the World Bank for rural America. We have a large loan portfolio for basic infrastructure. In 2013 we made over thirty three billion dollars in investments, so we are a big bank. A lot of those investments are in housing, but we also have other programs which I'll go over in a few seconds. We serve populations of fifty thousand, twenty thousand, and ten thousand people, or below. Our various programs apply to those geographies generally. Our business programs apply in communities under fifty thousand. Generally our housing programs apply in communities under twenty, although, I think that number is being moved up to thirty five thousand people now. And our utilities programs generally apply in communities under ten thousand people.

So, if you're in those communities, you probably know about USDA Rural Development, and you probably have relationships with our local staff. If you do not, I will encourage you to do that. We do have some grants for planning and capacity building, and we can talk more about those programs later in the call if you wish.

Very briefly, our portfolio of loans, mostly are for affordable housing. We have direct loans and loan guarantees as well. Our utilities programs are for electric, water and sewer, telecom, broadband. We have a portfolio for loan guarantees that support small businesses in rural towns. Some of our programs will support agriculture producers and rural cooperatives with infrastructure needs. We have programs, which support alternative energy, and then we have a community facilities loan program as well that serves civic buildings. It includes emergency services, which might be of interest to those of you in this application process.

The main point I want to make today is that we have a large field of operation. We have forty-seven state offices with multiple regional offices in each state or region. Unlike other federal agencies, we are field based and a lot of the work comes out of field offices, so I would encourage any of you who have not, to develop a good relationship with your local rural development office staff, or people in our state office. They are the ones who are going to know best which of our programs would suit the communities you are from. I have provided a link here with a list to our state offices. Our people are fairly responsive, and you can probably reach out directly to our state directors, and they will either get back to you, or forward you to someone most appropriate for your situation.

Within USDA there are some other agencies that might be of interest to you. Our Natural Resource Conservation Service, which handles a lot of watershed management issues, might be an agency who has programs you should look into. If any of you are interested in farmland preservation as part of your disaster resilient strategy, they might be an agency to go to; again, some of our--Even our rural development offices may be able to give you some guidance about who best, within the NRCS to connect you with; same with Forest Service. Some of you may be in areas where the surrounding forests impact issues you are dealing with, and want to resolve; Forest Service might have some resources that can help you in that regard. And then also, our cooperative extension staff, which are based in land grant universities; they are not generally USDA staff, they're actually state employees, but they are connected to USDA, and these people are often some of the best resources for you to connect with to figure out how to develop proposals and reach out to other USDA programs. So I think it's important to try to find someone in the land grant universities who can help you think through some of this.

I think that is it, so I will wait for questions at the end. Thanks.

Lynsey Johnson: Great, thanks so much Chris. We will now turn it over to Brett to talk a little more about resilience in small town and rural America.

Brett Schwartz: Thanks so much Lynsey, can you hear me?

Lynsey Johnson: Yes we can.

Brett Schwartz: All right, great and thanks so much, and hi everyone; my name is Brett Schwartz, I'm with the NADO Research Foundation based in Washington DC. I'm really happy to be on today's webinar to discuss supporting resilience in rural and small town communities at the regional

level. As you can tell, all of us in this webinar bring a slightly different perspective to rural efforts, from the federal, regional, state, county and local level, but I hope that when you take our comments as a whole, you'll see the paths for addressing these issues requires partnerships and relationships at all levels. As resources and funding become more and more scarce, it's necessary that everyone's at the table to drive these efforts forward in an efficient and intentional way.

Here's a quick overview of my presentation so you can easily follow along. I'm going to start off with a quick background about where I work, the National Associations of Development Organizations in the NADO Research Foundation. I often describe our approach to resilience and the importance of regionalism and working this space. I am going to get to the core of this presentation, which are six quick snapshots of projects that our members have done supporting resilience and recovery in rural communities throughout the country that I hope will be of interest to you as you are moving forward with your own plans and strategies. Then finally, we will close things out with a summary of the regional development organizations can play in supporting disaster recovery and in broader economic resilience in the communities and regions.

So the National Association of Development Organization is the membership association of the country's five hundred and twenty regional development organizations, or RDOs; RDOs might be called different things in your region; such as a council of government, economic development district, regional planning commission, or another local name. But no matter what these entities are called, they're all multi-jurisdictional planning and development agencies that work at the regional level to improve governments and communities by promoting economic and community development through place based strategies in the areas of housing, transportation, infrastructure, disaster resilience, workforce development, and many other initiatives.

