What is Climate Affairs?

It is evident that the twenty-first century has a good chance of becoming the climate century, a century in which climate-related concerns will occupy significant attention of the next generation of policy makers.” – Michael (Mickey) Glantz, National Center for Atmospheric Research, 2003.

"Climate information is any information that has a direct or indirect connection to climate processes and to the structure, function and impacts of the climate system.” – Mickey Glantz, Climate Affairs.

Why does WWA have a Climate Affairs Program?

Natural resource managers in the Intermountain West are concerned about how future climate variability and change will affect the resources they manage. In particular, these decision makers are concerned with how climate might decrease system reliability by reducing supplies and/or increasing demands. For the most part, these decision makers do not have a detailed understanding of the climate systems that affect their water supplies or knowledge of the climate forecasts and tools available because much of our climate knowledge is less than 15 years old (e.g. ENSO, ice cores, tree rings).

The Climate Affairs Program of the Western Water Assessment (WWA), modeled after Glantz’s book, provides natural resource managers with climate knowledge so that they can understand how climate affects water resources and apply this knowledge to their systems. The insights WWA gains from our interactions with stakeholders as part of the Climate Affairs program support the NOAA Strategic Goals to provide environmental literacy and improve use of climate information by decision makers. Only when decision makers understand the climate system and the impacts of climate in their resources will they be able to effectively use and guide NOAA’s evolving climate service tools.

Who is involved in Climate Affairs?

Western Water Assessment researchers:
- Brad Udall (WWA director),
- Robert S. Webb (NOAA Earth System Research Lab),
- Doug Key (NOAA National Climatic Data Center),
- Connie Woodhouse (NOAA National Climatic Data Center).

Several stakeholders regularly participate in Climate Affairs programs:
- California Department of Water Resources
- Colorado municipal water providers
- Experimental溪 forensics (Denver Water, Aurora Water, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District)
- Colorado River Water Conservation District
- Colorado Water Availability Task Force
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Northern Colorado Water Conservation District
- Wyoming irrigation districts (Goshen and Torrington)

Examples of previous speaking engagements:
- Presentation on water quality to the Western Coalition of And States (2006)
- Introduction to climate change information to Denver Water planning department (2005)
- Evaluation of the potential impacts of climate change on the green industry to the ProGreen Expo (2005)
- Introduction to climate information and WWA to Colorado River Water Conservation District seminars (2004)
- Brown-bag presentation about WWA to the Northern Colorado Water Conservation District (2004)
- Participation in USBR/Asp summit (1999-2004)

Climate Workshops

Current workshops:
- WWA held several workshops in the past year to educate decision makers in Colorado and Wyoming about seasonal climate forecasts. Workshop sites were forecasts, the state of climate knowledge, and current regional climate trends. The goals of the workshops are to give workshop attendees a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of these climate products to support information use in planning and decision-making; and to collect feedback on the products to improve usability.

Past workshops:
- Hydroclimatic streamflow reconstructions in management and planning.
- Sponsorship of annual U.S. of Colorado National Resource Law Center conferences.
- Climate change in the western U.S.
- Paleo streamflow reconstruction techniques for use in long-term water supply models.

Future workshops:
- Seasonal climate forecast verification and skill.
- Climate change in the western U.S.
- Paleo streamflow reconstruction techniques for use in long-term water supply models.

Speaking engagements:
- By speaking at conferences attended by water resource decision makers, Western Water Assessment scientists help develop an ongoing dialogue between researchers and stakeholders. Attending these conferences also helps WWA researchers learn more about the water managers’ annual operations and long-term planning issues, which will help WWA assist NOAA with improving climate services.

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- Doug Key, Klaus (NOAA National Climatic Data Center),
- Nolan Doeskin (Colorado Climate Center/Office of the State Climatologist).

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