

# NRDC Buyout Program 2023

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## SPEAKERS

Mary-Carson Stiff, Shameika, Doug Parsons, Tim Trautman, Kristin Marcell, Trameka Carriere-Rankins, Anna Weber, Shameika Hanson

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### Doug Parsons 00:00

Hey everyone this is America adapts the climate change podcast Hey adapters welcome back to a very exciting episode we're digging deep into flooding buyout programs. I partnered with the Natural Resources Defense Council and we delved into the vital role of buyouts in tackling flood damage from climate change. We'll kick it off with Anna Weber from NRDC to give us some background and why they want agencies like FEMA to learn and benefit from their buyout program experiences. Also joining the pod our reps from clean immigration network and The Nature Conservancy who give us background on some of the workshops that focused on how to improve the bio process. Also a resident from Lake Charles Louisiana shares her personal bio journey and the challenges she confronted and also offering firsthand guidance for others who might have to do a buyout. It was a hair pulling experience for her literally, we'll also hear from the group wetlands watch. She'll share Norfolk, Virginia sea level rise struggles and their efforts at innovative buyout funding. Finally, a flood mitigation manager near Charlotte, North Carolina will explain their long history and success with the buyout program. This episode has some fantastic resources for buyouts, which will increasingly play a critical role as we adapt to climate change. Okay, let's kick things off with Anna Weber from the Natural Resources Defense Council. Hey, adapters Joining me is Anna Weber and as a senior policy analyst on NRDC, climate adaptation team. Hi, Anna, welcome to the podcast.

### Anna Weber 01:33

Hi, thanks so much for having me.

### Doug Parsons 01:35

All right. We've been working on this episode together for a while but now bringing you on, we're gonna give some background as we head into talking about some of these guests that I've interviewed that you've recruited. But let's start off with what do you do there at NRDC?

A

Anna Weber 01:48

So my role on our climate adaptation team is, like you said, I'm a policy analyst, that doesn't really mean that much to most people. But basically, what I do is I think about ways that we can change policy for a better outcome. And specifically, in my case, I think a lot about the effects of flooding from climate change, for example, sea level rise or extreme rainfall and how we can make federal policies create better outcomes for people who are affected by flooding, and then prevent the effects of flooding in any way that we can.

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Doug Parsons 02:18

I just, I'm making the assumption here. But can you just give a really brief description of NRDC for folks who aren't even familiar with the organization?

A

Anna Weber 02:25

Yeah, so NRDC is an international environmental organization. And so we do a lot of different kinds of advocacy for all sorts of different kinds of environmental and climate issues, everything from wildlife conservation, to trying to shift the world's economy away from fossil fuels, and then my area, which is climate adaptation.

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Doug Parsons 02:45

So we're here to talk about buyouts. Let's give people a little bit of background that we're going to talk a little bit about some of the workshops and the specific work you're doing. But let's just generally can you give us the lay of the land? What is a buyout? And why are these things important?

A

Anna Weber 02:57

So a buyout is a tool that we can use to reduce the harms of flooding, essentially, in a situation where you're living in a repeatedly flooded neighborhood, someplace where maybe the road floods every time that it rains, and your home has been subjected to flooding over and over and over again, one of your options should be to be able to leave and move someplace else move someplace safer, if that's what you want to do. And buyouts are a tool that let us do that. Basically, the way that it works on paper is pretty simple. Usually, there's government funding of some kind, often from a federal grant that grant money allows usually a local government to buy somebody out to purchase or repeatedly flooded home so that the residents of that home can take the money and they can find an alternative place to live someplace, hopefully, that's a lot safer from the effects of flooding, then the home is demolished, the land reverts to public, Lee owned space, there's typically some sort of requirement that says nothing can be built on that land anymore. It has to stay as a form of publicly owned open space, whether that's to be used for some sort of stormwater management, maybe some kind of green infrastructure or a

park or some other kind of public benefit. The idea is that you've removed the risk to people who are living on that piece of land because nobody is living there anymore, and also that the land can provide benefit to the people who remain in the community.

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Doug Parsons 04:24

So why did NRDC decide to focus on buyouts? There's a lot of different tools out there when you're talking about flooding. There's, you know, the toolkit, but you guys have invested a lot of intellectual energy into the buyout issue. What Why was it attractive to you as something to work on?

A

Anna Weber 04:37

Yeah, well, that process I just described, that's how buyouts work on paper. And in reality, they're way more complicated than that. They often take years, if not decades, from the date of a disaster to the time when a homeowner is actually able to close on their property and move away. They often lead to inequitable outcomes because our risks of flooding are not destroyed. repeated equally across our communities and the values of people's homes are often declining in areas that are facing repeated flooding. And that means that the amount of money that's available to buy somebody out might not be the enough money for them to actually move to someplace safer. And so in a way, they kind of encapsulate a lot of the questions that we're facing with climate adaptation more broadly. And so NRDC is interested in thinking about how can we make buyouts better? We're not saying everybody should be considering a buyout. And if you ask me, I think the best buyout is one that never has to happen. But in cases where communities are thinking about buyouts, and people are thinking about relocation, how can we set these projects up for success in a way that they actually benefit, both the people who are participating and the broader communities where they live?

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Doug Parsons 05:48

I know part of the work that you're doing here is just not doing it just as a mental exercise. But FEMA, this relates to a lot of what FEMA is doing. And so this process, these workshops that you're doing, and just this education that you're trying to do you want FEMA to be aware of these things, right?

A

Anna Weber 06:03

Yeah, absolutely. That's a primary goal of our work here. So a lot of people have been researching buyouts over the past few years, this has become a really exciting area of research. But a lot of the time, people will do a study, and they'll point out all of the problems with existing buyout programs. And there's a lot of them, there are so many challenges in this area. But there's not that many discussions that are happening right now about concrete solutions. And so our idea was to pick up where other research has left off and say, Okay, there's a lot of ideas floating around out here about how we could make buyouts better. But what would it actually mean to do that and put it into practice? And so we wanted to get recommendations and perspectives from people who interact with buyouts in different ways,

whether it's professionally through their jobs, or whether it's as a resident of a repeatedly flooded neighborhood who might have gone through a buyout themselves. What would it take to make these changes that people are talking about in order to put buyouts sort of in a better position to benefit communities?

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Doug Parsons 07:07

FEMA could obviously learn from this process, but one of your approaches to this was like finding partners, right? It's just not NRDC. I mean, you you're working with a lot of groups to make this happen, right?

A

Anna Weber 07:17

Yeah, absolutely. So specifically, what we did is over the course of about a year, we hosted two sets of workshops, one with people who have learned experience or professional experience with buyout programs, those might be folks from local, state, federal governments, or conservation organizations, people who interact with buyouts in their professional capacity. We also worked with a set of people who have interacted with buyouts in their personal capacity, people with learned experience who have personally gone through this buyout process as a member of their neighborhoods. And so to do that, we didn't obviously want to just go in alone. And so we partnered with a really great team, including the climb migration network, The Nature Conservancy, a fabulous professional facilitator that we've worked with in the past named Carrie Hewlett, and we really worked sort of across our networks to recruit really, geographically broad and diverse set of participants in both of our workshops.

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Doug Parsons 08:18

So we're gonna wrap this up here, I'm gonna get you back on at the end of the episode, and we're gonna dig it a little bit further, but we're gonna hear a lot more about the workshops from some of the guests that were created for this episode. So can you give us a primer on who I'll be talking to?

A

Anna Weber 08:30

Yeah. So we wanted to make sure that you heard from a range of perspectives from the folks who've participated in our workshops. So you're going to be hearing from two participants in our practitioners workshop. Tim Troutman from Charlotte Mecklenburg County, North Carolina and Mary Carson stiff, who's from wetlands watch based in southeastern Virginia. You're also going to be hearing from Tamika Rankin's who is a resident of Lake Charles, Louisiana and was a participant in our bio participants workshops because she's actually gone through a buyout herself. And you're also going to be hearing from a couple members of our project team Kristin Marcel from the climb migration network in Jamaica Hanson from the Nature Conservancy.

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Doug Parsons 09:08

All right, fantastic. Okay, and I'm gonna let you go. But you're going to come back at the end of

All right, fantastic. Okay, and I'm gonna let you go. But you're going to come back at the end of the episode, and we're going to just wrap things up. I'll talk to you soon. Sounds good. Thanks. Hey, adapters joining me is Kristen Marcell and Shameika Hanson. Shameika is a community protection specialist at The Nature Conservancy, based in New York State. Kristen is the director of the CLI migration Network. Hi, Chris, then Shameika welcome to the podcast.

**K** Kristin Marcell 09:34  
How you doing?

**D** Doug Parsons 09:35  
Well, I've got a couple of you on and this is gonna be fun. But let's first start off with you Shameika tell me what you do there at The Nature Conservancy?

**S** Shameika Hanson 09:42  
Yeah, so for those who aren't familiar with The Nature Conservancy, we are the largest land conservation organization in the world are found in 70 plus countries and our mission is to protect the lands and waters of which all life on Earth depends. And here in New York, I work on our Climate Adaptation team where we're helping communities tackle and adapt to various climate change issues here in our state that mainly focuses on flooding both in riverine and coastal areas.

**D** Doug Parsons 10:14  
Great. And Kristin, tell us about the network. What do you do there?

**K** Kristin Marcell 10:17  
Yes. So I'm the director of the climate Migration network. We are 100 Plus members from all over the United States. And some and even in Canada, we bring both lived and learned expertise to this work. And our goal is to create community led approaches to relocation we have lived experts from community based organizations and from tribes across the United States and people who are trained in policy law Planning, Research communications, who are interested in serving communities that are having to face this difficult choice of considering relocation from places that they love.

**D** Doug Parsons 10:52  
Krishna, I'm gonna stick with you. We're here to talk about these buyouts and you guys were involved with some workshops. And I got some questions related to that for both of you. But can you just ground us what were these works? Either there was more than one, right? What were they all about? What were you hoping to accomplish with those.