Most of these entities were established between 1965 and 1975, many by state law or executive order. They are all governed by a board of local elected officials and members of the business community, residents, and other key stakeholders. The majority of our members are from small metropolitan and rural regions where RDOs are particularly important to provide technical assistance in general support of planning, GIS, business and economic development strategies, and other guidance to communities and towns that may not have the resources and expertise to carry out this work on their own. So we are really glad that Kevin Geiger, from Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission in Vermont on the call today. Two Rivers is one of our super star member organizations, and Kevin will be able to describe the type of work that his organization does on the ground every day in central Vermont.

Real quickly, I'm a program manager at the NADO Resource Foundation, which is the nonprofit research affiliate of NADO, and we work on a variety of projects related to issues impacting small metropolitan and rural areas. And identify, study and promote regional solutions through research, training, peer exchange, and publication. These are the issue areas we work on up on the screen as well as some of our publications and images from recent trainings and workshops that we host throughout the country. Hopefully, after the call you can check out some of our resources on our website at www.nado.org.

For the past few years, we have been working closely with our members and other partners in the areas of resilience. Many of them have seen more frequent and severe national disasters, as well as the shifts in global, regional and local economies that are reshaping our landscapes by region. My

colleague in NADO, Megan McConville has spoken much of her research and work on this area, and I have borrowed the following two slides from her.

Megan also presented on one of these webinars about two weeks ago, so I recommend you go on back and check that one out on regional consortium building. So please check out Megan and visit our website for more about our projects underway, but as you can see we have embraced a broad, inclusive definition of resilience. The ability of a region or community to anticipate, withstand and bounce back from any type of shock, or disruption. This includes natural hazards, disasters, impact of climate change, but also manmade economic shocks, such as the closure of a large employer, the decline of an important industry, and changes in workforce and population shift.

While preparing for these impacts is important for all regions and communities throughout the country, rural and smaller places are particularly vulnerable given their size, geography and resources. The forward progress thinking in this area is definitely a must.

We have all heard that disasters do not give a thought to geographical or jurisdictional boundaries, which makes the need to prepare a response to shock, a regional effort. Up on the screen you can see the many reasons why forming regional partnerships, and working at the regional level is important, especially for rural places. Similar risks and opportunities, interdependence of economies and infrastructure, and the benefits of an all hands on deck approach, make working regionally on resilience a natural fit. In rural places where resources and support may be limited, a regional approach is almost required to achieving sustainable outcomes. Regional development organizations, like our members, can serve as useful conveners and organizers in these efforts. We will look at a few of the success stories of RDOs that have been supporting resilience and recovery, primarily in regards to natural disasters.

The examples I'm going to show you today are all winners of our annual innovations award program, which has the creative regional solutions and projects of our members in a variety of subject areas. These are just a few of the many organizations that have been recognized for their work in emergency preparedness and recovery. And just as a quick caveat, I'm not on the review committee for the NDRC, or know exactly what types of projects and initiatives the reviewers are looking for in your applications. These are simply examples I drew from our membership to highlight the types of regional work that can be done in the field of disasters, or in recovery. So let's quickly dive into a few of these.

We will start things off in South Central Minnesota with the Highway 169 reconstruction flood mitigation project. The Minnesota River has flooded seven times in the last twenty years in this region closing Highway 169 and causing crippling detours and loss of productivity. This was a major artery for the regional economy. The corridor carries around seven hundred truckloads per day of fertilizer, seed, corn and soybeans, creating the market for agricultural products of nearly two million dollars per day. The local regional development organization, the regional development commission based in Mankato recognized an opportunity to partner with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the Federal Economic Development Administration to broker a deal and leverage resources to rebuild three miles of highway and elevating it one foot above the hundred year flood elevation. This regionally critical project will now allow freight and vehicle traffic to continue along important arterials after flooding. This would have taken years to make it to the top of the Minnesota's Department of Transportation funding, but through this unique cooperation between the development commission, EPA at the federal level and the Minnesota Department of

Transportation, construction will begin in 2016, which is right around the corner. This inter-governmental funding collaboration is a fantastic example of how government entities can work together to achieve economic resilience and recovery.

Next, which runs down to Texarkana, Texas and the Ark-Tex Council of Government Emergency Operations Center. With funding from FEMA, the council constructed an emergency operations center that is available for use by any of the jurisdictions covered in the nine county service area, but during or after natural or manmade disasters. The center has sleeping quarters, showers, a full kitchen, bathroom, interview room for media engagements, a briefing room and an operations room. This facility is also used for emergency training and workshops. You can check out some of the photos up there on the screen. This has been proven to be a great asset for the region as no single jurisdiction in the region could afford to build a facility like this on their own. It shows the importance of working together regionally to have a local asset.

Staying in Texas for our next example, which comes from the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council's role in establishing what is called a Spanish Language Severe Weather Early Warning Notification System. With such a large proportion of Spanish speaking residents in this three county border region, the system was put into place to broadcast translated official disaster warnings and mandatory evacuation messages. The development council partnered with local communities, the State of Texas, the National Weather Service and elected officials to put in place a computer system that effectively translates important messages to Spanish to benefit a service area of over one-point-two million people. For this project, you can see a direct, but often overlooked aspect of disaster preparedness, language barriers and warning notifications. With this project in place, all residents, no matter what language they speak, can be informed and updated about important developments in their regions to keep them safe.

Our next example in response to the 2012 tornadoes that impacted Eastern Kentucky, and this was the Big Sandy Area Development District, which recognized that chief management services were essential to address the unmet needs of individual families impacted by the disaster. In partnership with the previously established regional Kentucky Works program, Big Sandy was able to provide relief to disaster survivors by connecting them with the resources and services of multiple agencies, including the development of individual and household recovery plans, the facilitation of home repairs and replacement of personal items. They developed, organized and carried out the initial case management program, as well as provided the protocol for Kentucky's grant application for FEMA. By continuing to maintain a relationship, communication with impacted families, this program was able to meet the needs of residents that were not addressed in the initial days and weeks following the storm.

We will jump back briefly, back to Texas, for another example here. As many of you know, extreme winds and tornado damage are common in West Texas and the south plains, which is a region, which averages around nineteen tornadoes per year. This protects its citizens from future storms; the South Plains Association of Governments administers a safe room program, funded through the state, to provide rebates of up to two thousand-five hundred dollars for homeowners to build a safe room in their home. You can see those in construction on the screen. The location of each completed safe room has its grid coordinates recorded and stored with the local emergency management coordinator to allow emergency responders to locate and check on homeowners post disaster. All the builders and contractors are required to receive a special certification from either

the American Tornado Shelter Association, or the National Storm Shelter Association to ensure the quality and durability of these safe rooms that are built across the SPAG service region.

Finally, we will wrap things up with an example from the Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District that is using data and GIS to support disaster resilience and economic development. Following Hurricane Ike and other tornadoes in 2008, the planning development district used a variety of sources from the State of Arkansas, the Economic Development Administration, and the Delta Regional Authority, to develop a comprehensive GIS database that contains the locations of employers, public water and wastewater utilities and other critical infrastructure in this rural region. After the disaster, the data can then be compared to the tornado and storm track data to quickly estimate the likely number of impacted businesses and the number of employees affected to really help jumpstart a recovery grounded in accurate data and information. The data compiled in this database can also be used to quickly fill out applications for post disaster funding and technical assistance, and to inform stronger hazard remediation planning efforts.

We at NADO have also written more extensive case studies on these projects, so if you're interested, please check it out from our website. I know I kind of blew through these fairly quickly, but in summary I just wanted to provide some kind of broad themes that have emerged from these case studies I have mentioned about the important goals that RDOs can play to support resilient efforts in rural places. These include assisting with regional planning and analysis, building and enhancing local capacity, coordinating with partners at different levels of government, convening stakeholders and contributing to long term regional perspective. As you prepare your applications for the National Disaster Resilience Competition, or continue to work on disaster resilience in general, please make sure to think about the strength and expertise that regional development organizations can bring to this deal, particularly in smaller places and communities. I believe my contact information will be posted on a later slide, so I just want to thank all of you for tuning in today. I wish you the best of luck in your application, and more important your overall efforts in promoting resilience in rural places and smaller communities. With that, Lynsey, I will turn it back to you.

Lynsey Johnson: Great thanks so much Brett. One thing I failed to mention when we first started out is that all of these presentations will be archived on the HUD Exchange NDRC webinar site. So, I know I've seen some questions come through about getting a copy of the slides that are being presented today, and all of that will be available to you including a recording of this presentation on the actual NDRC HUD Exchange website. I will make that announcement again at the end, but I just wanted to make sure that you were aware of that. With that, I will turn it over to Kevin from Two Rivers.

