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From the Director: Fall 2000

Donald A. Wilhite

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Drought Network News

Fall 2000 | A Newsletter of the International Drought Information Center and the National Drought Mitigation Center | Volume 12 No. 3

From the Director

The NDMC hosted the first annual "Drought Monitor Forum" in November. Most of the readers of *Drought Network News* are probably aware of the Drought Monitor web site (http://enso.unl.edu/monitor/index.html) and the products that are provided to users. (Mark Svoboda of the NDMC provided an overview of the Drought Monitor product in the Winter/Spring 2000 issue of *Drought Network News*.) This weekly product, jointly produced by the NDMC, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, has been widely accepted in the United States, and other countries are considering the adoption of a similar technique for mapping drought occurrence and classifying severity levels. The web site receives about 30,000 hits a week and is published widely in newspapers across the country. It has also been adopted by The Weather Channel.

A diverse set of users and technical specialists came together to review the product's successes and failures during its first year. We also discussed some of the more technical aspects of product development such as nomenclature and the use or modification of climate indices for incorporation in a blended index. Expect to see changes in the product, some subtle and some more dramatic, in the months ahead. We also expect NOAA's National Climatic Data Center to join us as a new partner in this activity in the spring of 2001. The Drought Monitor was highlighted in the report of the National Drought Policy Commission (NDPC) to Congress and the President in May 2000, and the NDPC recommended continued and expanded support for this partnership effort. (The NDPC report can be found at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/drought/finalreport/accesstoreports.htm.)

In the last issue of *Drought Network News*, I referred to the Expert Group Meeting on Early Warning Systems for Drought Preparedness and Drought Management, which I had organized with the World Meteorological Organization. This meeting was held in Lisbon, Portugal, in early September. The meeting was co-sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization, Secretariat of the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification, and UNDP's Office to Combat Desertification and Drought. As promised, the summary (and recommendations) of that meeting is included in this issue (p. 13). The proceedings of the meeting were presented at the Fourth Session of the Conference of Parties to the

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Convention to Combat Desertification in Bonn, Germany, in December 2000.

A growing number of drought network members have agreed to receive future issues of *Drought Network News* online. They have the advantage of receiving the newsletter several weeks before the printed version is available. If you'd like to join this group, contact Kim Klemsz (kklemsz2@unl.edu). We will notify you via e-mail when each new issue of *Drought Network News* is available. This will save us both printing and distribution costs—which are substantial. Back issues of *Drought Network News* are also available online.

This issue of the newsletter contains articles on the use of the SPI in northeastern Argentina, the application of NOAA/AVHRR data in Turkey, and a summary of a workshop on drought in Iran, in addition to the summary of the drought early warning systems meeting in Lisbon. Readers are encouraged to submit articles for the next issue by February 15, 2001. We also welcome announcements of workshops, conferences, and other information of interest to our network members.

Donald A. Wilhite

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