K

Kristin Marcell 11:06

So these workshops, were an opportunity to hear from both bio program managers and program designers and the people who in the government are implementing these programs, as well as residents who have gone through buyout programs in communities around the country. And one of the things that's really unique about this project is far as we know, it's the first time that anyone has ever spoken to residents as a group about their experience going through the bio process. And it was a great opportunity to find out whether the experiences of residents and how they would change the bio program aligns with the experiences of program managers, and what they would do to change the program. So it was a great opportunity to see whether those recommendations might be in the same frame and the kinds of things that we could move forward with, because there's a lot of support for them. That's really

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Doug Parsons 12:02

interesting to having those two different perspectives. So Shamika, not that you can remember names, or maybe you can but tell us a bit about the resident people that participated, like where were they coming from? I mean, it was a pretty diverse group.

S

Shameika Hanson 12:13

Yes. So the residents that we spoke with, were coming from all across the country, I spoke to people in states from New York, New Jersey, Washington, Louisiana, Texas, we tried to get a nice makeup of various participants from across the country that had been in a different variety of programs. So both voluntary and some are involuntary.

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Doug Parsons 12:36

And I would imagine with this workshop, people were impacted by flooding, and then there's this larger issue of climate change in Jamaica, I'm just gonna stay with you here. Is that was that really brought up much in the workshop? Or was that just not a concern that you guys focused on? Or I mean, just how did that play out?

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Shameika Hanson 12:53

The focus of the workshop really was around their experience. Most people that we spoke to, if not all that we spoke to in this workshop, had experienced a buyout due to flooding or receiving being in an area that receives flooding fairly frequently. And so many of the people that we were speaking to, or sort of coming with that issue that they had experienced in the past, in regard to the conversation specific to climate change, I think many of the folks that we were speaking to in these workshops, had an understanding that these issues are pervasive and are something that they're probably going to be seeing further out into the future. And so while that wasn't the sort of main driver of the conversation, it definitely came up as one of the concerning issues, particularly as we think about communities going into the future.

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**Doug Parsons 13:41**

All right, Kristin. So I know that there were specific outputs, and we'll get to those. But I'm curious more about being there at the workshop. What were some of the challenges that these residents brought up with you guys? Because I'm sure it was kind of freeform at first before you start directing them into like, Okay, we need these specific things from you.

K

**Kristin Marcell 13:56**

Yeah, well, the most important challenge was building trust and relationship with the residents who agreed to participate in this project. This is not an easy ask. There is a remarkable spirit of generosity among people who've experienced flooding, who have gone through buyouts and interest in supporting other people who might have to go through this themselves. But it's still not an easy conversation. And even though we really prepared to have trauma informed conversations, it was still a very, these are very, very difficult conversations, and we couldn't eliminate all of the trauma that they might experience and telling their stories. And trauma can sneak up on you. You might be feeling okay, you might be beginning to share your story, but then you're completely overwhelmed with emotions you don't expect so it was amazing that this group was so brave and resilient to be a part of this project. But it was a challenge to do it safely and I think a challenge for everyone to be experiencing this pain, so directly with one another.

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**Doug Parsons 15:06**

Okay, so Shamika, you shared some notes with me. And I thought this was really interesting. And Kristen was just getting at this too, with the trauma and such. But there's this emotional experience for people. How did that manifest itself within the actual workshop? So Kristen mentioned the trauma. But were people just sharing their fears with during the flooding events? Or was it more about the buyouts? I've spoken to someone about buyouts? And they talked about pulling out their hair just going through that process? And so there seems like there's two sources of trauma for people who have to go through this.

S

**Shameika Hanson 15:32**

Yeah, you know, during our workshops, we really wanted to create a space of connection and trust among the participants. And so one of the very first things we did was ask everyone to share their own individual personal story and experience, however they so chose, and one of the things we offered was for the participants to share photos and images from those experiences, whichever ones they wanted to. And I think for many people having to relook at those pictures was sort of this visceral reminder of what they had gone through the places that they left, what they left behind, potentially, who they potentially left behind. I think it's something that many people hadn't thought about, once they were removed from that situation. And so seeing those pictures again, you know, I think it sparked something within folks, that was just a reminder of some tough things that they went through. And as Kristen mentioned, a lot of times, you don't realize you're going to sort of have that reaction, or go through that in the moment. And so it was just reactions to the stories that were being shared,

you know, the the variety of experiences that people had, and that were so different. That was unexpected. And I think people were really just leaning into empathizing for the other participants in the group and the stories that they were sharing with one another.

**D** Doug Parsons 17:00

Kristin, you had mentioned program managers and the actual residents who are going through this process. And I guess it wasn't quite clear. So were they both there at the workshop together?

**K** Kristin Marcell 17:08

They were not no, we made an intentional choice to have the buyout program managers meet separately from the residents. We know that there's probably a lot of tension between people who are administering the programs and the people that are going through them, because there's a lot that's flawed about these programs. And so we wanted to create community, and safe dialogue for program managers and residents in separate venues to start, it would be wonderful if we were able to bring these groups together now that they've had a chance to build some community with folks who are like themselves, but it was very intentional that we kept those conversations separate.

**D** Doug Parsons 17:49

Yeah, that makes sense to me. And could you just give me a little sampling of the program managers, who were they there were these like, local government type people like I'm trying to visualize who they are,

**K** Kristin Marcell 17:58

I'll start and then she make a can fill in because I wasn't in those conversations. But there were a variety of different people from federal, state and local government levels who are participating from all across the country. Some of the programs that we hear often, our leaders in this work like Charlotte Mecklenburg, and the New Jersey to EP blue anchors programs were in there, and they weren't great. They were just really very, very valuable resources for thinking about where these programs can go in the future,

**D** Doug Parsons 18:29

should make us so this is probably just obvious, but I think it's important because you both, I think covered this a little bit here. But why is it so important to incorporate both lived and learned experiences into these buyout programs?

**S** Shameika Hanson 18:41



One of the things that, you know, we mentioned before, again, is that this is really an emotional experience. And what we've learned is that the people on the ground who have actually gone through these programs, they see them in implementation, and so they see them for all the good that they offer, as well as some of the flaws that they have. And so going back and speaking with people who have gone through this program, really allows us to understand what are some of the pain points and difficulties that we could be looking to improve as a part of the program experience for those who have to go through it in the future? If this is something if buyouts are a tool that communities, municipalities, you know, people want you to use in order to adapt to climate change. It needs to be something that leaves people holding the end needs to be something that people want to use. And if the stories that we hear coming out of these programs continue to be painful, right, or not necessarily have all of these supports that folks need. That's something we should know. And we really won't know that unless we're speaking to the people who are directly impacted by these programs and who have gone through it.

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Doug Parsons 19:56

Kristen, I want to talk about these, at least from one of the workshops there were these five key recommendations. And you don't even have to go through all of them, but just maybe highlight a few of them. And I'm going to just tell my listeners that I will have links that if people want to read more thoroughly some of the things that you guys did, it'll be there. But can you kind of give us some of these recommendations that they went through this workshop? And they're all putting their brains together? And what were some of those?

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Kristin Marcell 20:17

I think the number one recommendation that really resonates with me, and I've heard now several times speaking with federal and state officials is that we have to find a way to transition from a buyout a series of buyout projects, to a buyout program that allows people from all parts of the country, no matter the context, they're coming from, to access funding to move to a safer location, and have the support systems that they need to make that transition, whether that be case managers, trusted sources of information, peer support systems, it has to be a holistic program that is voluntary, and allows people to make the choice when they're ready to go, instead of Oh, you're gonna have a year or even less to decide this huge, enormous life decision, right, you're gonna leave a home that you might have been living in for decades, or that your family might have been in for generations, you can't expect that people are suddenly going to be ready to make that decision quickly. And especially having it happen. Typically, the funding comes in after crisis. And so we need to be thinking about a more holistic program that allows a lot of people from a lot of different areas, that country to access resources and move to safer locations.

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Doug Parsons 21:41

In Jamaica, I remember reading one talked about it. And so it was interesting about the program managers versus the Presidents themselves. And sometimes there was friction or maybe frustration with that. But actually, one of the recommendations said, Those that were

probably most successful and happiest with the process, they were with a good program manager that really held their hand through the process. And that was really important to them. I saw that as one of the recommendations, right?

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Shameika Hanson 22:02

Yes. And you had actually sort of leaned into this earlier, people want someone who is going to be these are the recommendations, someone who's going to be reliable, trustworthy and knowledgeable. You know, you mentioned earlier, a lot of people who are going through this program, sort of had to become experts themselves on the nuances of the program, and the paperwork and the documents and the timelines. And it would have been helpful for a lot of them in their experience to have had someone from the program who could do this for them. And there are programs that we have seen, such as the New Jersey blue acres program, where they really do walk the community members hand in hand through many parts of the process of the program. And so that was one thing that we really heard was helpful is that to have people who sort of act as a case manager in a sense, and are willing to answer questions, and are easy to talk to, to get in contact with. And most importantly, people who are aware that these people are going through a traumatic experience. And so moving with that sort of care, in their conversations, and in the way that they handle these participants is really important to the success of the program.

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Doug Parsons 23:20

I love some of the anecdotes in it. And I'm sure very frustrating. They're talking about, like people that want to be worse off financially, they break even they're happy. But like if you have to spend a week in a hotel between selling and moving to a new place that can really hurt people. But one of the most frustrating things that I heard that is just insanity is that when they leave the house, and it's demolished in some cases, and I'm sure this is not every single buyout program, sometimes you actually even had to leave appliances in the house to be destroyed. If you wanted to take your toaster out. Nope, can't do it. Because that would be giving you a creditors. I mean, is that how it gonna play out? I'm a Christian, you want to take that?

K

Kristin Marcell 23:54

Yeah, I remember that coming up in the in the conversations with residents. That was even a surprise to me. I wasn't aware that that was a limitation on people, you know, people's choice to move. And you know, if nothing else, residents were like, this is just such a waste of good equipment. And, you know, it doesn't make any sense to us. Why would we have this policy in place? So maybe there are reasons for that I don't understand. But it's definitely something that that came up as a place to look in the future.

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Doug Parsons 24:25

Shameika , as we wrap this up, what's next for you. And also, this is really important work that you've loved looking through the notes and the recommendations and such. And I know this is a long term process, but have government entities looked at what you guys done here.

