Drought Impacts Reporting

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NATIONAL INTEGRATED DROUGHT INFORMATION SYSTEM

CIRES
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Drought Impacts Reporting Workshop

Identify needs, resources, approaches, and priorities for drought impacts reporting

Sponsored by CNAP, DWR, NIDIS. July 1st 2013

Participants: CNAP (Scripps, DRI), California DWR, National Drought Mitigation Center, San Diego State Univ., USDA - Office of the Chief Economist, CISA (Univ. of South Carolina), CLIMAS (Univ. of Arizona), WWA (Univ. of Colorado), Colorado Climate Center, JPL, National Weather Service

Workshop Questions

Why collect impacts data?
What is being collected now?
What is not being collected that should be?
Who currently conducts impacts reporting?
Who needs and uses these data?
What available resources could be tapped?
What can we learn and leverage from efforts underway?
How can we use impacts information for economic assessments?
How can the RISAs, NIDIS, and other partners be involved?

Statement of the Problem

To objectively and consistently quantify drought impacts

Challenges

Scale - impacts are often local, and don't scale up

Bias - impact assessments and drought declarations are often politicized

Subjectivity - no single objective "drought impact meter"

Data availability - impact data are often lacking or inaccessible

Data quality - impact data can be subjective, spotty, and unreliable

Challenges

Data relevance – available impact data may not be what decision-makers need

Fragmentation - no single agency responsible for impact reporting

Focus - impacts data often focused on agriculture

Managed versus unmanaged systems - impacts very different between managed systems (urban, irrigated agriculture) and unmanaged systems (ecosystems, dryland grazing)

Challenges

Sector specificity and complexity - impacts are often specific to one sector, or affect multiple sectors

Data collection - tendency to collect what can be collected, and measure what can be measured (even if purpose not clear)

Modeling - temptation to use models, which can be subject to bias and manipulation

Stovepiping - reluctance of agencies to cross boundaries, or to collaborate

Opportunities

Existing datasets - survey federal (and state) agencies for usable datasets – repurposing - make available on drought.gov

USDA/USBR pending MOU regarding wildfire impacts in Reclamation project watersheds

USDA climate hubs (pending)

USDA/NOAA MOU, cross-agency Subsidiary Agreements (e.g., NIDIS)

Partnering

Lessons Learned

Volunteers may not be able to provide foundation of impact monitoring system; need professional and institutionalized; need incentives for participation

Impacts often local, but need ways to scale up

Impact monitoring and reporting need to be continuous - not just during a drought

Wildfire and its linkages with drought need to be addressed, given the magnitude of wildfire impacts

Lessons Learned

Decision-making needs should guide data collection and reporting - understand how decision-makers use (and could misuse) data

Need connections between impacts reporting and decision-making

Impacts often qualitative

Need to evaluate prior and ongoing efforts and learn from them

Recommendations and Next Steps

Work with WSWC to approach NIDIS

Survey federal agencies for useful datasets (NIDIS task)

Survey decision-makers (e.g., state drought managers) to find out what impacts data they use, would need, and how they would use it

Explore linkages between drought indicators and impacts

Recommendations and Next Steps

Get "drought impacts" into priorities for federal agency grant programs, and into meetings and conferences (e.g., annual RISA conference)

Encourage better internal federal agency coordination

Identify gaps between resources and needs