Integrated floodplain management in Washington: How can we make it more resilient?

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Flood Risk Management in Washington State: How Can we Make it More Resilient?

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Northwest Climate Conference
October 2017
Climate Impacts on Flooding

- Sea Level Rise
- Heavy Rains
- Snowpack
Who are the Washington Silver Jackets?
Methods

• Semi-structured interviews
• Coding and memos (Atlas.ti)
• Work Plan draft
• Workshop:
  • Validation exercise
  • Prioritization
What did we learn from the interviews?

**Strengths:**
- Nexus for coordinated action
- Leverage strengths of each agency
- Excellent science resource
- Existing agency guidance on climate
- Passion and drive

**Challenges and barriers:**
- Flummoxed by uncertainty
- Gaps in Science
- Limited local capacity
- Actions sometimes contradict goals
- Coordination and Communication
Five Themes of the WA Silver Jackets Work Plan

(A) Develop improved estimates of future flood impacts
Estimating future flood impacts will allow agencies and communities to better understand, plan for, and manage their risks. Current information does not adequately portray risk.

(B) Develop resources for local planners
Local planners lack the tools and guidance needed to both communicate risk and plan effectively within the floodplain.

(C) Build capacity and coordination on resilient floodplain management
Improve coordination among the WA SJ Team, scientists, and local floodplain leaders, with the ultimate aim of cultivating a network for shared learning and information exchange.

(D) Improve public engagement
A public that is informed and cares about their flood risk will communicate that to local planners and elected officials. Specifically, these actions focus on outreach to city/county councils and homeowners/landowners/residents in flood-prone areas.

(E) Coordinate floodplain management goals and planning
Clearly articulated agency goals and better alignment among planning processes would free up capacity for local managers while also ensuring that floodplain management is applied consistently across programs.
(A) Develop improved estimates of future flood impacts

“If something is changing from what we have been expecting or used to expect, in order to get it right, our information is going to have to take that into account and portray that as well” (NWS 2017)
“Community planners are doing so much. I’m just in awe of all the things they do. They can only do so much at one time. They can’t start making up their own programs. They really need guidance and someone with the informed opinion and a monetary reason why they should be doing these things” (ECY 2017)
“I want to engage with those people that are developing [climate models] and talk through it so that I really understand it and I’m not just communicating some bullet point that I read. That at this point is a barrier.”
(NWS 2017)
(D) Improve public engagement

“get some public information out there because there needs to be the public support instead of just rampant public opposition. [...] The city councils need to feel that they’re not going to just get lost when they start adopting higher regulatory standards.” (ECY 2017).
(E) Coordinate FRM goals and planning processes

“Strengthening partnerships and relationships with agencies that are on the cutting edge. We should be on the cutting edge. [...] We might have a piece of the puzzle, but no single agency is going to own the whole puzzle.” (EMD 2017)
Near-Term Priorities for the WA SJ
Scope & Vintage

King County via the Puget Sound Institute: http://www.pugetsoundinstitute.org/tag/floodplains/
Questions?

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