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**Shameika Hanson 24:40**

So we have been working both as a project team, as well as individuals who work in organizations that are trying to move this work forward. And so as a project team, we recently presented at the Columbia managed retreat conference. And so we did talk about this project there. And then our climate added tissue team here in New York at The Nature Conservancy has just recently completed a round of presentations to the various state entities that will be managing the buyout programs or whatever form buyout may potentially take in New York, to share with them the research that we've been doing for the last few years, this project and others, as well as the recommendations that have come out of this past few years of work.

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**Doug Parsons 25:31**

Alright, Kristen, So following up on what Shameika just said, What's up with your organization? How are you guys following up? What's the future for you in this project?

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**Kristin Marcell 25:38**

Yeah, there's a couple of things. One is, as we were sharing earlier, the level of trauma that community members experienced in this process is, is really challenging. And the community based organizations and indigenous leaders in our leadership are asking us for resources for them to help their own communities, because the trauma is showing up in unexpected ways that's creating conflict and making their work in their own communities even more difficult, and we started looking for resources to share with them. And it's, it was surprising to find out that there aren't many free resources out there. So if anybody that's listening to this podcast is aware of free resources and guidance that we think might help in this realm, please, please do share with us. The other thing I'd love to share is one of the things that came out of the conversation with residents, is that they really like to have other residents that they could speak with who are going through the same process. And this is a big life decision. And when you're facing a big life decision, what do you do you find other people you can trust who have gone through something similar, and you talk to them about it, or you look for information on how it went for other people like you. And we'd love to support people who've gone through buyout programs to connect with other people who might be considering this option to get the straight dope. What is this process? Like? What should they be watching out for and even better if we can create resources for these folks to support in these conversations with residents, making sure they are the people who help connect them to other resources that they need to good information on the buyout programs? Because we're finding they need a lot of translation. They're very complicated. So if we can create those conversations, and further these conversations between people in government, people who are program managers and people who are going through this process, to really get to the nuts and bolts of what needs to change and where there's areas of agreement in that, I think that would be a huge step forward for us to

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**Doug Parsons 27:51**

Kristin Shameika . Thank you so much for coming on. There's gonna be all sorts of resources in

the show notes for this episode. And of course, I'm assuming that they can reach out to you guys if they will have more questions. There's communities out there that want to learn more about this process. But thanks again for coming on the podcast.

**K** Kristin Marcell 28:05  
You're very welcome. Thank you.

**S** Shameika 28:06  
Thank you for having us.

**D** Doug Parsons 28:10  
Hey, doctors Joining me is true mica carrier Rankin's Tamika is a resident of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Hi, Tamika. Welcome to the podcast.

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 28:17  
Hello, how are you today?

**D** Doug Parsons 28:19  
Well, it's a pleasure to have you first off, let's get a little background though. How long have you lived in Lake Charles?

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 28:25  
I have lived in Lake Charles roughly about 28 years.

**D** Doug Parsons 28:29  
So for a while, you've probably seen a lot of changes. Okay, great. We're gonna talk about some of the flooding issues that you've dealt with but I also want to give some history there. Let's talk about the house that ultimately you sold through a buyout. But can you tell us a little bit of the history? How did you find that house? You know, what kind of the process did you go when you bought that house originally,

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 28:47  
originally when I bought the house I had just had my son who was 21 years old we live in an apartment complex and it just apartment living just wasn't working for me every other night

you had some idea of this organ fighting first thing and things such as like okay, I'm gonna buy a home so I looked all around all around first time homebuyer ran across the ad in the paper, I was desperate to move. So I bought the house guy was like we'll do on a financing. I was like, okay, great, whatever, you know, so I gave him like, maybe 10,000 miles down on home pay like \$400 a month for it was it was supposed to be longer, but I paid it off in about maybe 15 years, 10 or 15 years. So I had to live in there for 21 years, my son actually turn 21 In the summer that just passed. So roughly about 20 years I lived in the same location. And it was great. The first you know, 1516 years of living there. We had no issue right around the 17 years when a house first flooded, it was in 2017 then it flooded again. 2020 then again 2021. But for the most part, it was an older community. We didn't have any issues. We were probably the youngest family that was living on on that area and then inclusive part of the block so we never had any issues. You know, there watch my kids grow up very friendly in the neighborhood. It was actually used to be a prominent neighborhood back then it was what I found I was an army base back then that's where all the general streets came in at. So we never had any issues in that area. It was just a little community living together.

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Doug Parsons 30:20

Okay, so I want to dig into that. Oh, that's, that's fascinating to just have for so long you didn't get in flooding. But as I'm sure with most homebuyers, when you bought this originally, you probably didn't think about the potential flooding threat. Did you or did you? Well, we

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Trameka Carriere-Rankins 30:32

were told that if they had an issue in the 80s, but it wasn't bad. And we were considered a flood zone it back there is still considered a flood zone x how I do not know. But they had putting a pumping system supposedly to remedy the issue that they happen maybe late in the 1980s. I didn't find this out until I first flooded. But as far as hearing anything about the backpack area, from the time that I moved to Lake Charles until that started happening, I never heard on the first time I heard anything about it was in 2017, when we actually flooded because I'm originally from Appaloosas. So I've never heard anything about the area. Like I said it was a copacetic area we were living there, you know, just as happy as can be. I had always thought about moving out the area because I was supposed to be a starter home when my son turned five, we were supposed to move out of it. However, I chose the alternate route on education for all three of my kids and put them all in private school until they got on high school. So I was just like, okay, when they get our start going to college, then we'll move so we were already looking to move. But with them going to school and stuff like that, that was something that, you know, that was extra 15 and 2000 miles on our pocket each month. And we just decided to stay there till you know, my last one went in college.

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Doug Parsons 31:48

Right? Well, that's interesting, too, is that for 15 years, there were no flooding issues, but then over a very short period that you had multiple flooding issues. Did anyone give you information of why that might be the case? Or it just was a long period of just not a lot of raining that would lead to flooding? That was it? Has anyone sort of speculated why you got so many floods in such a short period.

T

**Trameka Carriere-Rankins 32:08**

They call it 100 year advance. That's what they kept saying, you know, and I'm like, okay, you know, I finally got fed up to the point where it's 100 year flood event. Okay, this is happening. First time it happened. It was Hurricane Harvey, it was a lot of rain that inundated Texas and moved over to Louisiana. So I let that slide for that one. I was just like, you know, it could be that's what it was, you know, was a lot of rain that came in the area. So I'm gonna let that one, maybe slide because I was actually delivering mail at the time. And I know they had us in these trucks. And he told us, hey, when it gets too bad, get that man. No, I've seen areas that were flooding within the city. So I let that one kind of go like, okay, but I'm actually going to come back less than two and a half years later from the date. And we're going to flood and we didn't receive as much water as we did from more, which was a hurricane prior to the one in delta. And you're going to call that 100 year flood event where you had less water there. Then you had that rain onto the city than you had for hurricane Lord that decimated the city to smithereens. So you can't tell me that, you know, the water levels that day, according to the National rainfall wish I was like, at the airport, you can't say that we had that much rain. The next event because that wasn't so the amount of rain that was recorded in 2017. The only landscape that changed and wasn't the water was the landscape of different communities being built around and old piping meet new piping more, say, and you're not compensating for the extra rainfall and you're having water directly to one location. And when the rainfall has come in, you're not opening gates flood gates in time and you're not turning these pumps on in time is actually what happened with short it happened as a repetitive issue.

D

**Doug Parsons 33:59**

Okay, let's talk about the buyout though. And so you sold your home like I want you to describe that process. Who did you work with? How long did it take? And ultimately, yeah, just let's get some of those details.

T

**Trameka Carriere-Rankins 34:10**

The buyout itself was a headache. Actually, I lost all my hair after the buyout. I'll be honest, I said yeah, I literally was riding down the street working and I would actually take my hand and run it through my hair and I'd come out with gobs of hair, which is very stressful. We worked with the Kalamazoo parish police jury, as well as I had a team that came up with the buyout community itself that was operated out of Louisiana watershed initiative. In the beginning, it was chaotic. I'll be real with you. It seems like it was the first in the area for like Charles, however, was not the first for Louisiana because they did something similar in New Orleans for the participants in New Orleans if I'm not mistaken. That was the first areas down there Lafourche Parish and things like that. So wasn't new to Louisiana, but it was new to Lake Charles. We Yeah, so you had a lot of hiccups along the way, you had a lot of headings you had a lot of I'm uncertain with the answers. So it was never really anything that was straightforward had to do a lot of digging had to do a lot of research, they'll say they'll give you one deadline, and then it turns around to be another deadline. So if I can say that it was actually hell on earth, that would be a sizable robbery to go on through. That would be the great concept of terms that I would use. Like I said, to the point where it's, I literally had cut off all my hair because I lost it. Because, you know, even on the buyout process, you know, if you had stuff

that you didn't know about, like 10 years prior that may have people put liens on your house for like, \$100 bill you didn't know about you move or something like that you thought you paid but the courthouse didn't take it off, you'd have to go dig up records and show him this was paid that was paid, then yet turn around and pay him like 3040 \$50 just to get the lien off your house and make no sense to me. But those are things that they put you through the records weren't kept the best records that at all weren't kept some things that was on there from people that were buying out the stories that I heard set that was on there stuff like 20 years ago, they should have been taken off. So is this mainly

D

Doug Parsons 36:13

the county that you're interacting with? Like what entities are you interacting with, through all those things that

T

Trameka Carriere-Rankins 36:18

we are after was captured press release jury and Louisiana watershed initiative people that they put in place in Lake Charles and the Magnolia building, which is a county building, they gave them a whole floor dedicated to the area that we were in to actually assist with buying out the process, originally should have went when we had our first meeting, they said it's gonna happen within a three month span was almost a year before actually contracts and everything was actually bought out. And then at the end, we were bought out, we talked about Louisiana watershed initiative. But the buyout for our house was actually Louisiana Road Home, nobody knew that until the day of signing.

