



Bridging Conservation & Hazard Mitigation Planning: A Workshop for Natural Resource Professionals

Final Program

Costa Mesa, California | August 3, 2025

Description:

The Environmental Law Institute invites natural resource professionals and community leaders to explore how conservation practices can provide flood mitigation co-benefits and discuss avenues for collaboration between natural resource professionals and hazard mitigation planners. This full-day interactive workshop will provide practical insights on integrating nature-based solutions into local hazard mitigation planning processes.

Through expert panel discussions and small-group sessions, participants will gain an understanding of the local hazard mitigation planning process, real-world examples of special districts (i.e., conservation districts and flood control districts) that work with hazard mitigation planners on nature-based mitigation projects, and resources on conservation solutions that overlap with hazard mitigation planning priorities.

You do not need to have a flood mitigation focus to attend—if your work addresses natural hazard risk or you would like to explore how your conservation efforts could provide risk reduction co-benefits, we welcome your participation.

Whether you are new to hazard mitigation planning or are already engaged in your local hazard mitigation planning processes, this workshop is designed for you.


Venue Information:



This workshop will be held in **Balboa Bay on Banquet 2 Level** at the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa as a partner event during the [Soil and Water Conservation Society's Annual Conference](#).

Contact Information:

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Workshop Agenda

Time	Sunday, August 3
8:30am-9:00am	Registration & Breakfast
9:00am-9:30am	Welcome and Participant Introductions Welcome remarks from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebecca Kihslinger, Senior Science and Policy Analyst; Director, Wetlands Program, Environmental Law Institute
9:30am-10:45am	Panel 1: Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning and Nature-Based Solutions <u>Objectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an overview of the basics of a hazard mitigation plan Introduction to nature-based solutions Describe the intersections between conservation priorities and hazard mitigation planning priorities Describe the benefits to conservation districts participating in hazard mitigation planning Learn about one Resource Conservation District's critical role in local hazard mitigation planning processes, including how and why the District became involved. Understand how to tailor messaging to effectively communicate the value of multi-benefit watershed projects to policy makers, technical experts, hazard planners, and community stakeholders. <u>Panelists:</u> Matthew West, Mitigation Planning Supervisor, Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management , Local Hazard Mitigation Planning and Integrating Special Districts Ellie Flaherty, Biologist, U.S. EPA , Enhancing Natural Hazard Mitigation and Resilience through EPA's Nonpoint Source Management Program Kellyx Nelson, Director, San Mateo Resource Conservation District , The Role of Conservation Districts in Multi-Benefit Watershed Projects
10:45am-11:00am	 Coffee Break
11:00am-12:30pm	Breakout 1: Opportunities for Alignment <u>Objective:</u> Identify where conservation and district priorities currently align with hazard mitigation planning, explore opportunities to strengthen that alignment, and discuss barriers to expanding alignment. <u>Guiding Questions:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What hazards and conservation priorities exist in your area? How do you engage with hazard mitigation planning? How are your [district's, if relevant] priorities reflected in local plans? What NBS projects have you seen, funded, or implemented? What benefits did they provide? Where do you see overlap between conservation and hazard mitigation goals? What barriers or resource needs limit alignment between these goals?

12:30pm-1:30pm	 Networking Lunch
1:30pm-3:00 pm	Panel 2: Partnerships <u>Objectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the diverse goals and priorities of conservation districts and other special districts Showcase the different types of partnerships that support conservation and hazard mitigation efforts. <u>Panelists:</u> Kristy Hawthorne, Executive Director, Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District , Case study with collaboration focus Jennifer Fish, Director, Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District , Case study on leveraging state-local stormwater permitting and partnerships to scale nature-based solutions Gabe Powers, Director of Land Preservation and Natural Resources, McHenry County Conservation District , Case study with nature-based solutions focus Zachary Christin, Research Economist, Equilibrium Economics , Leveraging Partnerships and Tools to Secure Funding and Develop Policy
3:00pm-3:15pm	 Coffee Break
3:15pm-4:30pm	Breakout 2: Partnerships <u>Objective:</u> Examine what makes certain partnerships effective and identify the tools or resources needed to strengthen and sustain them. <u>Guiding Questions:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What partnerships do you already have that do (or could) support hazard mitigation planning? Which of these partnerships have been the most effective and why? What factors have contributed to their success? What partnerships are missing or underdeveloped? Who else should be at the table? Are there local or regional agencies or organizations that you would like to partner with in your work but haven't yet? What challenges or barriers have you faced in forming or sustaining partnerships? What tools or resources are needed to foster those partnerships? How could hazard mitigation planning serve as a platform to strengthen or initiate collaboration?
4:30pm-5:00pm	Closing Remarks & Next Steps
6:00pm-7:30 pm	<p><i>Optional</i> Happy Hour at Garf's Sports Lounge (3046 Bristol St, Costa Mesa, CA 92626)</p> <p>Please feel free to join us for a buy-your-own happy hour following the conclusion of the workshop. Garf's Sports Lounge is just a 2-minute walk from the Hilton Orange County.</p>