**Unsolicited Pitch through our Form (1)**

**Section**

Environment and Energy

**Story**

Conservationists, Cengineers and the insurance industry team up to measure the economic benefits of coastal wetlands during hurricanes.

**Key points**

As we head into the heart of another catastrophic hurricane season, conversations about how we can be better prepared for the next one will become very relevant. Coastal wetlands have often been known to be able to reduce flooding, and yet they continue to be built over and lost to human activity. In this collaborative study we show that by using state-of-art flooding and loss models we can put a dollar value on wetland benefits during hurricanes and we can now 'price wetlands in' as part of a larger suite of risk reduction solutions. This means we can prioritize where we conserve and restore these natural defenses for risk reduction and show the financial benefits of doing so.

**Timeliness**

Now.

**Significance**

This study showcases the financial value of wetlands for reducing hurricane damages in a unique partnership between conservation and the insurance industry. In this study we show the benefits of natural coastal wetlands as first lines of defense against hurricane damages. Using high-resolution risk models from the insurance sector, we show that wetlands averted $625 million in direct flood damages during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Importantly, the study shows that we now have the tools to measure the value of wetlands for risk reduction and incentivize their conservation, so that we are better prepared for the next hurricane.

**Multimedia details**

We have maps and graphs from the paper, a short video and some images of wetlands. We have maps illustrating spatial variations in wetland values across the US Atlantic coast, and specifically for parts of New Jersey. We also have a graph showing the annual risk reduction benefits of conserved wetlands on the Barnegat Bay shoreline in New Jersey. We have a video summarizing the study and its key findings. We have some images of marsh wetlands on the US Atlantic coastline.

**Unsolicited Pitch through our Form (2)**

**Section: Philanthropy + Non-profits**

**Story**

The catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey in Texas has triggered outpourings of public support from around the country. This drive to help the victims of disaster is laudable, yet in-kind donations of goods are often the last thing that is needed in disaster-affected areas; instead, send cash.

**Significance**

From Boston’s ‘Help for Houston’ drive to countless other community collections, Americans want to help disaster victims. By encouraging them to make in-kind donations of goods to affected areas, however, leaders may be doing more harm than good. In-kind donations are simply not as helpful to disaster-affected communities as cash, and are often obstructive of organized relief efforts by incurring transit costs and clogging already damaged or overburdened ports, roads and warehouses with inappropriate items. Charity is a virtue, and the impulse to help should be channeled to do the greatest good: namely, cash donations to reputable relief organizations.

**Timeliness**

Now

**Key Points**

As humanitarian responders have seen firsthand from Hurricane Katrina to the Haiti earthquake, South Asian tsunami and Typhoon Haiyan, disaster relief efforts repeatedly provide lessons in good intentions gone wrong. At best, in-kind donations can augment official efforts and over-strapped local supplies. While ostensibly free, however, such donations come at an enormous cost in the cycle of the response: from shipping and storage to distribution. At worst, disaster zones become dumping grounds for inappropriate goods – whether used clothing, high-heeled shoes, ski gear or expired medications – which delay actual relief efforts and harm local economies.

As a researcher at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, my work is devoted to improving humanitarian response to conflict and disasters through professionalized, evidence-based response. There are few more consistent lessons from past disaster responses than this, and few better times to share such lessons than now, as many seek to help Harvey victims.

**In response to a topic suggested by an Editor**

I'm [NAME REDACTED], a math PhD candidate at [REDACTED]. I'm sending this email on behalf of myself and [REDACTED], another math PhD candidate here at [REDACTED]. I work in mathematical modeling of disease and [REDACTED] works in analytic number theory, but we both have a special interest in data science, in particular its application to sports analytics.

Your call for proposals for Mathematical Takes on March Madness was brought to our attention by [MEMBER OF MEDIA RELATIONS TEAM] (cc'ed), and we'd like to submit an article proposal:

---------

Every March, millions of people fill out brackets searching for the perfect 63 NCAA picks. However, most of us will have busted our brackets within the first two days of the tournament. Correctly selecting the first round of winners is the first step towards the elusive perfect bracket, and that means identifying first-round upsets. At least one such upset has occurred every year since the expansion of the NCAA tournament to 64 teams in 1985.  
  
Can a computer take the surprise out of an upset by predicting when one is likely to occur? That is, can a computer take the “upset” out of an upset? We aim to find out in this year’s tournament, using a little math and an analysis method called machine learning. We will feed a computer data on the NCAA teams, including past performance, and develop a mathematical algorithm that identifies the key statistics that could make an upset more likely. Our method differs from ones that [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com/) and others have used to pick their brackets each year.

Our article would talk about the importance and difficulty of identifying first-round upsets, explain machine learning and why we think it can do a better job at picking upsets, and then offer our picks as to the most likely upsets.  We could have the story ready before the tournament selection begins and add our picks after we run our algorithm (within a day or two before the tournament starts).

-----

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us. We look forward to hearing back from you.