Kevin Geiger: Thanks Lynsey, I think I have control now, I will move it forward, very good. Welcome to everybody out there, my name is Kevin Geiger and I am the senior planner at the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. Lynsey got it very close. We cover thirty towns and parts of four counties in East Central Vermont and that picture there that you see is the front of the house from one of my neighbors just down the road, that got ripped off during Irene. Actually, because you did not have a porch on there, the floodwaters actually entered into the house, came up through the basement and blew out the front of the wall there, and they just spent about two years remodeling the house. So, this is the best bad option. There are no good options if this happens to your house after catastrophic flooding.

Buyouts, in particular, I am going to talk about, and for those of you who have not done buyouts, I will cover it very briefly. The town buys the property owners property typically at pre flood value, which is nice. It then demolishes the property, puts it to bed, just smoothes it out, puts grass seed on it and there is a--if you are using FEMA funds; there is an easement language in there so that no structures can get rebuilt on there except very basic structures. You could put a pole barn, you can put a bathroom, but you cannot build a house or a business, or anything like that again.

Immediately after Irene, we had hundreds and hundreds of homes damaged in Vermont, and we did not have an ongoing buyout program. One of the major issues for homeowners is there's no immediate funding. This process is not short and not quick. So it took a long time for that process to get up and going. Of course, we had Fall weather coming; Irene happened the last day of August, which if you're in Vermont, is almost the day before frost hits in places. So we had to get things going, and landowners had to make decisions pretty quickly. Are they going to try to repair a house, or are they going to go for a buyout? In some cases, it was obvious that they could go for a buyout because they had no house left. In other cases, it was kind of iffy.

Just to cover our area, when we say rural, we mean pretty rural. Our largest town is nine thousand people and our smallest town is three hundred people, and the majority of those have very few paid staff: a town clerk that is maybe there three afternoons a week. That type of stuff, so it is difficult for them to apply for, and/or administer money and that is where we really stepped in.

We are also the agency that helps them write their hazard mitigation plans, and so we were in that process already, perhaps with some, but generally not with a bunch of them. So the strengths that we came to, and that many of you, I think, would come to the process like this with, is that we have good relationships with our State Emergency Management Office, and with our State Housing Agency, which handles CDBG funds. Both of those were critical because the buyouts were funded with two sources. Generally, in this case, Hazard Mitigation Grant program funding, which is post disaster funding that comes from FEMA to the state. That is seventy-five percent money, like most FEMA money. In this case, we had Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery money, special CDBG funds that also came through to the state. We were able to use that as the twenty-five percent match on the FEMA money, which got everybody to a hundred percent, which was good.

I note immediate assistance to towns. The buyouts were not immediate, obviously, but our work with towns and landowners was very immediate, and I urge you all to approach things that way. FEMA, in this case, was in the state and was very quick because we had an ongoing disaster from our Spring flooding. But sometimes it takes them a little while to get there, and in our small towns, we literally were in the towns the next day. I was in towns and they were still recovering vehicles in trees. So you want to be on the ground that fast, because for homeowners, it's critical they're going to be making some decisions pretty fast. We were able to consolidate a lot of damage data and give it to our state housing agency, the agency of commerce and community development there, so that they could frame their unmet needs application and we're now, of course, in the process of helping them frame unmet needs for the ongoing disaster resilience competition. I should note, it's not all me, it's a bunch of our staff. We have a great and flexible staff, which we were able to task to this process basically within twenty-four hours of the storm.

Weaknesses of buyouts is it takes a long time to happen. Even if you had the money today and the house today, it would be months, if not years, potentially, until you're buying out some of these properties, and that's hard on landowners. It's hard on banks, it's hard on everybody in the process. It beats the other options though. That's why it's the best bad option.

We only had seventy-five percent money at first, that was the FEMA money. It took a little while for the CDBG-DR money to come in, and we don't have a standing process, so we aren't all versed in this. From the get go, there are various questions where we had to find out things as we went along. Like don't demolish the structures early, because they you can run afoul of FEMA. And we didn't have a hazard mitigation plan in place, which we mostly do right now. We're in the process of working on them. Again, as I mentioned before, our municipal staff is almost non-existent.

