

BigSkyHUG CONFERENCE CALL MINUTES December 20, 2002

ATTENDEES: Paul Spengler, Mike Stickney, Pat Crowley, Monique Lay, Joan Bowsher, Doug Bausch, Val Jaffe.

TOPICS

1. Western States Seismic Policy Council Conference in Denver (9/2002) and Paul's HAZUS presentation: Paul attended the annual WSSPC meeting (<http://www.wsspc.org/>) and gave a short presentation on applying HAZUS for Helena. Although the presentations were not extensive, it was good exposure on the topic for the attendees. There are no future HAZUS panel presentations scheduled by this group, but WSSPC meets regularly; the topic will undoubtedly be discussed in a risk assessment context in the future. HAZUS will undoubtedly be discussed at the 2004 WSSPC meeting on mitigation.

Paul prepared a Powerpoint presentation for the conference, which can be posted to the BigSkyHUG web page at his discretion.

2. Mitigation Funds tied to Risk Assessments: Doug confirmed that HAZUS is expected to be used for calculating risk assessment numbers required in state and local government mitigation planning documents. Interest in HAZUS should increase as the November 1, 2003 deadline for those mitigation plans approaches.

3. Homeland Security and HAZUS: As of March 2003 FEMA and Homeland Security will be combined into one agency. Although the details of exactly how that transition will affect the HAZUS program are not yet available, no decrease in funding or promotion is anticipated. The change will probably promote a broader user base.

4. Montana earthquake response exercise: Paul was in Kalispell, where the statewide exercise was held in late November. HAZUS was used to create the exercise scenario and for some of the design of the exercise itself. Jens Bolstad, GIS Coordinator for MDES, produced HAZUS quick assessment reports at the State Emergency Coordination Center in Helena, and distributed them for the exercise briefing. Due to the distance of Helena from the NW Montana epicenter and the magnitude of the quake, damage to Helena was determined to be minimal. Running HAZUS for use with this statewide exercise was considered to be of minimal utility; yet, the participants suggested it be

in future earthquake response exercises.

5. October 2002 EMI training - Data Preparation for HAZUS Multi-Hazard: Val attended a 2.5 day training at the FEMA's National Emergency Training Center, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Jawhar Bouabid and Eric Tate were the instructors. Jawhar is a primary developer of the earthquake model, as Eric is for the flood hazards. It was the first course offered that focused on data preparation necessary to run HAZUS analyses. Although the course contents did not cover the broad extent of preparing data for HAZUS, it did introduce helpful software tools for HAZUS users. The attendees offered excellent feedback and discussion on the field realities of implementing HAZUS, which were recorded by the course organizers and instructors for improving the training curriculum. Three of us attending traveled from Montana (Mark Pearson and Shane Fox of Maxim Technologies, Inc. also attended).

Two software programs were highlighted: the Inventory, Collection, and Assessment Tool (InCAST), and the Flood Information Tool (FIT). InCAST is used to gather and convert information into the appropriate data format required to run the HAZUS loss estimation model. InCAST is a user-friendly software program to streamline compilation of data unique to the individual hazards analyses (earthquake, wind, flood) and attribute data common to all the hazards. The FIT is an ArcGIS extension to process user-supplied flood hazard data (hazard assessment) for input to the HAZUS loss estimation model. FIT requires spatial data inputs, ie. terrain and flood elevations, and floodplain boundaries. FIT incorporates riverine hydraulic model outputs and produces a grid of flood depths. (It also uses a coastal flooding methodology, not pertinent to Montana hazards.)

The next Data Preparation class will be in January. A course that debuts HAZUS Multi-Hazard, including data preparation, will be given in March 2003. Doug Bausch will be one of the January instructors. See www.hazus.org for training details. The class fills up quickly, so be sure to sign up early.

