AAG Hazards Specialty Group  
Annual Business Meeting Minutes  
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.  
April 15, 2010

1. The meeting was called to order by Deborah Thomas, specialty group chair, at 8:00 PM. Thirteen members were present, as unfortunately, the meeting time conflicted with the AAG International Reception.

2. Thomas distributed the meeting agenda. Burrell Montz moved (Johanna Ostling seconded) approval of the agenda. Passed unanimously.

3. John Cross, specialty group secretary-treasurer, distributed minutes of the 2009 specialty group business meeting. Ken Mitchell moved (Ostling seconded) that the minutes be approved. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Thomas gave the chair’s report. She reported that the specialty group has 377 members, an increase of over thirty from a year ago. The specialty group sponsored 14 paper sessions during the Washington meeting, and 61 sessions included the keyword “hazard.”

5. Thomas reported upon the meeting of specialty group chairs:
   (1) A new website is being developed for the AAG (which was also reported last year);
   (2) Many specialty groups are waiving their fees for AAG members from developing countries;
   (3) The AAG meeting in Washington, DC, with 8200 registrants, 5677 abstracts, and 70-75 concurrent sessions, is the largest in AAG history. The AAG continues to highlight one session from each specialty group, with the highlighted session from our group being the Gilbert E. White Award Symposium; and
   (4) Communications through the AAG continues to be an issue and many specialty group members do not receive e-mails sent through the AAG server. Possibilities to resolve the communication problems were discussed. There was a consensus that a new e-mail list independent of the AAG website might be the best option and that Deborah Thomas would discuss this with Jerry Mitchell

6. Thomas reported that no students submitted abstracts for the Jeanne Kasperson Student Paper Competition this year, even though she sent out three requests for submissions. Therefore no session was scheduled. Possible strategies for getting the message out regarding the competition for the 2011 meeting were discussed.

7. Three theses were submitted for consideration for the Gilbert F. White Award in 2010. Each of the theses was read by three reviewers. Monica Zappa was selected as the winner of the 2010 award for her Master’s thesis, “Assessing Human Vulnerability to Hurricanes: A Case Study of Bluefields, Nicaragua,” prepared at Northern Illinois University. Because she was unable to attend the AAG meeting, but will be attending the “IAI-NCAR Colloquium Knowledge Innovation at the Science-Policy Interface” in Costa Rica the following week, which will also be attended by Thomas, she will receive the award check of $500 at that meeting. In addition, an autographed copy of Gilbert White’s *Geography, Resources, and Environment* and the award plaque will be mailed to Zappa. Furthermore, Cross will send a letter to the director of the
University of Colorado Natural Hazards Center requesting that she be invited to attend this year’s Hazards Workshop.

8. Cross distributed the Treasurer’s Report, which was reviewed. The specialty group had $3,595.65 as of April 12, 2010. Income from dues and interest totaled $1,045.33, while expenses of $572.08 were incurred to pay the Gilbert F. White Award check and an award plaque. Expenses were abnormally low during the past year because no registration fees were paid to Jeanne Kasperson Student Paper presenters this year, saving the specialty group approximately $700. Cross reported that expenses for this year’s White Award plaque were still to be paid. Ostling moved (Montz seconded) approval of the Treasurer’s Report. Passed unanimously.

9. Thomas reported that John Cross had been re-nominated for specialty group secretary-treasurer. With no additional nominations forthcoming, Graham Tobin moved (Montz seconded) that nominations close and that a unanimous ballot be cast electing Cross as specialty group secretary-treasurer. Motion and election of Cross passed unanimously.

10. Two individuals were nominated for the faculty director position being vacated by Heather Bell. These individuals were Jamie Mitchem and Erin Hughey. Hughey was elected as director.

11. Jim Jeffers of Rutgers University was nominated for the two-year student director position, previously occupied by Johanna Ostling. With no other nominations, Montz moved (Ostling seconded) that nominations close. Montz moved (Tobin seconded) that a unanimous ballot be cast for Jeffers. Passed unanimously.

12. Plans for the 2011 Annual Meeting in Seattle were briefly discussed. Ostling urged that a field trip be organized to view the Mt. Rainier lahar hazard area, and Nathan Wood of the U.S.G.S. was suggested as a leader. Cross urged that the field trip occur on a day that the AAG is asked to schedule no hazards sessions that would conflict with the field trip. Ken Mitchell suggested that several paper sessions be scheduled that would review the “hazards of the year.” This might involve the scheduling of a panel rather than formal papers, giving greater flexibility to respond to recent events. Montz mentioned that the American Meteorological Society uses this format in their meetings to review “hazards of the year.” She volunteered to organize the “hazards of the year” session(s) for the Seattle Meeting. Matt Schmidtlein will organize the orphan paper sessions for the hazards specialty group for the 2011 meeting. Cross urged that sessions organized by the specialty group be scheduled in a consecutive fashion in the program, permitting them to be scheduled in the same room.

13. Jerry Mitchell continues as specialty group webmaster, with the website now hosted by the University of South Carolina. Thomas will discuss possibilities for enhancing the usage of the website with him.

14. The Gilbert F. White Award was discussed, and a proposal was made to separate the consideration of submissions into two categories: master’s theses and doctoral dissertations, rather than have the two groups compete for the same award. The fact that the award was split between a master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation in 2009 was mentioned, along with the fact that this year the award is being given only to a master’s thesis. It was moved by Ostling (Hughey seconded) that starting in 2011 that the award be separated into two categories (master’s and Ph.D.). Two awards will be given, assuming that an appropriately praiseworthy submission is received in each category, with each recipient receiving $250, an award plaque, and an autographed copy of Gilbert White’s
Geography, Resources, and Environment (until copies are exhausted—seven still remain). Passed unanimously.

15. Thomas discussed the current White Award review process, and she mentioned that the review sheet is posted on the website. It was proposed that the reviewers discuss the submissions in a conference call following their reading of the submissions. Thomas noted that the White Memorial website includes information about Gilbert White which might speak to the review process. Ken Mitchell and Burrell Montz were asked to look at the review sheet and rephrase some of the questions in the spirit of White and his legacy.

16. The need to get faculty members to promote the Jeanne Kasperror Student Paper Competition among their students was emphasized. The possibility of soliciting student names from members so that the students could be contacted to urge paper submissions was also mentioned.

17. It was the consensus of those present that the specialty group newsletter be kept dormant.

18. Ken Mitchell mentioned concerns about the validity of the number of casualties from the Haitian earthquake and suggested that the topic be explored in a session at the Seattle meeting.

19. Montz mentioned that the Applied Geography Conference is scheduled for Ft. Worth, Texas in mid-October. The meeting often attracts many hazards presentations.

20. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.