Here's a buyout program. Those are damages to the state and if you can see my cursor, you can see we are Northern Windsor-Southern Orange County. We're kind of in the middle of the reddest area there, except Waterbury, which is up at the top there in the red. Most of our towns were hit. Over half of the buyouts, there were seventy some buyouts in the state part in our region. We became in immediate discussion of the banks. We assisted the towns on those substantial damage requirements for those of you who deal with flood regulations, you know what that means in terms of oops, now you're going to have to build up to code. We formulated the unmet needs part for the state, and we did that at a state level using all our counterpart regional commissions to try to gather data, and we came up with this buyout plan, because again, we had no program to lean back on.

We were able to use the CDBG-DR funds for Brownfields, which is critical, because you cannot buy a site that has contamination on it, and with FEMA funds, so we were able to use the CDBG to back fill and get those sites clean enough. We put on a dedicated staff person to do this, and we do an enormous amount of hand holding, and I imagine those of you out there, all of you who work in rural communities, you do a lot of hand holding as well. Person to person, face to face, drive out to the town for an hour, meet with them, get the town clerk on board, so that when you can call him, they can trust you, you can trust them. We used all our regional planning commissions. We have eleven in the state of Vermont. To date, most of the houses have been bought out. Again, we had a hundred percent funding for most of those. That house I showed you in the beginning slide that had the front ripped off, that house was not in the FEMA map flood zone. It was just outside of it, and so they could not use FEMA funding, they only had the CDBG funding. For those we did seventy-five percent funding just to make the money go farther.

We are using CDBG money to do parks site reuse planning at sites, and so they will not necessarily just be growing up to weeds. Several of them, including that site we saw in the beginning, are now part of the adjacent public library's park, which was damaged during Irene. All of the buyouts make you have increased flood channels. Nobody is trying to push the river back, and get it over there. The next flood will be less tragic... after Irene, a hundred less houses are going to be destroyed, and the landowners maintain their credit. They do not default, they do not foreclose, and they do not just walk away. They end up with a bunch of money at the end, eventually.

The next time--we talk to our towns about the next time because there will be a next time or two, or more, and we would like to see an ongoing buyout at the state level program. One of the things that has made it easier is there is a new FEMA guidance out there on elevation and buyouts to avoid the benefit cost analysis. That is very nice to have, and next time around, we will know a bunch of things like do not do early demolition, how to document duplication of benefits and that type of

thing. And my personal fantasy is that there would be some type of state bridge loan program so we could give the owners some money while they're in the buyout process.

I understand many of you are looking forward to this... the resilience grant out there... and so you may not be looking at the next flood for this. But it took us nine grant rounds to get all of the people out of the woodwork who had damage during Irene, so it wasn't just, we put out the notice and we had all the damage from our recent flood. It took us literally well over a year and a half for people who had damage to the side that they were ready... emotionally ready... physically ready... but they didn't want to do the repairs anymore. So, you needn't have a disaster right away. You could have had a disaster in the past a little ways, and there are still people sitting on houses that need to be abandoned, should be abandoned, and you can get them a bunch of the funds to do it. I am done and now I'm going to turn it over to Jen, I believe.

Lynsey Johnson: Sounds great, thank you so much Kevin. Now I'll turn it back over to Jen from NACO.

Jen Horton: Hi everyone and thanks for joining us, and I'm so happy to be here. Just a quick background on NACO, for those of you who aren't familiar with us, we are the only national organization to represent all three thousand sixty-nine counties in the country. I'm going to quiz you on this afterwards, so you better remember three thousand sixty-nine. We provide advocacy, research training and peer networks for county staff and elected officials in issue areas related to healthcare, justice, public safety, and I work specifically in our community and economic development practice area. In this area, we focus on providing support and solutions to counties related to resiliency, community development and planning for both our rural and larger urban counties. We also support coastal counties and then unique issues related to natural disaster preparedness, climate change adaptation, and disaster resiliency.

A quick note about our work with counties and disaster resilience. In 2013, our past president, Commissioner Linda Linkson from Len County, Iowa, made resiliency her presidential initiative. Since then, we have infused a number of our programs with a focus on disaster and economic resilience, specifically, and do this we provide best practices for resiliency related to infrastructure improvements, environmental restoration, and long-term planning efforts.

