



Arizona Begins Drought Planning Process

END InSight Playing a Role

On March 20, 2003 Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano ordered that Arizona join 35 U.S. states, including New Mexico, that have created formal drought plans. The Arizona Drought Task Force is a direct response to the ongoing drought, while recognizing that droughts are a recurrent feature of the Southwest. The crisis that many rural areas of Arizona are facing is highlighted, along with the idea that adverse drought impacts can be mitigated by proper coordination of activities.

The timing of Gov. Napolitano's decree that Arizona develop a drought plan is most fortuitous with regard to the END InSight Initiative. Although it was not the intention of the Initiative at the outset, a window of opportunity has been opened for providing the Drought Task Force and other interested individuals with the climate information necessary to create an effective drought plan and for continued monitoring and evaluation of drought conditions. Stakeholder input gained through END InSight and other CLIMAS research efforts is expected to contribute to the research, monitoring, and communication aspects of the drought planning efforts and also encourage interaction among agencies, researchers, and the public.

Over the course of the past year, END InSight has made its participants aware of the broad spectrum of available climate information, improved understanding of climate variability and impacts, and raised awareness of the potential role of climate information in resource management and planning. In much the same way, the project will supply the Drought Task Force and the public with accurate and accessible information for planning and monitoring drought conditions. Up-to-date information on drought conditions, climate and weather forecasts, and other pertinent information will be available on the web.

The Drought Task Force website, <http://www.water.az.gov/gdtf/>, already includes links to the END InSight website. END climate information packets have been distributed and have formed the basis of presentations at drought task force meetings. The Arizona Department of Water Resources, which is heading up the drought planning effort, has expressed interest in providing a streamlined, web-based version of the information provided through the END InSight Initiative. The July 8 "End of END Workshop" in Tempe will provide an opportunity for dialogue between those who produce and those who use climate information and will contribute valuable insights to the drought planning process.

The Arizona drought plan will identify critical water shortage sectors, such as agricultural operations, wildlife, and wildfire, this summer and will implement a short-term drought plan to address needs in these areas. The plan also calls for longer-term drought mitigation, including developing thresholds for declaring a drought emergency. The longer-term effort will recognize and build upon existing drought efforts. It also aims to reduce the impact of drought on economic activities, communities, and habitats throughout the state. A conservation strategy that focuses on education, technology transfer, and assistance will also be developed.

The Drought Task Force includes state agencies and elected officials; representatives of Arizona counties, cities, towns, Indian tribes, water and power utilities, and the public are also being invited to participate. The National Drought Mitigation Center will play a role in shaping the agenda for the Drought Task Force through participation in a workshop scheduled for July 10.

Drought preparation has been formally underway in New Mexico for

almost five years. New Mexico began its drought planning process with an Executive Order signed by Gov. Gary Johnson on October 11, 1998. The New Mexico plan emphasizes actions for drought monitoring, assessment, preparedness, mitigation, and assistance. The plan has been edited and expanded several times.

New Mexico's Drought Planning Team produces a meteorological drought status map, available through their website at <http://weather.nmsu.edu/drought/droughtstatus.htm>. The site also links to CLIMAS' Southwest Climate Outlook, which provides the information from the END InSight packets on the web. The END team will continue to provide this monthly resource in the future. The Southwest Climate Outlook can be accessed directly at <http://www.ispe.arizona.edu/climas/forecasts/swoutlook.html>.

10 Steps for Drought Planning

1. Appoint a drought task force.
2. State the purpose and objectives of the drought plan.
3. Seek stakeholder participation and resolve conflict.
4. Inventory resources and identify groups at risk.
5. Develop organizational structure and prepare drought plan.
6. Integrate science and public policy, close institutional gaps.
7. Publicize the proposed plan, solicit reaction.
8. Implement the plan.
9. Develop education programs.
10. Post-drought evaluation.

From the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. For more information on drought planning, see <http://www.drought.unl.edu/index.htm>.