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Near Earth Objects and Cascading Effects from the Policy Perspective: Implications from Problem and Solution Definition

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The characterization of near-Earth-objects (NEOs) in regard to physical attributes and potential risk and impact factors presents a complex and complicates scientific and engineering challenge. The societal and policy risks and impacts are no less complex, yet are rarely considered in the same context as material properties or related factors. Further, NEO impacts are typically considered as discrete events, not as initial events in a dynamic cascading system. The objective of this contribution is to position the characterization of NEOs within the public policy process domain as a means to reflect on the science-policy nexus in regard to risks and multi-hazard impacts associated with these hazards. This will be accomplished through, first, a brief overview of the science-policy nexus, followed by a discussion of policy process frameworks, such as agenda setting and the multiple streams model, focusing events, and punctuated equilibrium, and their application and appropriateness to the problem of NEOs. How, too, for example, does NEO hazard and risk compare with other low probability, high risk, hazards in regard to public policy? Finally, we will reflect on the implications of alternative NEO "solutions" and the characterization of the NEO "problem," and the political and public acceptance of policy alternatives as a way to link NEO science and policy in the context of the overall NH9.12 panel.