

**Drought Preparedness for Tribes in the Four Corners Region Workshop**  
**April 8-9, 2010**  
**USGS Flagstaff Science Center**  
**Flagstaff, Arizona**

Drought occurrence is central to the history of the southern Colorado Plateau. Even so, modern society has not experienced droughts as severe as those recorded in the tree-ring record. How we plan for drought is important because financial losses incurred from drought are much higher than most other natural disasters. In addition, our ability to address drought impacts will provide a measure of how well we may be able to prepare for climate change.

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)\* in conjunction with the Department of Interior, National Drought Mitigation Center, and the Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS) will host a 1.5 day workshop at the USGS Flagstaff Science Center, Flagstaff, Arizona, April 8-9 2010. The workshop is a direct response to drought and climate related issues and concerns raised among Native Nations in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Native leaders and natural resource managers who are responsible for making decisions related to climate and drought for their communities should attend this workshop in order to strengthen, refine and enhance their drought plan. The purpose of the workshop is twofold:

1. IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL NEEDS. In order to develop effective local drought early warning and response systems, it is necessary to articulate the drought and climate decision needs of tribal leaders and natural resource managers. How can drought plans be tailored to the resources available, and clear enough that decisive plans for mitigation can operate effectively? Any drought plan should have risk assessment criteria based on tribal needs as well as local meteorological conditions, and a mitigation plan that helps to lessen both community and resource impacts.
2. FORM A PARTNERSHIP NETWORK. NIDIS is charged with developing and implementing a drought early warning system. Native Nations can partner with NIDIS and bring visibility of local drought impacts to Federal Agencies. Federal drought relief is contingent upon information included in the Drought Monitor, a NIDIS publication.

We envision a workshop agenda that focuses on three central issues related to drought preparedness: monitoring, risk assessment, and response. The workshop will focus on issues such as:

- How we measure drought, and how often drought impacts are established depends on what is monitored, and how measurements are used.
- The importance of a clear risk assessment process for quickly establishing drought conditions and the severity of those conditions.
- The value of a drought emergency response plan, which should allow rapid response to occur, to minimize losses incurred from drought.
- The need to evaluate mitigation practices to assess their effectiveness, which will provide an avenue for improving future drought and climate change emergency response.

A primary outcome of this workshop will be to begin addressing the monitoring network shortfalls by developing a communication bridge among users and the datasets available. In addition we will work together to identify data gaps, and to provide recommendations for filling holes in local monitoring efforts.

*\*NIDIS: The National Integrated Drought Information System Act, (Public Law 109-430, December 2006): "An Act to establish a National Integrated Drought Information System within the National*

*Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve drought monitoring and forecasting capabilities.”*