D

Doug Parsons 36:58

So let's stop there. And that so you were bought out, you're getting a check written to you. Tell us about the other side of that. So you now have to move? Were you moving to a new location before all that finalized? Because I'm sure there's issues of like, you need to get paid before you can actually even consider what I do it like that. So how did What are you doing now? Like, are you in a different place?

T

Trameka Carriere-Rankins 37:18

Where have you when I close the same day that I closed on my house, I closed on the new home, what they did is and this is so ludicrous, you know, usually when you sell a home, you have 30 days to get out, you have 30 days to move, we have 30 days to do this. That was not the case here. It was okay. When you come to sign the data to sign you can no longer go back to your home because this home belongs to the state Louisiana. Interesting. So you can step foot on the property, you couldn't do anything. When you signed the paperwork, you had to unleash all keys to that property. So yes, so you have to give them the keys. And at closing, they take it put an envelope, then they come back and do the paperwork for the new housing or whatever the deal may be. But yes, everything was done in one day. So I ended up that last week that I know I was moving that I confirmed that the rest of the loan went through with the bank that everything was good. I put an offer on a house, I made the moving date that day. So I

showed up to my new house park one U haul there. The other was still at the house being loaded, and went back and get the second U haul when I finished when I finished everything. So everything had to be out that same day. So yes, I moved out of one house I took a whole week off, I moved everything we had two days, we put it in the U haul. And we moved the same day that we close.

**D** Doug Parsons 38:37

Okay, so tell me like this is important, I think because when people are buying out you're talking about disrupting your own sense of community and said, How far away Did you move? Like where did you buy a home?

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 38:45

I actually moved maybe five to eight miles from where I was living before.

**D** Doug Parsons 38:53

So did the flood history have that new property come into play at all?

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 38:56

Yes, you had to buy a flood zone X you had to buy something that did not have a 500 year floodplain. Okay, that was the rules to it. So before you even you may have found a property that you really lived before they okay that property you have to submit the address to the people at the watershed initiative who are working on your case your case manager, she had to check it in the database to make sure that property was validated for you to buy.

**D** Doug Parsons 39:22

Now it's my understanding that you've been very enthusiastic about helping other people through this process. Are you like you dealing with other landowners like that?

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 39:30

I am the ones that call me and ask them for assistance. The ones that are maybe in phase two phase three years we have talked even once that got bought out the same time as me you know that we're still confused on things they call me up and yes, we talk all the time still going to the community actually I rolled up on tearing down my house one day they didn't notify us when it was going to be done. They didn't notify us saying hey, it's going to be done this day just gave us a blank email saying demolition is going to be on the way so I actually was in the area checking on other people. And I pulled up some my own house and I've seen them just put the pitchfork in the roof to tear it down. So I actually sat there and watched him do that. But yes, I go back into the community once a week, generally on the weekends, I do give out my



business course I do talk to people, I do encourage them on how to do that if they're confused on any paperwork or anything that needs to go moving forward. As far as the buyouts what to look for liens on their properties. I make sure these old properties who may have their old deceased mom or dad on it, hey, y'all need to do succession who's going to take over this, you know, you're going to sell it on, like, who's gonna take over this this property? You know, you've been living there, you've been paying the taxes. So try to negotiate with them, like, Okay, we need to do a succession on this property. Because if not, you're going to lose your place on the buyout, and you guys are going to be stuck with this house. So those are things and I'm actually going back into community due I had an old lady that was across the street from me, that was refusing the sale. Like she's maybe 80 years old, she was refusing the sale, she had been there for 40. Some years, she had took a lien on my house for Hurricane Rita. So she had a little bit left on it, you know, to pay, and she was like, it just doesn't pay. It's just me and my grandson. Okay, it doesn't pay for you to buy it out, you have a 2000 square, if you had your house about 2000 square feet, you're gonna get almost the max of the buyout. How does that make sense, because you didn't do anything for law, or you didn't do anything for delta to the home. So the house is just riddled with mold is riddled with, you know, this flood water, no telling what's living in it, and you want to go back there, like, let's make it make sense. Because there's nothing left, it's gonna happen again. And it's not when it's not, if it's gonna happen, it's when it's gonna happen. And we're gonna be in the same boat again. So I eventually talked to her and I went meet her every weekend, and she finally decided to sell because it made sense to her that everything around you is going to be gone, you have no protect, you had no security, you have nobody to call on, you're going to be stuck in the middle of nowhere. And, you know, those are some of the things that you know, I've taken the liberty because there's a lot of older people that were left within the community that take pride in hey, let's talk about this last last reason it out. Let's see what you can do. If anything happens again, will you be able to have the money in your pocket to replace this? Will you be able to do that? So it's a lot of talking about it, they asked me to run for city council, but there's not any house back there to run for there's only two or three subdivisions they've already torn down by 45 houses, you know, since the buyout so there's nothing left back there. And community, it's just lots and lots with dirt they put on top of it to level it out. That's that's all that's left from memories, you know, well, they

D

Doug Parsons 42:41

should put you on the payroll. But it just occurs to me as people studying bile programs and shuts the notion of the community of people that are leaving, they just need to keep people together as resources, because those conversations that you had with your neighbor, that was critical. And so that's probably going to get lost with a lot of bureaucracy. So I hope people can learn from that. And just one question related to that is that you were there to see the destruction of your house, how did that feel?

T

Trameka Carriere-Rankins 43:04

I actually have a video where I sit there and started crying because I told my husband, I didn't know how to feel, excuse me, if I seem like I'm tearing up. Because that was 20 years of my life in one location that was our home that was paid for, you know, and it's kind of bittersweet, because I'm like, I'm almost 50, I'm pushing 50, my husband's over 50. And you know, even though we were sending our kids trying to give them the best of the best, that is something

that we still, you know, on the side have to struggle to pay off. So that was ours. That was a piece of something that we had, and including, you know, two vehicles that got lost in the last flood that we had, it was almost paid off. So we had to start all over again. So it was bittersweet, because every room that they went in, there was a memory whether it was good or bad. And I sat through the whole thing from them starting from the beginning and to all the way to the end. And it was a memory out it was good memory or bad memory or was both each room that they went into I had a memory that I can recall. So it was really, I wouldn't say that I got depressed. But for that whole weekend. I didn't say anything. And I took a video of it and my grandson who is poor now I brought it home to him. I said, Hey, the house is gone. He said really? Let me say So his dad and mom went back there after I had went home because I knew that it kind of threw me for a loop. I just went home for the rest of the day. I got off the field. And I was crying when I walk in the door. She was hanging, let it go let it go. I said you just don't understand how I feel. So my grandson came home after they went by it. And he said my mom, I said what? He said the house is gone. I said well how do you feel about that? And he said, Oh, and he told me thumbs down thumbs down to him is something that he's feeling a certain type of way from it. So that's how he and I communicate. If he's had a good day or if he feels alive is thumbs up if he's having a bad day or something that bothers him in some sense. He looked at me and he shed a little tear. And he said, thumbs down. His whole concern was we had a dog that died after the second storm. And we buried him in New York. And His concern was, I left my friend. So that was, you know, it was it was a little emotional roller coaster. However, I've been in my house, July 12, will be a year that I've been in the home. And you know, we've had great memories we share, you know, good times, but then there's times that when it rains, I'm still looking outside to see if this new property is going to flood if it's it was constantly raining, you know, I'm looking outside on my cameras, like, you know, it's a street is the water flowing to it's supposed to flow or anything like that. And it's a cast, it's something that you know, if you've never been in a house where you're in, I'm six foot one, and you've never been in a house where you're stuck in there, and a water has came over your hips and a steady rising. You know, there's nothing that you can shake out your head, basically, you know, no matter what you do, you can't shake it. And I'm just guessing that, you know, that might be something we have to live with, as people who have been through that, you know, the last storm, I had people that were having babies over their shoulders walking in the in the water was in their chest area, you know, and their babies are on top of their head, they're trying to hold on to the baby as they're trying to wade through the water. So that's the last traumatic experience that we had. So the house being torn down, it was traumatic in the sense that it's like, wow, nobody else in the community. Hopefully, you'll have to go through that maybe they're knocking down these houses to build a way for this water to go, we're not going to inundate the rest of the people in their homes. Because now they said they ran out of money. They don't have the funds to buy out phase two and phase three.

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Doug Parsons 46:40

Well, I'm sorry you lost your home. But I hope you can appreciate that you are a trailblazer because they there's going to buy outs for 1000s of people across the country. And so you certainly are trailblazer in doing it and definitely sharing the highs and lows. So I appreciate that. And I want to just end with one question here that because I want my listeners to have a sense of where people are at. Can you tell me your favorite spot in Lake Charles, do you have a favorite spot there?



T H O U G H T S 47:00

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 47:06

Yeah, soccer Saltgrass steakhouse at the Golden at the casino. Okay, why? That's my favorite. My favorite spot. Actually, the first time I experienced the Saltgrass steakhouse was actually Galveston when I went over and took over a district and Galveston, Texas with my insurance company and at the move to Texas so my boss was like, come over here they have lunch specialists. I'm gonna do it a first time with her I'm like, Oh my God, this was good. So when they brought it to like trawls at the Golden Nugget, and they do have other eateries within the golden nugget, but that is the best place to go eat even though it's a casino. I never really go into the casino. I just go indulge and they're great foods and they do have and the second place would be Vic and Anthony's and L'Auberge Casino. Those are great places to dine at. And just to do places here. Yes, people indulge in the casino. They have fun, do everything over there. But I'm just more of a I like fine dining, fine cuisine. So those are the places that I would go.

**D** Doug Parsons 48:04

All right, fantastic. Other the first time like that kind of recommendation. So I appreciate the diversity. All right, Tamika, it has been such a honor to talk with you because you just experienced it firsthand, and you very vivid examples that you use. And again, like I said, You are trailblazers in this. I think a lot of people are going to learn from listening to this podcast, what you went through, and I hope you can continue to be a resource for other people out there. But thanks for coming on the podcast.

**T** Trameka Carriere-Rankins 48:28

No problem at all. Thank you guys for even offering me to do that. That's an honor.