Just running the numbers for coastal communities, we work with some of our local and federal partners to support coastal counties. We see this focus as incredibly important since over half of Americans live within fifty miles of the coast. And with the population growing faster than the national average over the last forty years, and as you all know, coastal communities face a number of challenges related to disaster planning and resiliency efforts. So, I wanted to take a few moments to go through a few of the coastal counties that we have featured in recent publications, and have been working with. And then also move into a quick overview of the digital coast, which is a data resource for coastal communities.

First, Calvert County, Maryland. Calvert County lies on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, and they have a population of around eighty-eight thousand, so a little bit larger than the communities that Kevin was talking about, but like many counties in the Chesapeake Bay, Calvert County deals with regular flooding. It's just part of their culture. In addition to low lying coastland and daily tides, the land around this area is also subsiding. Over the past twenty years, regional sea levels have risen three to four times faster in this area than the average global sea rise rates.

Storm surge from Hurricane Isabelle in 2003 measured more than seven feet in some areas, significantly flooding many of the communities. Though Calvert County had a flood mitigation plan in effect for the entire county, except for two communities, Cove Point and Broome's Island, which flood more regularly than other areas. As of 2014, Calvert County has been conducting a pilot project to focus on flood plain management in these two communities. Because flooding is an accepted part of the local culture, the county's main goal in this case study is outreach and communication about increasing hazard impacts and resource availability. This has been achieved through a number of initiatives. They have a sea level rise training and sharing opportunity with the Army Corp of Engineers, and they show a lot of the graphics depicting the one-hundred year flood events and hurricane impacts. In addition to these initiatives and pilot projects in Broome's island and Cove Point, Calvert County has been building an online and interactive shoreline development tool aimed specifically at property owners.

After entering their address and answering several questions, the website supplies property owners with a GIS map of all the local, state and federal permits that their project will trigger. This includes habitat jurisdictions, cultural preservation limitations, sea level rise information, and flood insurance information. So, what's the main take away for Calvert? For us, it's that in small communities like Calvert County, sometimes the County can be most supportive, or the local government can be most supportive, by listening to the community needs, offering support and being an active partner in pooling the resources, providing the training and doing that with the state and federal agencies to address the problems.

Moving on to a much less rural county, but I did want to highlight them because they are not technically considered rural, but they have some interesting takeaways. This is Monmouth County, New Jersey and they are located at the northern end of the Jersey Shore, and included in the New York City Metropolitan area. They have a population of around six hundred and thirty thousand. The majority of the population lives within five miles of the coast. I wanted to note that, and they were hit hard by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and super storm Sandy in 2012, so some of you from the county might be on the call.

As most of you already know, FEMA has a national flood insurance program, and they run the volunteer community ratings system designed to award discounts on flood insurance premiums in communities. The challenge here in the county, due the impacts from the past storms, and obviously the potential for future risk, Monmouth County identified the need to engage in flood hazard mitigation for all of their municipalities. Due to statewide building standards, all of the municipalities in New Jersey State are eligible for additional insurance discounts in the CRS program. However, a number of the communities in the county were unable to implement CRS on their own, due to lack of capacity to navigate the process. The solution in 2014, the county created the CRS assistance program to provide CRS implementation support to its communities with a few goals of trying to lower insurance costs for the policyholders, increasing the number of participating communities in the CRS program, and helping with providing technical assistance to the municipalities wishing to participate.

The county created participation guidelines and convened meetings to achieve program participation. They also provided towns with mapping services, which I think was one of the most crucial pieces to all of this because it enabled the towns who needed CRS maps, to replicate the county's GIS map templates.

The lessons learned for this particular case study... well, first just to say before the assistance program, eight of the county's fifty-three municipalities were participating in the CRS program. Now, half of the municipalities are participating, and the streamlined process, and improved communication between the county and towns, has dramatically increased. It is increased consistency when requesting assistance, and implementing CRS. There is also an online library that the county created to store best practices and FEMA required documents; and they formed a new CRS user group, which holds meetings to facilitate brainstorming and mentorship. I just learned about this.

Moving west, I want to talk about Monterey County. They are located on the central California coast with a population around four hundred thousand. The county produced a hazard mitigation plan in 2007 that addressed a variety of natural disasters and hazards including erosion, earthquakes, floods, landslides and wildfires. But since the plan was produced, Monterey experienced forty-one natural hazard events as of mid-2014 that caused over thirty-two million dollars in damages.

To address the more current vulnerabilities and to incorporate new data and stay eligible for FEMA assistance, the County worked with its municipalities to update its hazard mitigation plan in 2014. The most important piece to all of this is they used a free source of data that NOAA's digital coast resources, to shape the planning process. As I mentioned, I am going to do a quick overview, but I will talk just a second about their plan.

The community is the municipalities and the county, assessed their capabilities and included specific actions in their plans, which will be re-examined at the next five-year plan update. The detrimental effect of climate change on drought and wildfires was also acknowledged in the plan and it incorporated into the update. They also established a process for regularly updating the plan and including sharing GIS documents and tracking flood related projects. And public outreach was an important part of the planning process, including a number of public meetings to gauge common goals and abilities, participatory mapping exercises and sessions, a project website, and project fact sheet.

Moving on to digital coast, hopefully a number of you have heard of digital coast, but the Monterey County used the digital coast website to inform their updating process of their hazard mitigation plan. The digital coast provides essential data sets, interactive tools, digitalization, case studies, and training for coastal community needs. It is centralized, it is user-friendly and most important, it is free and it is essentially an information repository that was developed by the NOAA office for coastal management, with support from eight partner organizations. The digital coast partnership, which includes NACO, is a resource for a number of stakeholders, including coastal managers; I have seen planners use it, local policy decision makers, and technical users who are charged to manage the nation's coastal and ocean resources.

Two of the tools and visualization tools that I like to talk about is first, the coastal country snapshots tool, which creates useful snapshots of demographic infrastructure, land use development data, and economic data that allows you to tell a story about their country from the economic and environmental perspective. If you are a coastal county, you can search by whatever municipality you live in, and you can get a great snapshot of what is going on in your county related to jobs, land use development and infrastructure.

Then there is also the sea level rise viewer. Using this, you can observe varying scenarios and impacts to infrastructure. Users are able to adjust the degree of sea level rise. It can take up an entire afternoon, because it's so interesting to play around with, but you can adjust the degree of sea level rise examining how and where tidal flooding will occur with higher sea levels, higher projections. The tool can also, this is my favorite part, it can overlay the social and economic data to show potential development and infrastructure impacts, highlighting at risk businesses and neighborhoods.

I am going to go back just a second, the link is here on this slide, but the easiest way to find digital coast is just to put it into your Google, or any browser and it will come right up. Like I said, it is free for everyone, and they also provide not just data and tools, but the training as well. So if you haven't ever visited the digital coast website, I would definitely suggest doing so. Feel free to do it while my presentation is going too, if you want.

I want to shift gears just a bit to talk for the remaining of my minutes about economic resilience. As you all know, all of this is related, but I just wanted to take a second to talk about what we are doing within our practice area. We work with counties to enhance economic resilience to changing conditions and trends in the domestic and global economies. To show case our work on economic resilience, I just want to give a quick overview of our newest report that was released last month, November. It is titled Cultivating a Competitive Advantage: How Rural Counties are Growing Economies of Local Assets and Regional Partnerships. The report focuses on how rural counties are pursuing asset based economic development initiatives that create jobs and build wealth. But we're also preserving rural landscapes, culture and heritage.

The report specifically features fifteen rural counties, related as you can see here... it might be small to see on your screen, but related to topic areas ranging from business attraction, workforce development to transportation and infrastructure. I wanted to just highlight a couple of quick case studies from the reports, but you can also access the report on naco.org or follow the link here. I know that they are giving out the slides after the fact.

This is Benton County, Indiana. They used a year's worth of tax payments from wind farm developers to completely pay off their decade old debt. The rural county is fewer than nine thousand residents, became the first county in the state to host wind farms, and now holds among the highest single concentration of wind turbines in the United States. after conducting a two-year study on wind energy in the mid-2000s, officials in Benton Country decided to support the development of the state's first wind farms, so they passed a wind energy zoning ordinance in 2007 to guide future wind farm development. As of August 2014, when we last talked to them, there are four hundred and ninety-five wind turbines erected on the three wind farms in the county, which combined, produced enough power annually for two hundred and fifty thousand homes. Benton County also created a new wind farm tourism center, established to educate visitors about wind energy and give them the opportunity to observe the wind turbines up close.

The takeaway here, Benton County's wind farms show that investing in renewable energy, it's not only about finding cleaner sources of electricity, which is great, but it is also an effective strategy for creating new economic opportunities in rural areas, including more jobs, increased tourism opportunities, and greater revenue for counties.

