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From the Director: February 1998

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Drought

Network News

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**A Newsletter of the International Drought Information Center
and the National Drought Mitigation Center**

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No. 1

From the Director

If it seems like considerable time has elapsed since you received the last issue of *Drought Network News*, it is not just your imagination. After much discussion, we decided not to publish the newsletter in October 1997. First, we had a limited number of submissions to include. Second, the task of editing the manuscript for a new drought book was an overwhelming task that was involving much of my time and that of my publications specialist, Deborah Wood. She is also responsible for *Drought Network News*. With more submissions and the near completion of the drought book, I am pleased to be publishing this issue of the newsletter.

The National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) organized and conducted two training workshops on drought contingency planning in 1997. These workshops were very successful, with more than 200 participants representing a diverse background of tribal, local, state, federal, and regional organizations and agencies. Three more workshops are planned for this spring. An article about the workshops is included in this issue (p. 3).

The National Drought Policy Act continues to be discussed in the U.S. Congress. The Senate version of the bill (S222) passed last November. An identical version of the bill was introduced in the House of Representatives (HR3035) in November. I testified in support of the bill at a hearing in late January. Although some minor modifications may be made in the bill, it is expected to pass the House. This bill would establish a commission to review existing drought programs at the federal, state, and local level and make recommendations to the Congress and the president on the elements of a national drought policy. The commission would have 18 months to complete its task. The NDMC will work closely with the commission.

The Western Drought Coordination Council (WDCC) is completing its first year of activities. The WDCC was formed by the Western Governors' Association in June 1997 to improve response to drought emergencies in the West, as well as enhance the level of drought preparedness and mitigation in the region. The WDCC is headquartered at the NDMC. (The WDCC was discussed in more detail in the June 1997 issue of *Drought Network News*.) The working groups of the WDCC have completed a number of products, which are (or soon will be) available on the WDCC web site (<http://enso.unl.edu/wdcc/>). Check it out!

With the growing popularity of the Internet and World Wide Web to distribute information and the comparative costs of distributing this information by more conventional means (“snail mail”), I am exploring the possibility of making *Drought Network News* available only in electronic form beginning in 1999. Our network includes about 1,500 persons, and about half of our network members are outside the United States. Current and back issues of *Drought Network News* are already available via the NDMC web site (<http://enso.unl.edu/ndmc/>). Although we have been successful obtaining funding for the newsletter up to this point to cover printing and distribution, resources are becoming more and more limited. If you have any comments on electronically distributing the newsletter, I would welcome them.

This issue of *Drought Network News* contains

articles about Bulgaria, India and Indonesia, Poland, and China. There has been a lull in recent months in article submissions for publication in *Drought Network News*. Members of the drought network are encouraged to submit articles and reports for publication. Through my participation in international meetings, I have discovered how valuable this information is to the scientific and policy community. It is critical that we share information and lessons learned with others. **The deadline for receipt of articles for publication in the June issue of *Drought Network News* is May 1, 1998.**

Donald A. Wilhite

Contents

Drought Planning Workshops	3
Drought Impacts on Crops in Bulgaria	4
El Niño’s Effects in India and Indonesia	6
Droughts in Poland, 1951–90	7
China’s Drought Climate Monitoring System	11
<i>Western Climate and Water Status</i>	12
Announcements	13
Change of Address	15