**D** Doug Parsons 48:38

Hey, adapters, joining me is Mary Carson stiff, the executive director of wetlands watch. Hi, Mary Carson, welcome to the podcast.

**M** Mary-Carson Stiff 48:44

Hey, thanks for having me.

**D** Doug Parsons 48:46

All right, let's just jump right into this. Where are you based,

**M** Mary-Carson Stiff 48:49

based in Norfolk, Virginia, southeastern part of the state.

D

Doug Parsons 48:52

All right. There's a city that's always in the news when it comes to sea level rise. But we'll get into that. Tell us a bit about wetlands watch. What do you guys do there?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 48:59

So we are a nonprofit. And we're based in Norfolk, as I said, but we work statewide, and we're really focused on nature based solutions to climate change. We run a ton of different programs. But at the core, we are primarily concerned with how all of our natural infrastructure is going to survive the increased impacts we're seeing from sea level rise, increased rainfall intensity and other climate stressors.

D

Doug Parsons 49:26

Alright, let's set the stage here. I guess with some of the background on flooding. Can you give us some of the history of flooding the region that you're dealing with?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 49:33

Yeah, so our organization is based in Norfolk. And so I'm going to talk primarily about Norfolk because it's kind of the case study, it's ground zero for sea level rise and for flooding issues in Virginia and certainly for the East Coast, Virginia, Norfolk, Virginia specifically, we have the highest rate of relative sea level rise on the East Coast and we are experiencing you know what this really feels like on the ground is that right now we have about 45 days of nuisance flooding. Every year, I was driving back from a meeting just before we jumped on this call together. And I had to drive about three different ways. So redirected three different ways to get to my house, because of impassable roadways due to a huge rain bomb that we just had a you know, an hour or so ago, it is 45 days, but certainly feels like more, especially lately. But the projection for nuisance flooding is that by 2050, we're actually going to have these events 85 to 125 days per year. So that's essentially a third of the calendar year. It's pretty significant here, it's impossible to live in this area and not have your daily life impacted by flooding. Instead of studies. Our schools have flood days where they're actually delayed for school or schools just outright canceled. Because getting there is just too difficult for our transportation sector as well as for individual people trying to get kids to school. It's kind of a mess.

D

Doug Parsons 51:13

I think this is a first where my guests had to adapt the route to get to the recording of the podcast because of flooding resume. So that yeah, that's a nice visual there. And just one other thing about Norfolk is that you've got a very unique neighbor, that also puts you in the news a lot more than what I guess a typical community would have who is that neighbor,

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Mary-Carson Stiff 51:34

the Naval Station Norfolk, right. We and that's like a another big one, right? Yeah, it's the largest

the Naval Station Norfolk, right. It's and that's it's a pretty big one, right? Yeah, it's the largest naval station in the world. And they have a lot of challenges associated with sea level rise on the base, they have raised their docks a number of times to help adapt to those to these rising waters. And they have all sorts of issues associated with getting people onto the base, the major thoroughfare, it's Hampton Boulevard, and it is wet significantly, and very frequently. And they have a lot that they have to consider in terms of their adaptation plan and their mitigation plan for their operations to run smoothly. But they're an active participant, we have some joint land use studies that are underway in our region, many in fact, and more planned. And so it's unusual in the sense that the military has such a big presence here. And it defines our region. They're not a silent partner, necessarily in a lot of other parts of the country. We know that there's less interaction between local governments and the military, that may have bases located in those governments, but here they are part of the conversation. And there is this type of joint planning that we're seeing occurring more frequently and with more intention. So we're pretty fortunate.

D

Doug Parsons 52:56

Okay, so let's talk about buyouts. This episode is about buyouts. Can you give us a quick overview of the bile program that you're working with there? Yes, doesn't have a name. It doesn't

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 53:05

really, we are working with the City of Norfolk on their innovative buyout program that they've developed and are kind of standing up through their zoning ordinance. The city went through a massive zoning ordinance overhaul with the release of what they tried to make the most resilient zoning ordinance in the country. And that was effective in 2018. And the ordinance has this really cool provision where they're basically setting up a alternatively financed by our program where developers that want to build in the city are footing the bill for acquisitions of developed land and undeveloped land in their high risk parts of the city.

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Doug Parsons 53:49

Okay, so you sort of answered it just there. And besides the obvious reason that there's flooding, why did the city and account slip at the city or is it a county or is it kind of a both thing?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 53:58

Well, in Virginia, we do all of the above. We're kind of unusual in that way, but this is the City of Norfolk. So it's a traditional municipality.

D

Doug Parsons 54:06

And so why did they decide to pursue buyouts of all things?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 54:09

Well, the city is on its own, pursuing buyouts in a limited capacity. I would say, the traditional way that buyout have worked and are in coastal Virginia are through local governments using FEMA grant dollars to do the actual buyouts to finance it, and to provide the infrastructure for the program to exist. So using FEMA deed restriction templates, for example, as a condition of receiving the grant funds. All of the buyout programs in our region with the exception of one city, the city of Newport News are using FEMA grant dollars city of Newport News uses general funds, the City of Norfolk has done a few buyouts using those FEMA grant resources. This program is extremely alternative and it essentially uses development interest as a financier of the buyouts that are occurring in the community. And the reason why they're interested in this buyout program is that they have a significant portion of their city at risk from flooding that's occurring today. And more at risk from flooding that will occur in the future. So they have to get people out of the way. And they need to do this, through resources that go beyond the city's own financial resources, of which they're not enough. And they're being utilized in different ways. They came up with this idea that removes their budget, from the responsibility of carrying the buyout program. And then it also, in a sense, removes the city from the center of the transaction. And the FEMA buyout programs, the city plays a very important role in a sense that they have to actually facilitate the buyout and they have to own the land that results from the buyout occurring. So when the structure is demolished, that land goes into city ownership, and it's on them to maintain it to to monitor it and all that. And so this program doesn't do that. It basically sets up this marketplace where there are points that are being earned to develop everywhere in the city. And those points are resilient space, not just by out based but resilient space. And then they say, Well, you can earn points, if a developer pays money to extinguish the development rights in a high risk part of the city. And that extinguishment occurs between a conservation organization or a land holding organization, and a property owner. So local government isn't involved at all.

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Doug Parsons 56:50

So how much money is generally generated a year?

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Mary-Carson Stiff 56:53

I mean, it is very well, it certainly will, we assume because the program has not been effectuated yet. So our role is to help make it happen. The language that authorizes this action to occur was included in the zoning ordinance update, but it has not been tested fully. And part of why we were brought in to do this is because we have a land conservation background in the organization. And we also have an adaptation background and a planning background and all that. So we're kind of bringing in all of our areas of expertise, and combining them and meshing them together to try to actually figure out how this would work in practice. And what we discovered is that, you know, the ordinance needs to be modified a little bit. So it's more reflective of how land conservation organizations manage and follow their own best practices. So we're working on getting that marriage between local government purpose or government purpose and conservation organizations purpose, really that marriage to get those programs to speak the same language,

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Doug Parsons 58:03

the city has a finite area, was there early on target areas of is there like acreage that you have right now? Or is that a shifting number to?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 58:11

Well, the way that the city has prioritized these areas for eligibility to be bought out through the zoning ordinance is through the FEMA flood maps, essentially. So when the city did their big zoning ordinance rewrite, they split up the city land wise into two different zones, a high risk flood zone and a low risk flood zone. And that was based off of the FEMA maps. So the high risk flood zone is the 1% annual chance flood and the point 2% annual chance flood, and then the low risk flood zone is the zone. So the lowest risk, but it is certainly not zero risk, as every good floodplain manager should say those two zones were stipulated. And because of that stipulation, all of the buyout work that occurs through this new zoning ordinance facilitated program has to occur in those high risk flood zones.

D

Doug Parsons 59:06

So the focus is these flood zones and such and where are you part of these conversations? But how do you ensure equitable outcomes of a buyout program? You know, you think about disadvantaged communities marginalized communities, did that come into play where you're at?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 59:18

So this program in particular is because the two districts were established according to flood risk zones and the FEMA maps the zones themselves did not have any there was no discussion of of equity in the creation of the zones. The implementation of the project, however, will need to have an equity lens applied right now the program is best setup to acquire properties that our vacant so one has a double lot, for instance, in Norfolk, which is common but the lots are tiny, then they could put the adjacent lot to the lot that has the structure on it. In a conservation easement, which would then remove the development right of that secondary lot. And that would be a form of a buyout through this program that we're discussing. In that sense, the properties that would be low hanging fruit properties are properties that are owned by someone who has to lots and their ownership, I think that the program could work through a number of different lenses, there's this great need to provide resources for communities that have not received need in the past are disadvantaged communities. And this program actually could provide a funding resource that they would otherwise not have access to, which would actually help build the ability for, you know, for someone to be compensated for their property. Now, the other side of this is that, you know, if it's not managed properly, you certainly don't want people to be forced into participation, which of course, wouldn't happen, because this is a voluntary program, but you don't want programs to be set up. And so it's a kind of an incentive that is salacious or maliciously intended to, you know, to prey on people with with with less means. So, I think that there are a lot of ways that this could shake out and our goal, and certainly the city's goal is to have it work in a way that is favorable to help assist the people who need the most help.

D

**Doug Parsons 1:01:33**

Well, you're just starting with this particular program. Was the public involved where they actually talked about these zoning changes and stuff, was it an active because a lot of times people just they don't get involved with these local policy decisions. But was there active engagement and getting feedback from the public?

