

Appendix F:

Focus Group Summary

Purpose

In July 2005, Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup held targeted focus groups aimed at identifying the issues that local governments encounter while developing the risk assessment component of their Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The focus groups specifically examined the obstacles and opportunities that local governments experience in discovering, accessing, and using geospatial data to develop their risk assessments.

Data discovery is defined as the process of identifying, locating, and/or collecting geospatial data. *Data access* is defined as the ability to obtain and use current geospatial data. *Data use* is defined as the incorporation, analysis, and management of community risk assessment geospatial data into local systems.

Methods

The first focus group was held on July 20, 2005, with the City of Beaverton and Washington County, and the second focus group was held on July 26, 2005 with Umatilla County. The project's steering committee identified the participating communities. Communities were selected to represent both urban and rural interests and were invited to attend focus group meetings conducted by Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (ONHW).

ONHW asked the selected communities to bring individuals from the various departments that participated or would participate in developing the community's risk assessment. Focus group participants included members from emergency management, planning, and GIS staff from both city and county departments.

At the focus group meetings, ONHW gave an overview of the project and explained the purpose of the focus groups to meeting participants. ONHW asked participants to individually fill out an issue identification worksheet that asked about issues regarding technical, administrative, economic, and legal issues related to the discovery, access and use of hazard geospatial data.

An open discussion followed in which participants reported their top issue from each issue category to the group. Participants were then asked to have a group discussion regarding the importance of data collection standards and hazard overlay methodologies.

Findings

ONHW documented the responses from the group discussions and collected participants' worksheets after the meetings. The following is a summary of all participants' responses for the issue identification worksheet and the discussions regarding data collection standards and hazard overlay methodologies.

Issue Identification Worksheet

ONHW created an issue identification worksheet to gain information from focus group participants about the different aspects of discovering, accessing, and using geospatial data to develop risk assessments. Specifically, the worksheet questioned participants on the technical, administrative, economic, and legal aspects geospatial data. Please note that not all of the four issues categories listed above applied to each of the geospatial data aspects – discovery, access, and use.

Definitions of the different worksheet topics appear below, along with a summary of responses for each topic from participants' worksheets.

Data Discovery

Data discovery is defined as the process of identifying, locating, and/or collecting geospatial data. Examples of data discovery include field collection and data development. Participants were asked to identify issues that their communities experienced related to technical, administrative, and economic aspects of data discovery.

Technical

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the technical skills and equipment necessary to collect, develop, and interpret local hazard data. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Need to collaborate with border jurisdictions and agencies for data discovery.
- Some jurisdictions are inadequately staffed;
- There is an need for more staff training, cross training, and continued education for staff and end-users;
- There is an need for more technical assistance;
- There is a need for data collection standards;
- Data is in multiple formats that are not always compatible; and
- Data is often in formats that make it hard to quantify.

Administrative

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the human and financial resources required to administer various data elements for a community risk assessment. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Some jurisdictions and departments are adequately staffed.
- Some jurisdictions and departments are inadequately staffed.
- Sometimes there is a lack of communication between departments when data is collected.
- Costs of hiring more staff or outside consultants to collect, input, and integrate are prohibitive.

Economic

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the cost associated with developing, buying and/or collecting new hazard or community risk assessment. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Need to collaborate with other departments and jurisdictions to collect or purchase data.
- Cost of staff time and equipment to collect data is prohibitive;
- Cost of hiring an outside consultant or purchasing data is prohibitive;
- Ineffective use of resources when duplication of collection or purchase of data occurs; and
- Unaware of available funding sources and resources.

Data Access

Data access is defined as the ability to obtain and use current geospatial data. Examples of sources used to access data include federal, state, or local jurisdictions. Participants were asked to identify data access issues that their communities experienced related to technical/administrative and legal aspects of data discovery.

Technical/Administrative

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the necessary technical skills and/or equipment, human and financial resources needed to obtain and acquire natural hazard data. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Lack of adequate storage space for data; and

- Need to collaborate with other jurisdictions to share data.
- Unaware of what data already exists and how to access it;
- Blocked or limited access to data;
- Data is in multiple formats that are not always compatible; and
- There is a need for more staff time, money and equipment to be able to access data.

Legal

Participants were asked to identify issues related to potential legal challenges, constraints and/or opportunities involved in acquiring and using community risk assessment data. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Publishing data belonging to other agencies and/or jurisdictions;
- Publishing data that contains locations of critical facilities;
- Affect on private property owners of publishing confidential information that could influence property values or insurance rates;
- Access onto private property to collect and access data;
- Ballot Measure 37; and
- Licensing agreements.

Data Use

Data use is defined as the incorporation, analysis, and management of community risk assessment geospatial data into local systems. Examples of data use issues include data format and ease of integration. Participants were asked to identify data use issues that their communities experienced related to technical, administrative, and legal aspects of data discovery.

Technical

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the technical skills, equipment, and/or software necessary to interpret and analyze natural hazard data. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Cost of staff time and equipment needed to maintain data;
- There is a need for training on how to use and merge data; and

- Data is in multiple formats that are not always compatible, making some data unusable.

Administrative

Participants were asked to identify issues related to the human and financial resources required to analyze and maintain various data elements for a community risk assessment. A summary of responses from participants' worksheets is listed below.

- Collaboration with other departments and jurisdictions to share data.
- Cost of maintaining data to keep it current; and
- There is a need for training and funding for staff to be able to use data.

Legal

Participants were asked to identify issues related to potential legal challenges, constraints and/or opportunities involved in acquiring and using community risk assessment data. Responses from participants' worksheets are listed below.

- Ballot Measure 37;
- Internal and external sharing of data; and
- Publishing data that contains locations of critical facilities.

Data Standards and Methodology Discussion Questions

ONHW asked participants to provide input on potential next steps to better assist communities develop accurate risk assessments. Participants were asked to identify how important data collection standards and hazard overlay methodologies are to local communities.

How important are data collection standards?

Focus group participants expressed that having data standards at the time of collection would allow for multi-purpose data collection, and could save time and money in the long run. Participants expressed a desire for a template for how to collect data to meet standards. They also expressed a desire for a multi-hazard and multi-purpose GIS tool to make inputting data easier. Several participants agreed that the methodologies used later to analyze data do not matter if there are uncertainties in the accuracy of the data. The majority of participants agreed that having statewide standards for data collection could help accomplish the following:

- Ensure data users that they are receiving high quality data from other jurisdictions;
- Make sharing data and resources across jurisdictions easier; and

- Provide legitimacy when jurisdictions must collect data or ask for funds based on analysis of collected data.

How important are hazard overlay methodologies?

Focus group participants agreed that having both data collection standards and hazard overlay methodologies are important. Participants indicated that having methodologies that demonstrate how to use collected data would be helpful, providing technical support to data users. Participants also expressed that flexible methodologies could be adapted for each site and/or jurisdiction, and could be used for reviewing and updating plans and risk assessments.

Conclusions

The findings from the issue identification worksheet exercise and the discussion questions are summarized below.

- There is a lack of knowledge of what data is available.
- Capacity issues at the local level stem from a lack of staff and funding rather than a lack of technical capacity.
- Discovering, accessing and using hazard geospatial data is complicated by the lack of standardized data formats.
- There is a lack of communication between internal departments on what GIS activities are taking place, and opportunities are being missed to collect and acquire multi-objective datasets.
- Both data collection standards and hazard overlay methodologies are equally important because one cannot be accomplished without the other.