Speaker Biographies

Nick Shufro
Assistant Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
US Department of Homeland Security

Nick Shufro serves as the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistant Administrator for the Risk Management Directorate within the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA). Mr. Shufro directs and manages the Risk Management Directorate's responsibilities in support of the Agency's mission, including strategic planning, policy development, budget execution, program management and reports to Congress. The Risk Management Directorate leverages partnerships across the public and private sector to compel the public to motivate and empower communities to own their evolving risk.

Through Mr. Shufro's leadership, the Directorate does this by managing a suite of programs that analyze and assess hazards, manage risks, and engage with partners to communicate risk. The Directorate's program portfolio includes the Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning Program, the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program, the National Dam Safety Program, and National Mitigation Planning. These programs must not stand alone; rather their integrated delivery best enables FIMA to realize its value to society by creating safer communities through reducing loss of life and property; enabling individuals to recover more rapidly from floods and other disasters; and lessening the financial impact on the Treasury, States, Tribes and communities.

Mr. Shufro was appointed to the Federal Senior Executive Service in 2016. He holds a Masters of Environmental Management from Yale University, and a Masters of Business Administration, Finance and International Business from New York University's Stern School of Business with a study abroad at L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, and a Bachelor of Arts in History from The University of Michigan.

Mr. Shufro has more than 30 years of energy, financial, adaptation, resilience, environmental health and safety management, and performance reporting experience, working and consulting for industry, government, utilities, trade associations, and non-governmental agencies in the U.S., Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Recently, Mr. Shufro served as the Director of Sustainable Business Solutions for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Prior to joining PwC, Mr. Shufro was the Manager for Regulatory Affairs & Policy Planning, Environment, Health and Safety at United Technologies, and the Director for Program Development at U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership. Nick and his family live in Avon, CT.

David Vallee
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David Vallee is the Hydrologist-in-Charge of the National Weather Service's Northeast River Forecast Center. The center provides detailed water resource and life-saving flood forecasting services to National Weather Service Forecast Offices and the hundreds of federal, state and local water resource entities throughout the Northeast and New York.

David has worked for the National Weather Service for 30 years, serving in a variety of positions including Senior Service Hydrologist at the Taunton Weather Forecast Office from 1993-2000 and as Science and Operations Officer from 2001-2006. David started his career right at home as an Intern Meteorologist at the NWS office at T. F. Green Airport.

David has extensive experience leading hydrometeorological forecast and warning operations and directing weather research and training programs. David's research activities span a variety of topics including flooding, severe weather forecasting and orographically enhanced heavy rainfall in southern New England. David has served as the NWS lead investigator with the State University of New York, at Albany, on a multi-year project addressing Land Falling Tropical Cyclones in the Northeastern United States. This research has improved the forecasting of heavy precipitation associated with these land falling tropical cyclones as well as improving our understanding the mechanisms which lead to the recurvature and rapid acceleration of tropical cyclones as they approach the Northeast. David was responsible for development of a new Short Range River Forecasting System which provides hydrologic forecast guidance based on three Numerical Weather Ensemble Predictions Systems. Most recently, David has been leading an effort at the Northeast River Forecast Center to examine changes in precipitation and temperature patterns across New England and their impact on flood behavior.

David is most known locally for his outreach and education work on the behavior of New England Hurricanes, including many appearances on local radio and T.V. networks, as well as appearing on documentaries on the Weather Channel, the History Channel and the Discovery Channel. David has been the recipient of numerous regional and national awards including the prestigious National Isaac Cline Award for Leadership. David is a graduate of Lyndon State College. He is a life long resident of the Rhode Island, living in the northeast part of Cumberland, with his wife and two sets of teenage twins. He considers it a tremendous privilege to be serving the people of the very region he calls home.

James O'Donnell
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Professor of Marine Sciences, University of Connecticut
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Jim O'Donnell is a physical oceanographer. He earned a BSc. (Hons) in Applied Physics from Strathclyde University in Scotland, and a M.S. and Ph.D. in Oceanography from the University of Delaware where he worked

with Professor R. W. Garvine. After serving as Postdoctoral Research Associate with Prof. P. Linden in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University, England, he joined the faculty of the University of Connecticut in 1987. In 1999 he was promoted to the rank of Professor and served as interim Head of the Department of Marine Sciences and Director of the Marine Science and Technology Center from 2002 to 2005. He was elected to the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering in 2009 and appointed to be Executive Director of the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) in January 2014. Professor O'Donnell's research focuses on understanding the physical processes that determine the circulation and transport of materials in the coastal ocean. With students and research associates, he is currently involved in both the construction and testing of models and the development of technology to make observations. He is also interested in fundamental geophysical and environmental fluid dynamics and the application of mathematical and statistical methods to the development of models of biogeochemical processes.

In the last decade Prof. O'Donnell has been involved in the development of a permanent ocean observing system in Long Island Sound and the adjacent shelf. This multi-use infrastructure informs environmental managers and, the general public, as well as providing new scientific insights. The availability of this type of data has provoked new applications and Prof. O'Donnell has collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard to develop an improved drift prediction system for the search and rescue applications. He has served as a Director of both the Northeast Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems and the Middle Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association. He has been appointed as one of Connecticut's representatives to the Bi-State Commission on Long Island Sound and a Governor's appointee to the Council on Environmental Quality.

As Executive Director of CIRCA, he is responsible for bringing together the world class research and outreach capabilities of the University of Connecticut and the extensive practical experience of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to create and disseminate practical and sustainable strategies to enhance the resilience of the built environment while protecting natural ecosystems in Connecticut and the northeast.

Rebecca Pfeiffer, CFM
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Rebecca Pfeiffer is the Floodplain Regulatory Team Lead with the Vermont Rivers Program, and has worked in the Program for over 11 years. She is also the Co-Chair of the ASFPM Natural & Beneficial Functions Committee. Over the years, she has worked in Vermont the River Corridor & Floodplain Protection Program. Work with the program includes a variety of experiences, such as providing technical assistance to local communities and general public for development in flood hazard areas, local planning & regulatory review, providing review and comments for Vermont's Act 250 land use permit, the preparation & implementation of educational outreach to a variety of audiences for No Adverse Impact (NAI) floodplain and river corridor policies and issues, as well as leading the VT Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor permitting team. Rebecca holds a B.S. in Natural Resource Management from Rutgers University, and has completed M.S. coursework in Natural Resources at the University of Vermont.