M

**Mary-Carson Stiff 1:01:48**

For this massive zoning overhaul? Yes, they did a ton of outreach with the community. It was a really big undertaking. And kind of complementary to this zoning update, the city also adopted two really important long range planning documents, one of which is fairly unique. And I'm not aware of another community that has adopted such a long range plan. The Norfolk has a vision 2100 document that basically set the stage for the zoning ordinances approach in dividing the city into these two zones, one of high risks one of low risks, and that's definitely worth a look, essentially, this very brief, it's about a 10 page planning document shows the vision that current planning staff have for the city. And there's a map that shows different parts of the city and different colors indicating where they plan to actually armor against future impacts. So those areas are indicated in red, and areas where they foresee adaptation to changing waters, which is essentially areas where they're not going to focus extensive resources in protecting those are retreat areas, of course, not said outright in the plan, but that's what they are. And those are areas that are identified in yellow, and they have neighborhoods of the future, which are essentially receiving areas when you're talking about relocation and buyouts, you have sending and receiving areas. So those yellow areas are sending areas and the purple areas, the neighborhoods of the future are the receiving areas of the city spoke in this planning document about what they're about what the realities are, that they're facing, and try to create some sort of future vision for how they plan to adapt, or to mitigate against the impacts. So this planning document happened at the same time that the city was going through this big, comprehensive plan update, as well as the zoning ordinance updates. Everything happened somewhat in step. We also had prior to all of this occurring, a very robust Dutch dialogues program. I'm sure you've had people on this podcast talk about the Dutch dialogues occurring in America before. So there was a lot of build up associated with the launch of these significant planning and zoning efforts.

D

**Doug Parsons 1:04:14**

All right, this might be a challenge. But if you could give one piece of advice for other people considering a buyout program, what would it be? And obviously, you've given a ton of advice already, but just sort of like kind of in closing, what would one big bid advice be?

M

**Mary-Carson Stiff 1:04:27**

So a significant portion of our work is looking at how communities can overcome the barriers to do buyouts? Because right now, there are a lot of communities that aren't touching it, because it's too hard. It's too costly. And the maintenance and stewardship of the properties that result



from the buyout can be a deal breaker for many communities. And so we've been really focusing on how to help governments local governments overcome These barriers. And that's why we've explored the use of land conservation organizations stepping into this really important long term stewardship role. And what I'll say is that we have had a hard time getting land Trust's to come to the table and want to take on this long term stewardship role of properties that have been acquired, and that are just vacant, lots littered throughout a landscape because that's what the future looks like with climate change with sea level rise. And with a government's ability to adapt. It's really open land, and its long term stewardship and land management. That's what's facing us. And right now, there are no entities that want to take on this. And we, as a movement, as a group of professionals working on climate adaptation really need to hone in on this issue. And it starts with the grant programs and the federal grant programs understanding this complicated problem. Right now, FEMA grant programs and other federal bio grant programs are not including long term stewardship money in their grant allocation. This is a mistake. When we look to the land conservation community, they require stewardship to be a part of every land transaction, because they know how important it is you have to have insurance on these properties to protect against lawsuits. And there's a big difference between a local government taking on the burden of Land Management, and a land trust taking on that burden. This is where we're spending a lot of time thinking about potential solutions. How do we get the grant buyout program landscape to really understand what they're asking governments to do in this long term land management work. And, you know, we've explored modification of deed restriction language from FEMA to get the program to better coordinate with traditional conservation and kind of best practices conservation work. And we've been marginally successful in the sense that we got them to approve some modified deed language at the region three, but we're very far from where we need to be in this space. And I just can't emphasize enough that we should be bringing every stakeholder to the table as we can to help us accomplish more buyouts, smarter buyouts and more equitable buyouts. But if we know if there's this threshold burden of stewardship resources not being available, we're never going to get those other stakeholders that we really need to the table to accomplish this work. So I know that's long winded, but I just can't overemphasize how important that piece of this is.

D

Doug Parsons 1:07:44

Okay, last question. Do you have a favorite natural spot in your area that you'd like to go to?

M

Mary-Carson Stiff 1:07:51

I live in a neighborhood that is right on the Lafayette river. And our neighborhood is like a big key. And there are two creeks on either side with the Lafayette river right at the top of the neighborhood. It's the neighborhood of colonial place. So shout out to all my colonial place residents. I walk and run along a walkway, a pathway that goes all along this neighborhood in these two creeks and along the Lafayette River, and it's my happy place. It's a refuge from stress and work. And it's where I took my two children out every evening into the breeze along the creek to feel the air on their faces and listen to the birds and check out the night herons fishing in the evening. And it's just it's heaven. And it's right in my my front yard and in my backyard, and I just feel really grateful.



**D** Doug Parsons 1:08:46  
All right, excellent choice. Well, Mary Carson, it was a pleasure having you on and good luck with what you're doing there.

**M** Mary-Carson Stiff 1:08:50  
Thank you. I really appreciate it.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:08:55  
Hey, adapters joining me as Tim Trautman. Tim is the Flood Mitigation Program Manager at Charlotte Mecklenburg Stormwater Services in Charlotte, North Carolina. Hi, Tim, welcome to the podcast.

**T** Tim Trautman 1:09:05  
Hey, Doug, thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:09:08  
It's great having you on and we're going to talk about buyouts here. But first off, can you just tell us a bit about the Stormwater Services place that you work at? What do you guys do there?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:09:16  
Yeah, so I work for Mecklenburg County, which is a stormwater utility in Charlotte, North Carolina. So it's a government entity. And the whole concept of of our stormwater utility is very similar to a water sewer type of or electric type of situation. So we build the public for the impervious area on their property that generates water runoff, and we use those dollars to manage and maintain the system downstream and the flood risk downstream and the quality of the water downstream of everyone's home. And so that's the premise of our stormwater utility and it provides us with some great stable, reasonably stable funding.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:09:54  
I want to get into this a bit more later, but just so the model is like most counties like it's a millage tax rate or something like that, and That's how you're generating revenue.

**T** Tim Trautman 1:10:01  
Yes or No actually, the the stormwater fee is based upon the impervious surface on every single property within the Charlotte Mecklenburg area. And so it really is a rate type of structure, not a tax structure people pay every month based upon their square footage

calculation. And again, it's really correlated to the amount of runoff that comes off the property that we have to manage downstream.

D

Doug Parsons 1:10:25

Great clarification, that's very useful. Alright. Can you also set the stage to tell us a bit about the flood history in your county? What what's kind of happening there that flooding is an issue? Yeah. So

T

Tim Trautman 1:10:37

Charlotte, I would say is a not coastal obviously, it is an urban flash flooding community, we not only are not on the coast, but we don't have a big huge river system that comes through downtown. Fortunately, we don't have the Mississippi River or another big system, where we have a lot of lead time. But we do have a lot of creeks, over 350 miles of, of mapped floodplain of streams in our community. And usually when it starts raining, things can begin to flood anywhere from an hour later to six, seven hours later. And so we don't have a whole lot of lead time. And that leads to some of our interest in buyouts, specifically, because we don't have a lot of time to evacuate and prepare. And the water tends to move maybe a little more swiftly with higher currents and velocities, because it's an urban situation, and therefore it impacts the types of strategies that we use to manage our stormwater runoff.

D

Doug Parsons 1:11:33

Okay, perfect. You're just led me there. Now, talk about your buyout program. That's why we're here on this episode. Can you just give us that sort of broader overview, and then we'll dig down into some of the details?

T

Tim Trautman 1:11:43

Yeah. So within the stormwater utility about 25 years ago, we had a couple of big flood events. And at the time that those occurred, our program basically just told people to buy flood insurance. And we realized after they're seeing some of the distress, some of the rescues that had to happen, the long path to recovery, for the homeowners that we had to do things differently. And so about 20, some years ago, we decided to begin a voluntary buyout program. And we recognize that some of the areas that we have developed in the past are really meant to store floodwater, that is what they're meant to do. That's what they do during large events. And we needed to begin strategically getting folks out of those areas, let the floodwater be stored with minimal damage, and then let the creeks recede. So that's kind of what spurred that one program, which is our floodplain buyout program, within our stormwater utility.

D

Doug Parsons 1:12:44

You talked a bit about the history there. But how long literally, have you been buying up properties as part of this program?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:12:49

Our first buyout in Charlotte Mecklenburg was in 1999. Wow, that's goes back. Yeah. So we're about almost 25 years into the buyout experience. And we've really taken the long play on it, we have decided to make it a program within our stormwater utility, and not just an event based reactionary, oh, we had a flood, let's get federal money and do a bunch of good work. And then when it dries up and goes away, we go back to business as usual. That's not the approach that we've taken. We've bought at least one property every single year, the last 24 years, and in lots of cases, dozens of properties each year.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:13:27

Okay, that was my next question. How many total properties have you guys purchased? Yeah, so

**T** Tim Trautman 1:13:31

we're getting close to about 500 properties in Charlotte Mecklenburg. And again, we don't have a big river system, where we've got, you know, 10s of 1000s, or hundreds of 1000s of buildings in the floodplain. So really, from a percentage standpoint, we've made progress, we've made measurable progress toward reducing the impact of flooding in our community. And

**D** Doug Parsons 1:13:52

for the better. I imagine that part of what guide us you're looking at these flooding zones, I don't know if it's a map and then you're overlaying existing properties. Sometimes that could potentially be troublesome to how do you guys do it, you probably have that I don't want to call a wish list. But like, these are the properties in the floodplain and when they're interested in potentially doing a buyout isn't random just based on someone's interest in selling their property?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:14:16

Oh, boy, that's a that's a really good question, Doug. And I have to say that our strategy has evolved over the years. So initially, when we first started it, we had probably six targeted neighborhoods that had recently flooded, and we were able to get some federal grant funds from FEMA to buy them out. And that's kind of where we began. And we really rode a predominantly grant based program for many, many years. If we could get grant funding we proceeded. If we couldn't, then we didn't. And what we've done is we've adapted and evolved our program into more of a risk based approach. And so about 10 or so years ago, we developed a risk assessment tool here locally, to try had to really evaluate all of the factors that go into flooding in that impact our citizens on a true local level. And we built a risk scoring system off of those values and criteria, and we crunched a bunch of numbers. And so basically, we have what we call a risk assessment risk reduction plan. Now for our area that looks at

every single property that touches the floodplain, and it kind of scores the the flood risk factor on that property. And then we use that as a guide to begin to talk and have conversations with people through our budget and planning, and set goals for risk reduction and adaptation of our floodplain areas over time.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:15:44

So are you in a situation where you have more people interested in selling their property than you have money for? Or I mean, how does that balance workout?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:15:53

