

## Natural Hazards Focus Group Newsletter (October, 2009)

---

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is with great pleasure that we are distributing the first newsletter on the initial steps of the AGU Focus Group on Natural Hazards. It has been four month since our group has been formed, and, thanks to your efforts and support, we have taken a good start. We would like to thank you all for your involvement and hard work and look forward to our future collaborations!

Sincerely,

Alik Ismail-Zadeh  
Group Chair

Ilya Zaliapin  
Group Secretary

### Contents:

1. Natural Hazards at 2009 Fall AGU meeting in San Francisco
2. New FG Awardee: Dr. Meththika Vithanage
3. Group reception at the Fall AGU meeting
4. Group web-page
5. Business meeting at the 2009 Joint AGU meeting in Toronto
6. News about natural hazard research and programs
7. Our sponsors

## AGU NATURAL HAZARDS FOCUS GROUP NEWS

No. 1 (October 2009)

### 1. Natural Hazards at 2009 Fall AGU meeting in San Francisco

The 2009 Fall AGU meeting will feature, for the very first time, a range of special sessions on Natural Hazards. The NH Program Committee has approved 413 oral and poster presentations and allocated 17 oral sessions, which will cover various aspects of Natural Hazards, including hazard assessment techniques and mitigation strategies, data collection approaches, PR, interaction with government, policy and decision makers, as well as numerous case studies.

### 2. First FG Awardee: Dr. Meththika Vithanage

<http://nh.agu.org/awards/>

In May 2009, the group has established an annual Award for Graduate Research, that will recognize young scientists engaged in studies of natural hazards and risks. The major criterion in the evaluation of candidates is the impact (or potential impact) of the research on the field of natural hazards.

The Graduate Award Committee:

- Prof. Michael Ghil (Chair), ENS, Paris, FRANCE and UCLA;
- Prof. Efi Foufoula-Georgiou, U of Minnesota; and
- Prof. Friedemann Wentzel, Geophysical Institute, Karlsruhe U.

The first recipient of the Award is Dr. Meththika Vithanage, Group Leader from the Institute of Fundamental Studies, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Dr. Vithanage got her PhD on "Effect of Tsunami on Coastal Aquifers: Field Studies and Tank Experiments" under the supervision of Professors Karsten Jensen and Peter Engesgaard in the Department of Geology and Geography at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark in February 2009. She has been nominated by Dr. Jayantha Obeysekera from South Florida Water Management District.

**Our sincere congratulations to Meththika with this distinction and very best wishes for her future career! Please join us to congratulate Meththika Vithanage at the group reception on 15 December 2009 in San Francisco (see below).**

### 3. Group reception at the Fall AGU meeting

<http://nh.agu.org/events/conferences/>

The Natural Hazards reception will take place on 15 December, 2009, in the Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA. This will be a good chance for all of us to meet and establish personal bonds for future achievements.

Please join us for:

- + 2009 Graduate Research Award presentation to Dr. Meththika Vithanage;
- + invited talk by Dr. Anselm Smolka, GeoRisk Department at Munich RE;
- + social interaction, wine, snacks, etc.

### 4. Group web-page and e-mail

<http://nh.agu.org/>

The group Web-page has been recently launched at: <http://nh.agu.org/> Please bookmark this site and feel free to submit any NH-related info (projects, events, links, photos, etc.) that you would like to see

posted on the site. We hope to make it a useful informational NH-related resource and welcome your suggestions on the site improvement.

The group e-mail is: [nathazards@gmail.com](mailto:nathazards@gmail.com) ; you also can use the "Contact" page on the site.

## 5. Business meeting at the 2009 Joint AGU meeting in Toronto

<http://nh.agu.org/events/meetings>

The group's first business meeting took place in Toronto on May 25, 2009. The meeting has been attended by the AGU President Tim Grove and AGU Interim Executive Director Robert Van Hook. The attendees discussed the group scope, representation in 2009 and 2010 AGU meetings, launching the Graduate Research Award, as well as other organizational issues.

See minutes at: [http://nh.agu.org/events/meetings/Minutes\\_May25\\_09.pdf](http://nh.agu.org/events/meetings/Minutes_May25_09.pdf)

## 6. News about natural hazard research and programs

### 6.1 International Council for Science (ICSU)

In response to the urgent need to reduce the impacts of natural disasters, ICSU launched in November 2008 a new, 10-year, international research program "Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR)" designed to address the gaps in the knowledge and methods that are preventing the effective application of science to averting disasters and reducing risk.

[http://www.icsu.org/1\\_icsuinscience/ENVI\\_Hazards\\_1.html](http://www.icsu.org/1_icsuinscience/ENVI_Hazards_1.html)

### 6.2 International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG)

IUGG Commission on Geophysical Risk and Sustainability runs the project "Webcyclopedia of Natural Hazards, Risks and Sustainability". The entries to the Webcyclopedia are determined by the scientific skill base, as determined by the IUGG associations – hydrological, meteorological, marine, tsunamis, volcanoes, seismic, geodetic (landslides), geomagnetic. In addition, the risks are determined by the sustainability issues such as infrastructure (building vulnerability, robustness of infrastructure) and health issues (air quality, water quality, contaminated land).

<http://www.iugg-georisk.org/webcyclopedia/index.html>

### 6.3 European Geosciences Union (EGU)

In the 2009 EGU General Assembly there were 1,680 talks and posters on Natural Hazards presented in 61 scientific sessions, with sessions ranging over the following: • extreme weather, • lightning, • floods, • droughts, • glacial lake outbursts, • earthquakes, • volcanoes, • tsunamis, • wildfires, • karst, • heavy-metals, • radon, • space weather. Participants included not only physical scientists, but also social scientists and industry (e.g. the reinsurance industry).

<http://nh.agu.org/resources/EGU/>

## 7. Our sponsors

We are glad to thank the group sponsors:

- The GeoRisk Department at Munich RE, and
- Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the U of Nevada, Reno.

<http://nh.agu.org/sponsors/>

Note: Contributions to AGU Natural Hazards Focus Group Newsletters are welcome from AGU members. Please send your contributions to Ilya Zaliapin by e-mail [nathazards@gmail.com](mailto:nathazards@gmail.com) or via the "Contact" page at the group Website (<http://nh.agu.org/contact/> ) inserting the Subject line: "Contribution to AGU NHFG Newsletters". The contributions will be reviewed and may be shortened.