

Scientific Earthquake Studies Advisory Committee (SESAC) Winter 2026 Meeting: Minutes
minutes were chair certified for accuracy on 08/08/2026

Session 1: Wednesday, March 18, 9-11a MT

9:00a – welcome, logistics

9:10a – State of the Program (Gavin Hayes)

10:10a – GHSC (Morgan Moschetti)

10:35a – ESC Update (Christine Goulet)

Session 2: Wednesday, March 18, 12-1:30p MT

12:00p – Q&A

12:30p – Special Presentation – The National Seismic Hazard Model

1:00p – Open Discussion

Session 3: Wednesday, March 18, 2-3p MT

2:00p – ANSS Update (Long)

2:30p – Discussion

Committee members present: Michael Hamburger, Tim Melbourne, Maureen Long, Anne Meltzer, Ramon Arrowsmith, Mike Oskin

Committee members absent: Aaron Velasco

USGS: Gavin Hayes, Morgan Moschetti, Christine Goulet, Dave Applegate, Cecily Wolfe, Mike Blanpied, Allison Faris, Liz Hearn, Bill Barnhart, Jill Franks

Guests: Oscar Caballo (Lewis Burke) (attended first part of Session 1 only)

USGS Guests: Andi Ellis, Nico Luco (session 2), Allison Shumway (session 2)

Notes:

Session 1

After introductions, Acting AD for Natural Hazards Dave Applegate provided some remarks to the committee, thanking them for their service, and discussing some of the recent developments across USGS and within the Natural Hazards Mission Area.

- Questions and discussion about how SESAC can most effectively support EHP and the USGS; budget direction and changes; DA responded with comments summarizing importance of program's work, alignment with Executive Orders and public safety. Budget direction reflects high visibility and interest from members of Congress.

Gavin Hayes summarized the state of the Program, including recent changes to the program structure, budget, staffing, NEHRP activities, SESAC recommendations, external research grants and portfolio

review, and other program highlights. This was followed by a Geologic Hazards Science Center (GHSC) update from Morgan Moschetti and an Earthquake Science Center (ESC) update by Christine Goulet.

- Questions and discussion about NEHRP reauthorization legislation and impact of FY26 budget redirects; GH responded with further details, particularly regarding ShakeAlert. SESAC members repeated previous concerns about ShakeAlert growth at the expense of the rest of the program. SESAC expressed the desire to play a more active role in prioritization discussions, rather than only weighing in at the end after decisions have been made. SESAC also expressed concern over the lack of hiring, and particularly a lack of ability to recruit the next generation of scientists, including through the Mendenhall program. SESAC expressed concern about a perceived lack of impact of their letters, and asked about the routing process to Congress. SESAC asked if USGS receives confirmation of receipt of letters from Congress. GH responded that SESAC letters make a difference within the EHP, in setting prioritization. Letters go to Congress, but we don't have insight into how they are received. They also go through DOI on the way and get some exposure there.

Session 2

Nico Luco and Allison Shumway led a special presentation on the latest developments in the National Seismic Hazard Modeling project, including the Puerto Rico/US Virgin Islands update. Topics included partnerships, building code transition process, budget pressure and Congressional direction, model uncertainties, short-term forecasting, cascading hazards, and the Hazards Ready Nation program.

- Questions and discussion about partnerships; NL responded with further details of work with USACE and FEMA. GH responded with further details on NEHRP partners. SESAC also asked about NSHM review processes; NL responded with details regarding role of NSHM advisory committees.

Session 3

Maureen Long presented an update from the ANSS steering committee.

- Questions and discussion about monitoring footprint, ShakeAlert, DAS. GH and CW responded with details.

A discussion session followed. SESAC asked for details on the termination of the USGS IPA program, Terms and other hiring mechanisms, and the status of the Mendenhall program. GH, CG, and MM responded. IPAs are not disallowed, but paperwork is overly burdensome. New Mendenhalls will require a hiring waiver. Some previously approved Mendenhalls may come on board this summer/fall.

Session 4: Thursday, March 19, 9-11a MT

9:00a – welcome, logistics

9:10a – NSHM & NEPEC Updates (Blanpied)

9:40a – Discussion (Hamburger to moderate)

Session 5: Thursday, March 19, 12-1:30p MT

12:00p – Special Presentation – Earthquake Early Warning and ShakeAlert

12:30p – Open Discussion (Hamburger to moderate)

Session 6: Thursday, March 19, 2-3p MT

2:00p – Discussion, EHP Responses to FY2025 Report

Committee members present: Michael Hamburger, Tim Melbourne, Maureen Long, Ann Meltzer, Ramon Arrowsmith, Mike Oskin

USGS: Gavin Hayes, Morgan Moschetti, Christine Goulet, Cecily Wolfe, Mike Blanpied, Allison Faris, Liz Hearn, Bill Barnhart, Jill Franks

Guests: Linda Rowan (Congressional Research Services), Oscar Carballo

USGS Guests: Andi Ellis

Notes:

Session 4

Mike Blanpied presented an update of the NSHM, focusing on details of the PRVI update and review process. Mike also presented an update on NEPEC activities, the recent reconstitution of the committee, and upcoming meetings.

- Questions and discussion about coordination with CGS & Cal OES. MB responded. SESAC asked about the workload within the NSHMP, and about communications of model updates and the fate of the USGS Office of Communications and Publishing, recently consolidated into DOI. GH and CW responded with details of new procedures.

An open discussion session followed. The SESAC discussed info needed in developing SESAC's FY26 report, and the need for SESAC to emphasize the importance of the EHP to new leaders and players. SESAC discussed the fate and impact of their annual report.

SESAC requested **a graphic** that shows the increased budget for ShakeAlert, and how it has impacted funding for the rest of the program and the external research support program. SESAC discussed needing to make the case that NEHRP-supported basic earthquake science has been important and needs to be continued.

Discussion about budget, redirects, effect on staff and morale, and approaches to communicate impacts.

Session 5

Natalia Ruppert presented an update on the USGS ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning system, with a focus on the December 2025 false alert and potential expansion of ShakeAlert to Alaska, Nevada, and Utah.

- Questions and discussion focused on gaining improved understanding of the cause of the false alert, which NR and CW provided. SESAC also asked for updated information on the Canadian EEW system, and on Google Android Earthquake Alerts.

Session 6

This session was reserved for open discussion and preparation for the next SESAC meeting and the associated SESAC report, due by 9/30/26.

SESAC discussed the pros and cons of an interim letter focusing on the impacts of Congressional budget protocols.

SESAC discussed EHP external research grants, and asked for information on FY26 award decisions, which GH provided. SESAC stressed the importance of making results of FY25-26 cycles publicly available through the Grants website.

SESAC discussed the topics that an interim letter should focus on; budget redirect, impacts to research. The committee discussed the benefits of ensuring the letter is brief.

SESAC **requested information** on recent grant awards, and expectations for FY26.

SESAC **requested guidance** on whether they are able to communicate the contents of their reports/letters to a broader audience.

The committee discussed the next SESAC meeting, which they hope to hold in person in Washington, D.C., with the goal of inviting the USGS Director for a discussion.