Yeah, Doug, it changes over the years. So when when it's wet, and it's raining, and it floods, sometimes we have interest. And when we go through periods of dry, dry spells, and there's not a lot of flooding, people tend to think that we've fixed the flooding problems, and the interest wanes, there's also other things at play, the real estate market is a big deal. And certainly we've seen here in nationally across the US the last two to three years with interest rates changing and inflation and property values, supply and demand issues at play, the demand for our voluntary flood buyouts has changed in that kind of climate. Affordable housing can also affect people's interest, the cost of flood insurance, there's so many factors that motivate people to sell that, you know, over the last 25 years, I've just seen, you know, seeing that change and evolve and be very cyclical. In nature.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:16:51

You've sort of explained this, but I want you to go into more detail on that. The key thing here is that you've been able to avoid federal funds, I guess more recently, and you have the utility fee and such, but how important is that in to what you're doing?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:17:04

You know, it's really important to our success, the way that we've built our program. You know, one of the biggest things that I've seen that's an impediment to buyouts is how long things take when you pursue grant funding. I mean, you're talking years, even after a flood, you're talking years and years usually, and when communities need to pursue federal funding in we're able to make decisions much more quickly, and adapt to unique situations that homeowners might have, in terms of them needing to sell or wanting to sell within a few months, or maybe just a home or to being impacted by by a flood in one specific area. Last summer, we were able to just buy one home along one creek that had two feet of water inside the living space and \$50,000 in damage. And before they made repairs, we looked at our plan, and we decided, okay, well this is a property, we probably would make an offer to hear in the next five to 10 years, let's move them up the list because there's flood damage and buy it at a reduced cost. And so that's just one example of how having a local program with a little bit of flexibility allows us to be able to be a little bit more successful with a risk reduction goals we're trying to achieve

D

Doug Parsons 1:18:18

sort of like reverse real estate sort of process. It's fascinating. Okay, in a previous conversation I want to bring this up again, is that, you know, this is talking about the federal funds and all the strings attached. And so you're able to buy, as you said, damaged goods, which makes the money go farther. What do you mean by that?

T

Tim Trautman 1:18:35

Yeah, so that's not exclusively what we do. But a couple examples that that allow us to make our money go further is one when there is flood damage, you know, we have gone in and bought flood damaged homes with local dollars, and we offer them you know, the damage price of the home. And in cases where the owners have flood insurance, which we highly recommend, and we have a whole marketing campaign for then they're made fairly whole and we're able to buy the property in a damaged condition and it creates a win win win terms of wasting resources and repairing a home. Another example is that here in Charlotte, it's a hot real estate market. There's a lot of areas where house flipping or renovations are happening to homes. And there have been some situations where there have been homes in the floodplain that have come on the market that have not been improved yet. And so they're I guess, for just for general example, you know, 1960s or 70s homes that haven't been updated and haven't been improved and don't have new kitchens and things. And so we know that if they sell on the private market, someone will come in and probably invest 5060 \$70,000 in fixing that home up in a lot of areas of Charlotte. And so we're able to sometimes make decisions in those situations. We call them kind of maybe semi distressed properties, where we'll you know, act on them within a matter of months, and that those kinds of kinds of things would be impossible through any kind of a federal grant program application process.

D

Doug Parsons 1:20:00

Okay, and imagine, again that you're being strategic in the properties that you're targeting such but if you're in a high growth area, and I'm sure this is difficult that all right, you've identified properties, you're doing these buyouts and you're getting these homes, not they're not flooding. But if there's high growth, is there zoning is it set up such a way that you're just not allowing additional homes to be built in potential flood areas, like one step forward? And two steps back? Is that kind of a control in there?

T

Tim Trautman 1:20:27

Doug, that's an awesome question. And that's one of the fundamental principles of our buyout program from 25 years ago, when we went to our Board of County Commissioners and said, We think this is a solution that we ought to implement. One of the caveats and key factors of that was, let's not make sure that we are on one hand, you know, reducing flood risk of our existing housing stock. And on the other hand, there's new risk being added to standards that are not adequate. So what we did is, at that same time, we developed much higher building standards there based upon future growth, future changes to the runoff and bigger, wider floodplains and all the new building that's been occurring in Charlotte Mecklenburg, the last 25 years have been built to these much higher standards related to our flood mapping and our flood risk. And so we hope that what we've done with this two prong approach is we have improved and

significantly reduced the future flood risk of all the homes that have been built the last 25 years in our community. And at the same time, through our bio program and other types of programs that we have, we've been reducing the risk of our existing housing stock, and the combination of those two things will make us a much more resilient community 20 3050 100 years from now.

D

Doug Parsons 1:21:54

Okay, so the idea is noble that you're trying to get people out of these risky areas and flood zones, but sometimes it's not so easy. And you're disrupting communities and you're not doing it on purpose. Of course, have you been able to track when you do these buyout programs? Where are people relocating? Are they staying in the community? Are they leaving North Carolina altogether? Have you been able to look into that?

T

Tim Trautman 1:22:13

Yeah, we've done a little bit of we haven't done any formal tracking, but in most cases over the last 20, some years, we've known where people have purchased or rented or moved to, and unfortunately, we're in a situation in our Charlotte Mecklenburg region, that there is a lot of development, new development happening and growth happening. And so generally speaking, most folks are staying in the area that wants to stay in the area, because there is some new housing stock that's always being built in a more resilient manner on higher ground, etc, etc, with newer materials and building codes. But we do have people that, you know, move out of the area, but it's usually for personal reasons that that probably they would have done that anyway, at some point, if they sold to a private individual. So we really have not seen much of an impact of our buyout program on say, reducing our tax base or reducing our, you know, existing housing stock.

D

Doug Parsons 1:23:09

If you could give advice to a local government person listening to this or some partners out there working on these areas. What What piece of advice would you give them about starting such a program?

T

Tim Trautman 1:23:18

I think the biggest piece of advice that I give anyone is begin with the end in mind. One of the reasons we've had very sustainable success here is that we've had a vision that has been basically approved and supported by our elected officials over the years and in our government management and the public have open space in our floodplains and parks, and recreation areas, passive recreation areas, and trails. And so we've actually been able to latch our buyout program in support for on to the fact that our community wants more open space, they want more Greenway trails along our creek corridors, they want to interact with our creeks. They want more trees in those areas. And so find a community value that your community has that buyouts are very compatible with, and try to turn it into a positive asset for the community. It is not for us just to just simply about removing people out of the floodplain and then having, you

know, vacant land and dumping grounds in our community. It's about reducing risk and removing people from these areas that store flood water and creating a community asset in the area. Whether that's just simply a small mode area or whether it's reforestation or whether it's a you know, some kind of a passive park, you know, that that's really the ultimate vision that you need to have that to get broad support for a buyout program and some sustained success.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:24:46

All right, fantastic answer. All right. Final question. If some of my listeners happen to be visiting your area, what outdoor spot would you most recommend? What's your favorite spot there?

**T** Tim Trautman 1:24:57

Oh boy, for your listeners. I I would say the Little Sugar Creek Greenway. It begins just outside of Uptown Charlotte. And it now traverses all the way into South Carolina for about 15 miles. The last sections here were just opened a few weeks ago of the trail. And the beautiful thing is if you enjoy just a nice bike ride, walk, stroll, you enjoy change of scenery between urban settings and neighborhoods and a little bit of rural areas and nature. And you want to go through some of our bout areas. Finding the Little Sugar Creek Greenway and enjoying a few different sections of it is something that I'd recommend to your listeners, Doug, know.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:25:39

Can you paddle in a canoe and it is big enough for that.

**T** Tim Trautman 1:25:43

It's not quite big enough for that. Yeah, I wouldn't recommend it's not a river system, but it is we've restored a lot parts of it. So it's usually fairly beautiful to look at. It's a nice paved trail along most of the sections that's about 10 feet wide. So just to something enjoyable to do if, especially if you like the outdoors.

**D** Doug Parsons 1:26:03

Alright, fantastic. Alright, Tim, this is fantastic. You shared a lot of information, a very short amount of time, and you guys are doing some great work there. Thanks for coming on the podcast.

**T** Tim Trautman 1:26:11

Oh, thank you for having me, Doug. And I really appreciate what you're doing your podcast and love the opportunity to talk about how flood buyouts can play a role.



D

Doug Parsons 1:26:23

Hit after it's we're back. I hope you enjoyed those conversations. They were fascinating to me, especially Tomiko. What an amazing story that she has. But I brought Anna Weber from NRDC back on to wrap things up, Hannah, welcome back.

A

Anna Weber 1:26:35

Thanks. Glad to be here.

D

Doug Parsons 1:26:36

All right, fantastic. Tamika, you recruited her and I interviewed her. And that was an amazing interview. And so I'm sure that's what you had in mind when you wanted me to talk to her. She really has an amazing story, right?

A

Anna Weber 1:26:46

Yeah, one of the things that we're hoping to do with this workshop is really just share out some of the stories of people who have gone through buyouts. One of the things that I find really interesting about talking to people who have gone through buyouts is many of them talk about how isolating an experience it is, you feel really alone, even if there's lots of other people in your community who are going through similar things. And like Trump mica, you have to basically become an expert in this really complicated process. And so we wanted to capture, like the lessons and that expertise that you gain as a buyout participant and work that into our recommendations to improve buyouts for everyone.

D

Doug Parsons 1:27:27

So I want to talk with you a bit about as we wrap this up, some of the issues that were brought up, and I thought was really interesting is that a couple of the experts from the local governments that they talked about, you know, they have local programs for BiOp. And that has given them so much more flexibility, because as you alluded to, at the beginning, some of these federal funds, they're very difficult, they take a long time to implement or even spend, and so they've kind of avoided them altogether, you know, how does that play into your NRDC, policy development? And I guess, recommendations?

A

Anna Weber 1:27:56

Yeah, that's a great point. So we're kind of trying to do a couple of things here. One is, we recognize that there's a lot more innovation and flexibility that can happen when you're not tied to using federal funds, like we heard about from Tim, right. However, not everybody can do that. Not every local government has the money or the capacity or the staff or the expertise to be able to fund their programs locally. And in that case, they're going to need to rely on this

federal funding. So how can we make the federal programs better and more flexible, so that the same kinds of things that Tim is doing locally, other people can do, even though they're relying on federal funds,

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Doug Parsons 1:28:38

the idea of flexibility and finding different programs that work? That's great, but you're a national organization. And so this notion, like who really does have the deepest pockets since the federal government, so at the end of the day, they're still going to have to be a primary source for this, I guess, this is to kind of give them food for thought about becoming more flexible.

