Relocation outcomes for participants in US voluntary buyout programs: a nationwide analysis

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Abstract:

Managed retreat is the strategic removal of people and assets from high-risk areas. This adaptation option will be increasingly important as the climate continues to change. Over the last 30 years, more than 40,000 households have participated in voluntary property buyouts funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Little is known about where households relocate to after participation in the buyout program. This implies that outcomes of the buyout program for participating homeowners are unclear. This is the first time a comprehensive search has been undertaken to trace participating households to their next home using property deed transaction data. Deed information was found for 9500 buyout addresses. For more than 4000 of these a next property purchase was identified. Mirroring demographic trends, most households relocated <10 miles. However, these results are limited by the fact that this sample of buyout households excludes the most vulnerable participants, such as renters or mobile home residents. Finding where buyout participants relocate to helps build an understanding of the outcomes of the voluntary property buyout program for its participating households. Future managed retreat policies can glean from historical experiences of property buyouts how to ensure effectiveness and equity of buyout implementation and outcomes.

About Carolien:

Carolien Kraan is a second year PhD student at UM's Abess Center for Ecosystem Science and Policy. Her dissertation focuses on integrated water management in a changing climate. Her research evaluates the impacts of climate change adaptation policy in both quantitative and qualitative ways, with a focus on social justice and equity

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Department of Marine Ecosystem Science and Society Student Seminar Series
November 20, 2020 | 10:30 AM