

Managing Drought in the Southern Plains

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A drought of strong intensity and vast geographical extent has gripped the South Central United States since 2011, and in response the [Southern Climate Planning Program](#) (SCIPP) has launched a “Managing Drought in the Southern Plains” initiative. As early as November 2010, the NOAA Climate Prediction Center predicted that eastern Pacific La Niña conditions would increase the potential for drought formation across the southern United States. In fact, the state of Texas set its driest water year (October 2010-September 2011) on record. To respond to

these severe ongoing conditions, multiple efforts were launched to engage decision-makers from regional to state and local arenas in a conversation about drought.

Communication among agencies and affected sectors is key to successful management. Towards this end, SCIPP, in collaboration with the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), NOAA Regional Climate Services Director, National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC), Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS), and the region’s State Climatologists, launched a four-pronged approach to assure that all of these arenas were addressed: regional forums, state drought planning, a series of webinars and supporting local impact reporting. The net effect of these efforts is that interaction between these arenas and between the academic and practitioner communities increased sustainability. Many decision-makers have participated in multiple activities, such as state drought planners attending the regional forums or local Farm Service Agency offices participating in the drought webinars and impact reporting.

While in many instances the response to the drought has remained reactive, these discussions have yielded a treasure trove of information that will form subsequent development of best practices guidelines, improve drought planning, and connect state and local monitoring more closely.