I am going to jump back west again to Nye County, Nevada. Nye County worked with the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection, and the Nevada State Legislature to issue statewide guidelines to address cleanup of former methamphetamine labs in Nevada. Since 2002, Nye County has assessed approximately fifty properties with real or perceived contamination, and all fifty of those properties are now at various stages of planning. Some are in demolition, others are in clean up and reuse already. New uses of the brownfield sites include a farmer's market, a fire station and a county administration building that you see here. Within the brown field's assessment process, Nye County identified the opportunity to use brownfield sites for renewable energy development with a focus on solar power. Since then, they have awarded contracts to energy providers to install photovoltaic panels on remediated county owned properties. They also used EPA grants in both 2008 and 2012 to prepare residents for brownfield redevelopment related jobs, and they trained a hundred-thirty-four county residents, of whom fifty-four of those are now working in industries related to brown fields and sustainability. So, huge success there.

I think the main takeaway here is oftentimes brownfield redevelopment is thought of as an urban issue, but it can be an important tool for rural counties that they can use to make property available for new uses, and also help to clean up environmental hazards.

These are just three of the other resources along with the part I highlighted just a few minutes ago, that I would love you all to take a look at. A lot of the case studies that I talked about earlier pertaining to disaster resilience will come out of the planning resilience water systems report, or the severe weather adaptation report. Then you can learn more about the digital coast and how you can use it and who the main stakeholders are and topic areas in the digital coast tools to promote county resilience report. My contact info is going to be put up eventually, so I just want to thank you all so much for your time, good luck with your applications, and I believe we are going to move to questions and answers.

Lynsey Johnson: Great, thank you so much Jen. As Jen said, here is all of the presenter's contact information from today, plus we added Kathy from NACO as well. What I'm going to ask that you do is if you guys want to ask any questions right now, feel free to include it in the question/answer forum on your screen, or feel free to raise your hand and we will unmute you. Just as a reminder, this presentation with all the presenter contact information will be on our website, as well as the recording of this presentation. All the presentations we've done on climate resilience over the last three months on our website--the national disaster resilience competition website on HUD exchange, so please feel free to do that.

One of the other things I wanted to mention is prior to coming to HUD I used to work for Wisconsin Emergency Management doing resilience and recovery work. We worked out a community in rural southwest Wisconsin called Gainesville, and during 2008, they experienced two five hundred year flood events in approximately ten months. So they decided after those two significant events to relocate the entire town outside of the flood plain. They moved residential, commercial, everything up a hill. They coupled HMGP, CDBG-DR, USDA rural development, economic development administration funds as well as other funding to make it happen, and they are in the process right now of completing a lot of that. So I urge you to check out and Google and do some more research on Gainesville, Wisconsin because I think that is also a very interesting case study in coupling funding streams and effort. So, with that, I'm going to see here... we had one question come in, and I'll just present it to everyone.

The attendee would like to know if any of the presenters have examples of successful regional efforts around climate change and resiliency that have included significant engagement and participation by tribal communities. I will open that up to any of the presenters. Have any of you guys worked with tribal communities and engaging them in climate change and resiliency efforts?

Chris Beck: This is Chris Beck, I can't say I've had any direct working with tribes in that regard, but I know I read things in Alaska that have been going on where some of the coastal groups are having to address relocation issues. So you might want to--I can try to track that down if someone is interested, they can reach out to me. But I'm sure that in Alaska there surely have been some dealings with tribes and sea level rise issues.

Lynsey Johnson: Great, thanks Chris. Any of the other presenters want to weigh in?

Kevin Geiger: We do not have anything on that.

Jen Horton: Yeah, same here at NACO, not to my knowledge.

Brett Schwartz: Yeah, this is Brett; I can get in touch with you directly if it is a follow up. Nothing comes off the top of my mind, but I can definitely reach out to our membership. I am working regionally, and tribes are an important part of that response and equitable outcomes. I will definitely follow up with you off line.

Lynsey Johnson: Great thanks so much Brett. Do we have any other questions for our presenters today? I want to thank you all for joining us today and taking time. I want to thank our presenters for providing such interesting case studies and how to go about bringing resiliency efforts to rural communities and small towns. With that, please make sure to check back in the next couple of days to the NDRC website for archived information on this presentation, the slides as well as the recordings. If you do have any questions, please feel free to contact our presenters with their contact information. Again, thank you everyone for joining us today, and we look forward to seeing you on future webinars. Thank you.