6. HAZUS Library: Val returned with copies of materials made available by FEMA during the session. Those materials were submitted to Paul for inclusion in the local HAZUS Resource Library under his management. Materials include such titles as: Development of HAZUS Earthquake Risk Assessment Capabilities for the San Francisco Bay Area, California; HAZUS Market Characterization Study Report (7/2002); A Guide to Using HAZUS for Mitigation; HAZUS - Getting Back to Business. Contact Paul Spengler to view the Library materials. Val will submit the copy of Geology, Earthquake Hazards, and Land Use in the Helena Are, Montana - A Review, by RG Schmidt, USGS, 1986, after Pat Crowley reviews it (Mike Stickney also has a copy of this USGS publication.)

7. Availability of the Helena Area HAZUS Analysis Report (paper and electronic): Each funding partner of the Helena project (city, county, state, and federal) has a paper copy of the report. There is also one catalogued in the reference section at the Lewis & Clark County Library. FEMA has agreed to facilitate and assist in the preparation of an electronic version of the entire report. The results will be a PDF version for online distribution. Val has accessed the City project archives for assembly of the multiple files required to compile the electronic version, and will forward those files to FEMA headquarters before January 1, 2003.

8. BigSky HAZUS User Group's non-profit status and funding potential: In August 2002, Val formally registered the Big Sky HAZUS User Group with the State of Montana as a not-for-profit corporation. Articles of Incorporation are filed at the Montana Secretary of State's office. She also obtained an Employer's Identification Number (EIN) for the Group from the IRS. These are two of the critical steps towards becoming a full-functioning non-profit organization. These actions were taken to encourage governmental, academic, and private partnerships in the use of HAZUS, and to open up funding opportunities for all those interested in Montana.

The User Group can now apply for some training funds, but needs to establish itself with the IRS as an organization exempt from taxation. Funding to cover statewide networking and education is not forthcoming from state or local funding sources. For this purpose, the non-profit status will allow BigSky HUG to act on behalf of its members to seek adequate funds in support of HAZUS activities in Montana. Grant applications may be submitted now as pending tax exemption status, but funding opportunities can only expand after filling out the requisite legal forms. If you would like to be part of the grant-writing team, contact Val.

In order to be recognized by the IRS and major funding organizations as an eligible non-profit applicant, the following needs to be done: Form a Board of Directors, establish membership guidelines, document the User Group's mission, and complete the IRS form for 501(c)3 status. Individuals can view the Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501(c)3 IRS Code online at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/k1023.pdf> (Adobe Acrobat PDF viewer required). Contact Val if you can help formalize the BigSkyHUG tax exempt status. If you, or an attorney that you know can volunteer legal assistance for this purpose, please advise the Coordinator.

Montana HAZUS users can see how other User Groups have organized themselves at www.hazus.org. The San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California User Groups have published excellent descriptions of their organizations models for us to consider. They include brochures with their User Group Vision,

Mission, Goals, Objectives, Products, and Resources for prospective members.

9. Statewide Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Report: Monique (MDES, Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program) announced that the first draft of the statewide report is under review, and she will advise us when the final report will be published. Maxim Technologies, Inc., Helena, Montana, has been contracted to identify, analyze, and report on our vulnerability to natural and human-made hazards across the state. HAZUS will be applied for this statewide hazards identification and risk assessment project.

10. HAZUS-MH Training in Helena, MT: Training in HAZUS Multi-Hazards will be offered in Helena, MT this next summer. The dates for the course series are June 23-27, 2003. The training location will be announced soon, and will include a computer laboratory. Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced topics will be covered. There will be opportunities for individuals at various levels of GIS to participate. Cost will be minimal, but has not yet been determined. Registration forms will be available online soon, but don't hesitate to spread the news and contact Val and/or Paul regarding your interest in the training before the formal announcement. Space will be limited in the computer lab for the advanced exercises.

Prepared by:

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Notes from others who could not attend:

1. Rich Davis, WDC, had a previous appointment, and regrets his absence. We'll ask him to brief attendees of the next Conference Call on the Western Disaster Center goals for support of HAZUS.
2. Doug Burreson, Missoula County GIS Program Director, could not attend and is interested in our activities.
3. Mike Murray, L&C County Commissioner, had to attend Government Day in Augusta, MT.
4. Kristie Rhodes, MTDOA - Risk Management, had a previous engagement.
5. Jere Folgert, Global Positions, Inc. Bozeman, will look for minutes of the meeting on the web.