



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Roger Marshall

Joint Research & Technology and Environment Subcommittee Hearing *Calm Before the Storm: Reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program*

December 4, 2019

Thank you for holding this hearing, Chairwoman Stevens and Chairwoman Fletcher.

I appreciate this committee's focus on improving forecasting the effects of severe weather events this Congress. Today's hearing builds on our previous work and examines how we can translate the knowledge gained from improved forecasts and use that to help our constituents better prepare for severe weather events – wind damage in this case.

Damage from severe wind effects from tornadoes and thunderstorms is a phenomenon Kansans know well. Farmers and ranchers face the constant threat of damaged equipment and lost crops due to severe weather. Homeowners in rural communities, towns, and cities all face the same prospect of damage to their homes. First responders and emergency personnel must be prepared for these events at a moment's notice.

The National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program – more commonly known as NWIRP was created by Congress in 2004. This legislation was written to help reduce the loss of life and property by ensuring a coordinated federal response in working with different levels of government, the private sector, and the research community in better understanding windstorms and mitigating their impacts. NWIRP was reauthorized in 2015 and placed the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in charge of coordinating federal efforts.

In the years since the program was created, we have made significant progress in understanding and mitigating the impacts of wind damage. NOAA has made strides in its ability to forecast extreme weather and will continue to do so thanks to weather-related legislation passed by this Committee. The National Science Foundation has engaged in research which has helped improve the communication of severe weather events to the public. NIST has led research which has resulted in improved building standards for communities across the country.

But we must strive to do more as we consider reauthorizing this program. Questions this committee should ask include: Can we further improve the coordination of the federal agencies involved in these efforts? How can we assist communities in adopting and utilizing the research generated through these efforts?

I want to thank our panel of witnesses for appearing here today who will help us answer these questions. Our witnesses represent government, academic, and private sector perspectives and I look forward to a conversation about how we can continue to address this important issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

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