A

Anna Weber 1:28:55

Yeah. So some of the things we're advocating for are changes to the grant programs that fund these buyouts, for example, ways that they can work more flexibly or provide funding for different kinds of activities. So they're not just so focused on buying and selling these properties, but sort of take a more holistic view of all the things people need when they're relocating. Other things that we're advocating for are a little bit more nebulous, and they have to do with this concept of local capacity. So it's one thing for a federal agency to give a grant to a local government. And they say, basically, here's the money, go ahead and do your project. Well, as we all know, it's really hard to get that money in the first place. Then once you get it, you have to do a good project. And that takes a lot of planning, and a lot of staff time and a lot of just expertise and kind of institutional memory to be able to do a really complicated and sensitive project like a home buyout. And so one of the things we're asking for is for federal agencies like FEMA to invest more in supporting local capacity building so that could show up in things like supporting planning at a local level, so that a local government can put more time in upfront before a disaster planning for how they might help people relocate when a disaster hits.

D

Doug Parsons 1:30:11

Okay, I'm just thinking off the cuff right now. But it occurred to me, I wonder if there's already existing, you think of the department education, they have a lot of block grants and like, local schools have a lot of flexibility what they can do, they have to meet some bare minimum standards, but a lot of the A lot of that's just money that flows to these local governments and seems like somebody who's by our programs could benefit from that hands off approach.

A

Anna Weber 1:30:33

Yeah, that's a really great point. And so you're you're pointing to like a really important aspect of the grants that fund buyouts most of the time, which are these grants from FEMA, and they're what we call competitive grants, which means that you have to apply for them, like you have to propose a project put in a really detailed funding application, in order to get the money. We can contrast that with something like a block grant program, like you were just talking about, where there's a certain allocation of money that you can use for certain purposes. And in fact, there are block grant funding sources that can fund buyouts, for example, in HUD, the

agency for Housing and Urban Development, their community development block grant program for disaster recovery can and does fund buyouts. The problem there, however, is that that program doesn't have like a sustained source of funding, basically, after a major disaster, Congress has to authorize the program to distribute the money, it doesn't have like a sustained authorization, like a lot of annual federal programs do. And so it's a little bit of a trade off, because that also comes with its own challenges.

D

Doug Parsons 1:31:39

So I had a chance to look at some of the notes that came from these workshops. And they're fascinating, you had some reports, and hopefully those will be available, just like I put on the webpage for this episode. But one of the things talked about, like these bile programs, how difficult it can be for someone to move away from their community, there's this sort of social science aspect of it. And so even though you guys acknowledge that and it came up within those workshops, is this something that NRDC will actually get into the business of making recommendation because sometimes a lot of those things are lost, here's your money, I Oregon at our home, but it's just like the idea of decoupling people from their community that makes us that much harder, even if the program's functioning, and so many, you know, if it's functioning really well,

A

Anna Weber 1:32:16

that's exactly right. That is a huge component of this kind of project, that isn't always a consideration when we're thinking about other ways to protect folks against flood risk, right? You don't necessarily have the same considerations if you were building some sort of, I don't know, levee or dam or something to protect people structurally against flooding, moving away from your home, and your community is a big deal. And it's not just about the money, right? Of course, you need enough money to be able to find a safer home someplace else. But there's so much else that goes into moving away from your community, are you going to be able to find a place that's close to your job? Or your kids going to be able to stay in the same school? Are you going to be able to stay in touch with your neighbors? Is it going to be easy for you to get to the hospital when you have a doctor's appointment? All of these aspects of relocation are things that aren't necessarily considered in traditional buyout programs. They're not really things that the grants that we use for buyouts pay for. And so some of the things that we're advocating for are to make buyouts part of a more holistic climate adaptation and relocation strategy for a local area that takes these considerations into account and isn't so much about just like picking up someone like their game piece right on a board game board and plunking them down someplace else. And saying, like, everything is great, now you have to think about all of the other services and support that these people need and all of the other aspects of like what it means to be sort of transforming our communities in the climate change future.

D

Doug Parsons 1:33:56

In a previous conversation, you brought up the idea of holistic managed retreat, and we haven't really brought up managed retreat much, but it's buyouts are just a part of that broader approach to manage retreat. But what did you mean by holistic managed retreat?

A

Anna Weber 1:34:09

Yeah, that's a great question. And so a lot of the time when people talk about managed retreat, especially in the United States, the conversation is pretty narrow around buyouts. And we can understand why that is because buyouts are basically the primary tool that we have to move people out of harm's way to help people relocate because of the effects of climate change, but buyouts in and of themselves are not managed retreat. In fact, I would think that buyouts can contribute to what we might call unmanaged retreat, right. They're not really part of a bigger system. And so when I think about holistic managed retreat, I'm thinking about everything else that goes into the process of making a safer community. What are all of the other things that community members need when they're relocating? from point A to point B, and it's a little bit less about just moving away from something and more about moving towards something both physically because you're physically moving away from a risky place and to a less risky place, but also on a broader scale, like we're moving away from the way that we're used to our community being right, we're moving away from the past, but we're moving towards hopefully something better in the future, something that is safer, and more equitable for everyone.

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Doug Parsons 1:35:27

Fantastic. And so my listeners out there represent state governments, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and if they're interested in getting involved, they're thinking, Alright, this might actually be good for our community is NRDC in the business of helping others do what you just did with these guys?

A

Anna Weber 1:35:42

Yeah, we would love to talk to you, if you are considering the possibility of buyouts in your state or your local area, or you work for an organization that interacts with the buyout process in some way or another. Part of what we're trying to do with this work is just bring people together so that everyone's perspectives are on the table. And so that everyone is connected to people who can provide them with ideas and support. And if you want to get involved, we really encourage you to get in touch with us and you can get in touch with me via our [website@nrdc.org](mailto:website@nrdc.org). Our project also has a really great web page that our partners at the climate Gration network put together at [CLI.migration.org](http://CLI.migration.org). And Doug, I'll give you those links so that you can put them in the show notes. We also have some written materials, we have a couple of reports and I hope that you'll take a look at them and then get in touch if you have any questions or other ideas.

D

Doug Parsons 1:36:35

Okay, Anna, thanks for coming on the podcast and thanks to NRDC for partnering and sponsoring the episode. It's always a treat working with you guys.

A

Anna Weber 1:36:42

Thanks so much, Doug. It's always great to talk to you and have an opportunity to share our

work with your listeners.

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### Doug Parsons 1:36:51

Okay, adapters that is wrap. Thanks to Anna, Kristen, Shamika, Tamika and Tim for participating in this episode. I'm very encouraged by what NRDC is trying to do here figuring out how to crack the bureaucratic code for buyouts will be critical in the years ahead when we will see manage retreat and bigger demands for bio programs. Jamaica's narrative was undeniably harrowing get her unwavering personal resilience in the face of home loss was nothing short of inspiring. Look ahead to future climate impacts, we can expect many similar and tough housing decisions will have to be made. Let us learn from Jamaica's experiences to enhance the efficiency and compassion of these programs. This is the mission that NRDC is championing. Also local governments are essential laboratories for refining the functionality of these programs, as we've learned from the stories of Mary Carson's different wetlands watch and Tim Troutman of North Carolina. And thanks to Kristen Marcel from clean immigration network and Shamika Hanson from the Nature Conservancy for their enlightening behind the scenes insight to the buyout workshops, there are a ton of links in the show notes and presentations from those workshops are there, I encourage you to dig in. There's a lot more to find and learn about through that process. And finally, I want to thank NRDC for sponsoring and partnering with America daps to share the story of flooding buyouts, as you heard, we need to do better and groups like NRDC are doing the hard work of finding effective policy approaches. And I also encourage my listeners out there who work in state and federal agencies, please reach out to folks like Anna at NRDC, as she mentioned, they're actively seeking partnerships, and numerous government entities share the objective of enhancing these bio programs. Let's make that happen. Okay, at Afters I just partnered with NRDC On this episode, imagine the potential of showcasing your achievements through a widely acclaimed podcast that boasts a large network of climate and adaptation professionals. Yes, I'm talking about America adapts and how it offers your company or organization the perfect platform to tell your adaptation story and spread your message to a diverse and highly influential audience of climate professionals. by sponsoring a whole episode you not only have the chance to share your story with the world, but also integrate a podcast episode into your organization's long term communication strategy. It's time to expand beyond the confines of webinars and white papers which can be dry and forgettable. Let's work closely to identify the experts who best represent the remarkable work your organization is undertaking and adaptation. Through the power of podcast storytelling. This will not only enable effective communication with your members, board members and funders, but also leave a lasting impact. The value of podcasts lies in their ability to continue promoting your story long after their initial release, ensuring it remains a critical educational resource for years to come. I am humbled to have collaborated with prestigious partners such as Patell NRDC, UPenn Wharton, WWF, UCLA, Harvard University, the trustees of reservations, and many more so lets you add your organization or company to this list. Yes, we can make a significant difference in the world of climate change adaptation. To learn more about the enduring value of podcasts and how they benefit your company or organization, email me at [America adapts@gmail.com](mailto:America adapts@gmail.com). Also, if you're interested in having me speak at a public or corporate event, reach out I've been doing some keynote presentations. I share stories from the podcast and my own experiences doing adaptation. And let me educate your audience on this emerging adaptation sector and how it differs from carbon mitigation and sustainability. Your companies and organizations and especially your leadership need to understand these differences in the years ahead, you can contact me at [America daps.org](http://America daps.org). And finally, as host of American apps, I'm always eager to connect with my listeners and hear their feedback on the show. Whether you want to share your thoughts or suggest a guest you'd like

to hear from. I'm open to it all. Your input not only helps me improve the show, but also leads exciting new opportunities. So please don't hesitate get in touch with me at America.daps@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Okay, adapters Keep up the great work. I'll see you next time.