AGENDA

1. Introductions and Welcome – roll call by state to identify new participants.

2. Annual Arid Regions Report to executive office (Jeanne Ruefer)

3. Article in News and Views on Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, text below.

4. Update on planning for ASFPM national conference in Phoenix in 2018 (Teri George?)

5. Other business.

6. Identify action Items.


Also of possible interest to Committee members

FEMA in the Fall of 2016 issued Hydraulics Guidance updates. A PowerPoint presentation summarizing the updates is available on the Arid Regions Committee web page on the ASFPM website, at:
http://www.floods.org/index.asp?menuID=244&firstlevelmenuID=183&siteID=1

The following is an excerpt from the monthly column of Chad Berginnis, Executive Director of ASFPM, in ASFPM’s News&Views, February 2017:

…So how does any of this relate to Scottsdale? The week after Coastal GeoTools, Kimberly and I took a trip to Arizona where we were out walking a trail in the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which is a large, permanently-protected, sustainable desert habitat. I felt as if we were in a sea of strewn boulders, saguaro, cholla and prickly pear cactus.
Surrounding us were the McDowell Mountains, their rocky outcrops in stark contrast to the brilliant blue sky. As we walked, I began reading some of the interpretive signage along the trail and learned about the story behind the creation of the preserve. Later after the trip I dug a little deeper. I strongly suggest you read the more extensive history of the preserve by downloading the book The People’s Preserve, which is an excellent read about how citizens, the city of Scottsdale (population 227,000) and the state all had a role in the preserve that exists today. Currently the preserve is more than 30,000 acres of a connected, living system of open space that provides a wildlife corridor and habitat for plant and animal species found only in this region. The McDowell Mountain portion of the preserve is the signature scenic backdrop for residents, businesses and visitors, a viewshed many call Scottsdale’s “oceanfront.” Hmmm. Scottsdale citizens passed sales taxes that provided over $130 million in revenue with $276 million spent on land acquisitions. The Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve now protects more than a third of the total land area of Scottsdale as open space.

So why do I think the Scottsdale story is so relevant to coastal communities and the need to adapt to sea level rise? First, I think that while there are coastal communities that will address sea level rise by taking the approach of being more resilient and develop flood defenses (you aren’t going to move Manhattan or Charleston for example), many, many more coastal communities will need to undertake significant adaptation measures (or possibly do a combination of resilience and adaptation). In some ways, resiliency efforts might be better viewed as short- and medium-term solutions, while the long-term solution is community adaptation. Second, I think a viable option for coastal community adaptation is preserving and/or restoring the native, coastal dune ecosystems. Today, most current efforts to preserve or restore coastal dune ecosystems are at the development site scale and fragmented. Few efforts are community-wide. We already know the flood loss reduction benefits of dune and coastal ecosystem restoration. So how about adding other benefits of restoring and preserving these spaces, including tourism and being an economic generator for the entire community or region? A point that is not lost on me is that like many coastal communities, tourism is Scottsdale’s major industry and largest employer. Like many coastal communities, the “oceanfront” in Scottsdale was prime development land, with house and land valuations surrounding the preserve not unlike those that are oceanfront in our coastal communities.

Third, the long-term solution to SLR impacts in coastal communities will ultimately have to be locally driven with help from states. There simply aren’t enough federal resources to do the job. The story of Scottsdale shows that efforts to educate citizens about natural assets in their own community, as well as smart planning and leadership, can lead to truly impressive results. It also shows how states can pass smart legislation to help communities.

Fourth and finally, big hairy ideas like this take time! The Scottsdale experience began in the early 1980s, taking several decades to make the progress we see today. Bold visions for the future are neither easy, cheap nor quick to implement. Yet it can be done. Scottsdale has managed to preserve its entire “oceanfront.” Why not try the same approach in our coastal communities to turn a threat into an asset and opportunity?