Project Announcement
NIDIS Pilot Project in the Carolinas

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and the Carolinas Integrated Sciences & Assessments (CISA) will partner to develop a Carolinas pilot project in 2012. The project's intended focus will be coastal ecosystems.

Initial activities for the Carolinas NIDIS pilot will include identifying potential project partners, including federal agencies, state agencies, scientific and technical experts, resource managers, non-profits, and others who are affected by drought or interested in improving the management of coastal resources during drought events. A steering committee will be tasked with identifying interested participants and developing an agenda for a workshop (expected for summer 2012). The objectives of the workshop will be to identify important issues of concern for the region and to establish and refine priorities for the pilot project. Possible projects might include assessment of the most appropriate and relevant drought indices for coastal ecosystems, collaboration with resource managers to develop relevant drought information for decision making, building – or improving existing – regional communication networks to disseminate drought data and information, or research to fill science gaps.

NIDIS History, Mission and Background

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Act, signed into law in 2006, calls for an interagency, multi-partner approach to drought monitoring, forecasting, and early warning, led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NIDIS draws on the personnel, experience, and networks of the National Drought Mitigation Center, the Regional Climate Centers, and the Regional Integrated Science Assessments (RISAs), among others. Federal agencies and departments partnering in NIDIS include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Geological Survey, NASA, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other partners include the Western Governors Association, the Indigenous Waters Network, The Weather Channel, and many universities.

NIDIS consolidates data on drought's physical, hydrological and socio-economic impacts for critical, drought-sensitive areas to enable proactive planning. NIDIS is building on existing system infrastructure, data, and operational products from various agencies.

NIDIS regional early warning system pilots or prototype systems are being developed to coordinate and strengthen capacity among states, counties, agencies and tribal communities for developing, managing and using drought early warning information. These systems support the following functions at regional, watershed and local scales:
(1) Communication and Education,
(2) Integrating monitoring and forecasting products,
(3) Impacts assessments and decision support tool development,
(4) Drought portal development at regional and watershed levels,
(5) Engaging preparedness communities, i.e., embedding information from (1) through (4) into planning and adaptation.

To date, NIDIS has developed pilot projects in four regions of the United States: (1) The Upper Colorado Basin, (2) the Four Corners Region, (3) Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) Basin, and (4) critical areas in California. Lessons and tools from these prototypes will be transferred and tested in other states and regions. NIDIS is increasingly acknowledged as a model for developing and delivering regional climate services. NIDIS actively seeks to engage partners in improving its effectiveness. The NIDIS Implementation Plan and technical reports can be found on the NIDIS U.S. Drought Portal, www.drought.gov/.

CISA Background

CISA is one of 11 Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) programs supported by NOAA. CISA works with a variety of stakeholders across North Carolina and South Carolina to incorporate climate information into water and coastal management and related decision-making processes. Efforts include working with decision makers on improving drought monitoring and management, linking climate variability to watershed/landuse planning, planning for coastal adaptation, and characterizing climate vulnerability in the region. CISA has conducted preliminary research to examine how coastal areas in the Carolinas are affected by drought and to identify potential research gaps and needs. This information has been compiled into a state of knowledge report: “The Impact of Drought on Coastal Ecosystems in the Carolinas.” Additional information about CISA is available at http://www.cisa.sc.edu/.

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