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From the Director: Spring 2001

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Network News

Winter 2000–
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**A Newsletter of the International Drought Information Center
and the National Drought Mitigation Center**

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From the Director

I recently participated in an advanced course, “Management Strategies to Mitigate Drought in the Mediterranean: Monitoring, Risk Analysis, and Contingency Planning”, in Rabat, Morocco (May 21–26). The course was organized by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (CIHEAM–IAMZ) and the Institut Agronomique et Veterinaire Hassan II in Rabat, Morocco, with contribution from the European Commission. The National Drought Mitigation Center’s Mark Svoboda also participated. Other lecturers included M. Wassif (Desert Research Center, Cairo); Eddy dePauw (ICARDA); Ana Iglesias (Universidad Politecnica, Madrid, and Center for Climate Systems Research, Columbia University); Karl Monnik (Institute for Soil, Climate and Water/ARC, South Africa); Manuel Menendez (CEDEX, Madrid, Spain); José Guerrero Ginel (Universidad de Córdoba, Córdoba, Spain); and Tayeb Ameziane, Omar Kerkat, and Mohammed Doukkali from IAVII, Rabat, Morocco. About 30 persons from 11 countries within the region participated in the course.

The goal of the course was to provide participants with methodologies and technical tools to develop and implement comprehensive drought preparedness plans. The format for the course was a series of lectures and a series of practicals focused on climatic indices and GIS techniques. The specific objectives of the course were included in the Fall 2000 issue (Volume 12, No. 3) of *Drought Network News*. I hope to include a more detailed summary of the course in a subsequent issue of this newsletter.

My travels and interactions with scientists and policy makers throughout the world repeatedly illustrate the importance of working together to reduce societal vulnerability to drought. To enhance national capacities for drought preparedness, I am currently launching a Global Drought Preparedness Network through both the International Drought Information Center and the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska. The goal is to create a “network of regional drought preparedness networks” to facilitate the sharing of information within and between regions and undertake specific regional projects. This concept was accepted for the Mediterranean region at the advanced course in Morocco (discussed above), and plans are underway to establish networks in South America, North America, eastern and central Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa. I am hoping to

encourage the adoption of this concept through the development of several regional networks in Asia in the near future. I have prepared a concept paper on this networking project that will be included in the next issue of *Drought Network News*. In the meantime, I will be contacting key organizations to garner support for this network and enlist their cooperation and collaboration. If you are interested in finding out more about this project, please contact me by e-mail at DWILHITE1@unl.edu.

This issue of *Drought Network News* contains articles on drought in Iran, India, and Nebraska. Readers are invited to submit articles for the next issue; the deadline to do so is August 20, 2001. Readers are also encouraged to submit announcements of workshops, conferences, and other information of interest to our network members.

Donald A. Wilhite

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Emergency Managers Adopt Position on Drought Policy

At its Mid-Year Retreat at the FEMA National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland, the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) adopted a position in support of the development of a national drought policy. IAEM called on Congress, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other federal agencies to give high priority to “the establishment of a National Drought Policy Council to coordinate the activities of more than 47 Federal programs dealing with drought and to evaluate the recommendations of the National Drought Policy Commission.” The text of IAEM’s Position Paper can be found at http://www.iaem.com/national_drought_policy.html. IAEM is a nonprofit organization of more than 1,700 emergency management professionals from local, state, and federal governments; military; private industry; and volunteer organizations.