Higher-Education Committee & Artificial Intelligence Subcommittee

2025 ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

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Introduction

The Higher Education Committee is a standing committee with the goal of encouraging and enabling the development of flood risk management degree programs at institutions of higher learning, including 2-year associate degrees, minors, 4-year bachelor's degrees, graduate certificates, degrees, and doctoral programs. The Committee works with partner agencies to actively promote the increase of existing flood risk management curriculum within institutions of higher learning already engaged in teaching flood risk management and related coursework as well as seeking out opportunities within other disciplines, such as planning, emergency management, and law, to promote flood risk management courses within their current higher education curriculum structure.

In addition, the Higher Education Committee has been happy to provide an organizational home to the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Subcommittee. The AI Subcommittee began in 2023 as ASFPM members began using and seeing the value in AI as tool for multiple purposes in floodplain management. ASFPM Higher Education Committee members Yanan Ma and Phetmano Phannavong developed the AI Subcommittee as a forum to bring AI expertise and programming to ASFPM membership.

Key Accomplishments

For the Higher Education Committee: In 2024-25, the Higher Education Committee continued its focus on pursuing grant funding for development of a Graduate Certificate in Floodplain Stewardship in conjunction with HBCUs in an effort to better diversify the profession of floodplain administration. However, due to the change in federal administrations and concurrent change in emphasis and direction of the federal administration, beginning in early 2025, the focus shifted from seeking potential funding and support through FEMA, National Science Foundation, NOAA, or other federal agencies to focusing on state-oriented needs for improved floodplain management and training.

This led the Higher Education Committee to work with state officials in Florida to address the sudden cancellation of hundreds of emergency management and floodplain-management-related classes and trainings. Higher Education Committee co-chair Jerry Murphy has used his position within the land-grant Cooperative Extension program of the University of Florida to pursue the potential of Extension to fill the training gap left by cancellation of FEMA training courses. While there is great potential

for such an approach as a model for other states to replace lost FEMA trainings, this is an on-going effort.

Co-chair Thomas Ruppert has continued to push towards summer 2025 completion of a state-oriented version of ASFPM's No Adverse Impact Legal Guide. The Virginia No Adverse Impact Legal Guide (VA NAI Guide) will be the first state-specific legal guide. Publication of the VA NAI Guide will allow ASFPM and the Higher Education Committee to promote it to interested lawyers associated with environmental law clinics as a ready-made project for legal clinics. Development of state-specific NAI Legal Guides offers an excellent ready-made project for legal clinics since it has a very defined objective with a clear model to follow, it provides ready-made partners in development, marketing, and use in states via state chapters of floodplain managers associated with ASFPM, it provides law students with both critical substantive legal research and knowledge as well as opportunities to network with relevant lawyers on review of draft products, and it increases the prestige of involved law schools by providing a public service through the finished product.

AI Subcommittee Key Accomplishments:

During the past year, the AI Subcommittee achieved several significant milestones. We hosted two insightful webinars focused on AI topics; these webinars garnered substantial engagement. We published an article in the March 2025 issue of the ASFPM newsletter and developed an online AI Collection for the ASFPM Library, providing valuable resources for our community. Our efforts extended to active participation and support at the ASFPM Foundation's Gilbert F. White Forum on AI and Floodplain Management. We also sponsored an AI session at the ASFPM 2025 conference, highlighting AI as a crucial tool in floodplain management.

- Hosted two webinars on AI Topics
- Published article on ASFPM newsletter, News & Views, March 2025 Issue
- Established and maintained an online AI Collection on the ASFPM Library
- Supported and participated in the ASFPM Foundation Gilbert F. White Forum on AI and Floodplain Management, March 5-6, 2025, in Washington D.C.
- Sponsored an AI session at the ASFPM 2025 conference under the AI as Floodplain Management Tool track (Session B7)

Challenges

For the Higher Education Committee: The greatest challenge for the past year for the Higher Education Committee has been the dramatic shift of FEMA and other federal agencies away from the trainings and funding streams that had been points of involvement by the Higher Education Committee and targets for funding proposed development of the Floodplain Stewardship Certificate program.

For the AI Subcommittee: The AI Subcommittee received multiple requests from outside the ASFPM community to join the subcommittee; however, participation is currently limited to ASFPM members. The lack of awareness and basic understanding of AI technology among ASFPM members also presents a challenge that the subcommittee is addressing through outreach and education activities.

Priorities

For the Higher Education Committee:

- Promote floodplain stewardship as a professional career and recognized field of post-secondary educational opportunities.
    - Develop a pilot program of supplemental FEMA-style trainings offered to local governments and others as part of a self-funding model through the Florida Cooperative Extension System of the University of Florida and Florida A&M University in conjunction with Florida Floodplain Managers Association.
    - Complete and market the VA NAI Legal Guide; market the VA NAI Legal Guide and ASFPM No Adverse Impact Legal Guide as models for law school environmental clinic projects with ready-made, clear objectives, processes, and utility for all involved as part of increasing floodplain management education within the legal education system.
    - Identify curriculum champions, share experiences, and provide available support.
- Participate in and provide support as feasible to the Climate Change Task Force as an ASFPM entity aligned with a mission of education, including in higher ed.

For the AI Subcommittee:

- Continue AI webinars throughout the year and short courses for future conferences
- Enhance the collaboration between academia, industry, and public sector on AI since this technology and policy are moving very fast
- Establishing a working group tracking AI policy and governance around the country.

Recommended Actions

For the Higher Education Committee:

- Prepare for the Committee Co-Chairs's retreat and annual Higher Education Policy Committee and POD meeting.
- Prepare notes of annual meeting for distribution.
- Facilitate, organize, and support the Membership Subcommittee in conducting regular bi-monthly conference calls.
- Continue to share experiences and provide general support to create certifications, courses, degrees, and minors related to floodplain management or stewardship.
- Promote diversity and inclusion by collaborating with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to promote the study of floodplain management.
- Continue to engage with POD leader David Powers, Leaders of Membership Subcommittee, and the AI Subcommittee.

For the AI Subcommittee:

- Considering promoting AI Subcommittee to a new ASFPM Committee to capture more needs from other committee and promote AI awareness as an outcome of the Gilbert F. White Forum.