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Priorities for Climate Change and Risk Reduction
ASFPM Policy Statement

Earth's Changing Climate

Our climate has always been slowly changing, but now the rate of change is unprecedented. In the past 150 years, and in particular since 1970, human activity has caused the rate of change to accelerate significantly. Documented climate change impacts include loss of polar ice and high mountain glacial ice, increased methane releases from melting permafrost and production of oil and gas, and changes in vegetation, as well as increases in sea level, average annual temperatures, frequency and intensity of hurricanes, and frequency of extreme precipitation events. Our climate is changing rapidly due to "feedback loops" that occur when the effects of a warming planet induces more carbon emissions; such as loss of ocean ice which reflects sunlight, or melting permafrost which releases methane (the most potent greenhouse gas) from the ground.

Due to climate change we are already facing significantly increased risks to vulnerable populations, the built environment, and our way of life. Higher seas, increased flooding, extreme temperatures, decreased snow packs, drought, permanent losses of dry land, and increased frequency and severity of storms are contributing to the growing number of billion-dollar disasters and losses of life. In addition, public and private development on our riverine and coastal floodplains, the world is causing the loss of protective natural ecosystem services provided by riparian lands, wetlands and marshes.

Risk Reduction

ASFPM strives to help communities understand how a changing climate is increasing flood risk, decreasing community resilience, and how to prepare for increasing flood risk. ASFPM supports efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce flood risks and increase community resilience by promoting local, state, tribal and national measures to reduce risk and climate change.

ASFPM believes that climate mitigation and adaptation strategies should reduce adverse impacts to our built environment, cultural resources, commerce, industry, and natural resources within and dependent upon our floodplains. Consistent with long-held policy, ASFPM emphasizes hazard mitigation measures that are cost-effective, and socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. In this changing world, ASFPM's 'hazard mitigation' mandate broadly includes climate mitigation as well as adaption measures.

ASFPM supports a risk management approach that restores and preserves natural coastal and riverine watershed dynamics. As these systems continue to change, risk reduction solutions must be "based upon flood scenarios within the defined lifespan of a project, constructing to the most probable future scenario, and building redundancies into a project to allow for further adaptation based on observed impacts and changes" *(Planning for Infrastructure Resilience, PAS 596)*. The key to resilience is the ability to change the built environment and reorganize institutions to accommodate changing environmental conditions.

Coastal communities have been on the front lines facing and addressing climate related impacts from sea level rise, storm surge, land subsidence and coastal erosion. Inland and Great Lakes communities are also seeing

increasing flooding due to more variable and extreme precipitation events. This ASFPM policy emphasizes the need for data, planning, and hazard mitigation strategies to address all future flood risks and hazards resulting from changing climatic patterns.

A Dynamic Approach

ASFPM promotes the development and adoption of policies that involve all relevant disciplines, sectors, and levels of government. ASFPM supports approaches that:

1. Support and utilize scientific research, data, and new technologies developed to address changing flood risk due to climate change;
2. Support preservation and expansions of natural features that absorb greenhouse gasses while reducing flood risk, by conservation and enhancement of wetlands, forests, riparian areas, and coastal marshes;
3. Incorporate future cumulative impacts when determining sustainable hazard mitigation practices;
4. Recognize there may be no "permanent" solution, but rather adaptive scenario solutions must accommodate changes to the natural environment during the expected lifespan of a built structure;
5. Acknowledge appropriate roles and responsibilities of decision makers at all levels of government, with an emphasis on local, state and tribal land use authority;
6. Leverage relevant expertise and experience across all professions;
7. Support consideration, assessment and engagement for solutions on behalf of climate vulnerable populations where environmental and/or social justice may be an issue in the reduction of flood losses;
8. Encourage long-term land use planning at the state, local and tribal level that addresses future flood risk due to climate change; and
9. Engage across public, private, academic, and advocacy sectors for inclusive and partnered efforts to develop and implement the most practicable, effective strategies that will minimize flood risk.

ASFPM's focus is on promoting hazard mitigation strategies that minimize future damages by addressing both the causes and the future impacts of climate change. We are committed to environmentally sustainable management principles and encourage all our members to practice sustainable land and water management and development practices in their daily work.
