

Lynn Walkiewicz, Ph.D.

Intern, The Red Cross, Tulane University

NON-COMPETITIVE DIVISION

Aroostook County and Greater Wenatchee's Social Resilience Indicators: Micro- and Mid-Level Social Resilience Indicators in Rural Communities

Aroostook County, Maine, and Chelan County, Washington both have very similar economic landscapes but vary in geography and social composition. The purpose of this paper is to compare two communities that have similar economies but experience different hazards on a yearly basis. This paper will use the Capabilities and Vulnerabilities Assessment Framework (CVA), FEMA's RAPT tool, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Models Framework to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and possible deviants that influence social resilience in each community.

We compared the counties using several of the resilience indicators used by FEMA's RAPT tool. The indicators we looked at concerned civic and social involvement, religion, access to medical care, transportation, and access to housing of any type. While the counties are statistically similar, Aroostook County covers more than twice the square mileage of Chelan County. The additional size of Aroostook County indicates that more resources need to be directed at far-flung communities to increase resilience.

These counties are not among the most disaster-prone areas nor the least resilient counties nationwide. While some “quick-fix” areas for improvement were easily identified, this paper argues that rural districts need more robust systems of emergency preparedness planning due to the logistics of the areas and the geographic disbursement of individuals. Furthermore, new resilience indicators focused on sub-macro level social systems need to be developed to gain a better understanding of rural community strengths and weaknesses within the disaster cycle. Moving forward, the researchers will be developing potential sub-macro level resilience indicators using relevant sociological ecosystem theories.

Presentation Theme: This paper argues that rural districts need more robust systems of emergency preparedness planning due to the logistics of the areas and the geographic disbursement of individuals. Furthermore, new resilience indicators focused on sub-macro level social systems need to be developed to gain a better understanding of rural community strengths and weaknesses within the disaster cycle.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: Max Palmer, Graduate Student