“From Epic Fires to Epic Floods: Safety and Financial Implications for California”

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In January 2018, post-fire debris flows in Montecito, California, a small community of 8,600 people, killed 23 people and caused over $1 billion in damages, highlighting the critical importance of such events. Montecito is not unique. While the frequency and magnitude of extreme events in California are increasing with climate change, exposure to flooding is increasing faster due to increased populations in high-hazard zones. Looking more closely at the Montecito case reveals much deeper challenges related to methods used to assess risk and policy constraints to manage risk in a sustainable and equitable way. In this presentation, we will highlight international examples to discuss innovative approaches that can facilitate advances in knowledge and tools to reduce flood risk in California.

Dr. Anna Serra-Llobet is an environmental scientist whose research concerns flood risk management policies and environmental planning. After receiving her Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, she interned at the Directorate General for the Environment at the European Commission (EU) in Brussels, working on analyzing EU-funded research related to hydro-meteorological risks and vulnerability assessment in Europe. She is currently a researcher at the Center for Catastrophic Risk Management at UC Berkeley, researching sustainable flood management strategies in the US and the EU. Dr. Serra-Llobet also co-chairs the International Committee at the American Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM).