



### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources

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#### ***Now Playing Only in Select River Basins: Multi-Hazards Tournaments***

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. About 40 people involved in water management, fish and game, agricultural extension, climate services and more came together on Sept. 17 in Floresville, Texas, to pioneer a multi-hazard tournament. The first of its kind, it was organized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Institute for Water Resources, hosted by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), with additional organizational and technical support from the National Drought Mitigation Center and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Unlike a traditional tabletop exercise, which walks agency representatives through a disaster scenario, the multi-hazard tournament asked participants to step out of their real-life roles, and to collaborate in teams of 5-6 players, competing against other teams to find the best ways to reduce the effects of drought, flood and water-quality hazards. The idea is that tapping into players' competitive energies will spur more creative, innovative solutions, or at least prod people out of their comfort zones and into a new understanding of challenges and constraints.

Learning and exchanging ideas were high on the list of accomplishments for the day. As one participant said,

*"I learned of many different possible adaptation measures after today's exercise. I do not have the authority to make changes to policy. However, in documenting best practices and in other documentation that I prepare in the execution of my duties, I would make every effort to incorporate what I learned today; for example, by expanding the descriptions of available options and the consideration of impacts."*

Participants left with a greater understanding of different stakeholders' water management interests in the region; the drought, flood, and water quality issues facing the watershed; and possible solutions that could be implemented to reduce the risk from hazards in the watershed.

Interdisciplinary teams such as the HardCorps Watershed Planners and Looming Drought selected management options to address scenarios presented in each round. A computer-based tool helped evaluate their choices' impact on protection of property, total nitrogen, aquifer recharge and recreation, among others. At the end of each round, each team produced a press release describing what they did.

Referees judged teams based on how well they reduced ecological, sociological and economic risks; justification for meeting basin and stakeholder interests; and staying within the allocated budget.

A second Corps-sponsored multi-hazard tournament is being planned for Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in early 2016.

#### **Learn More**

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