National Integrated Drought Information System Drought Portal

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Introduction

A new clearinghouse for drought information is now available. The U.S. Drought Portal, (http://www.drought.gov) released on November 1, 2007, features drought information, resources, and products useful in monitoring emerging and ongoing droughts, assessing impacts, and providing mitigation and preparedness strategies. The Drought Portal is a part of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), a cross-agency effort to minimize vulnerability by collaborating drought management, planning, and preparedness on a national, state, and regional scale. It features updated drought information including hydrological, agricultural, and metrological conditions useful to a wide spectrum of user groups.

The Drought Portal was based on the need to assimilate, archive, and quality- control data and drought information, and to address drought questions, information gaps, and user needs in a consolidated location. The Drought Portal is intended as a localized tool to foster communication and partnership between NIDIS personnel, experts, and users to develop early detection and preparedness strategies. A goal of the Drought Portal is to provide a customized approach to drought information by providing a "My Page" feature, allowing users (decision makers, producers, general public, etc) to select and save products, content, data, and/or indices specific to their knowledge level and information needs.

Content selection and organization is based on providing users with tools and resources necessary in early drought detection and is available on the county, regional, and national scale. Three main boxes on the homepage feature the latest U.S. Drought Monitor, the Drought Impact Reporter, and the U.S. Seasonal Outlook, which provides information on current conditions, impacts, and expected persistence (Figure 15a). The Drought Portal features data and information from federal and non-federal sources, as well as an overview of NIDIS, drought education, planning, and research. A searchable database allows users to find specific products or resources, and a scroll of recent national drought news features drought information from a regional perspective.

From the homepage, users click on topic headings or the main boxes for related products and resources categorized by methodologies, sector, topic, and regional resources. Information is categorized in several ways to appeal to multiple user groups,

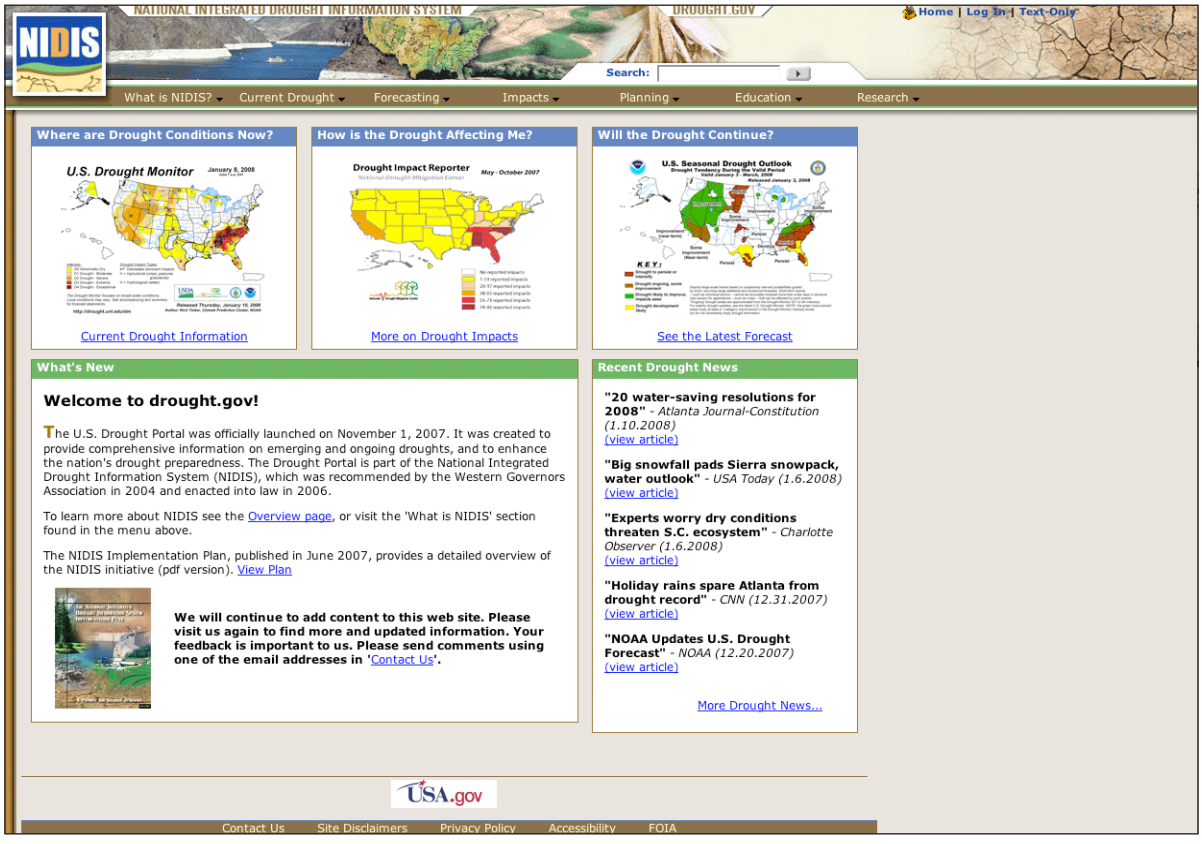

Figure 15a. The NIDIS Drought Portal homepage features drought information organized by topic, an introduction to NIDIS, and articles of regional interest.

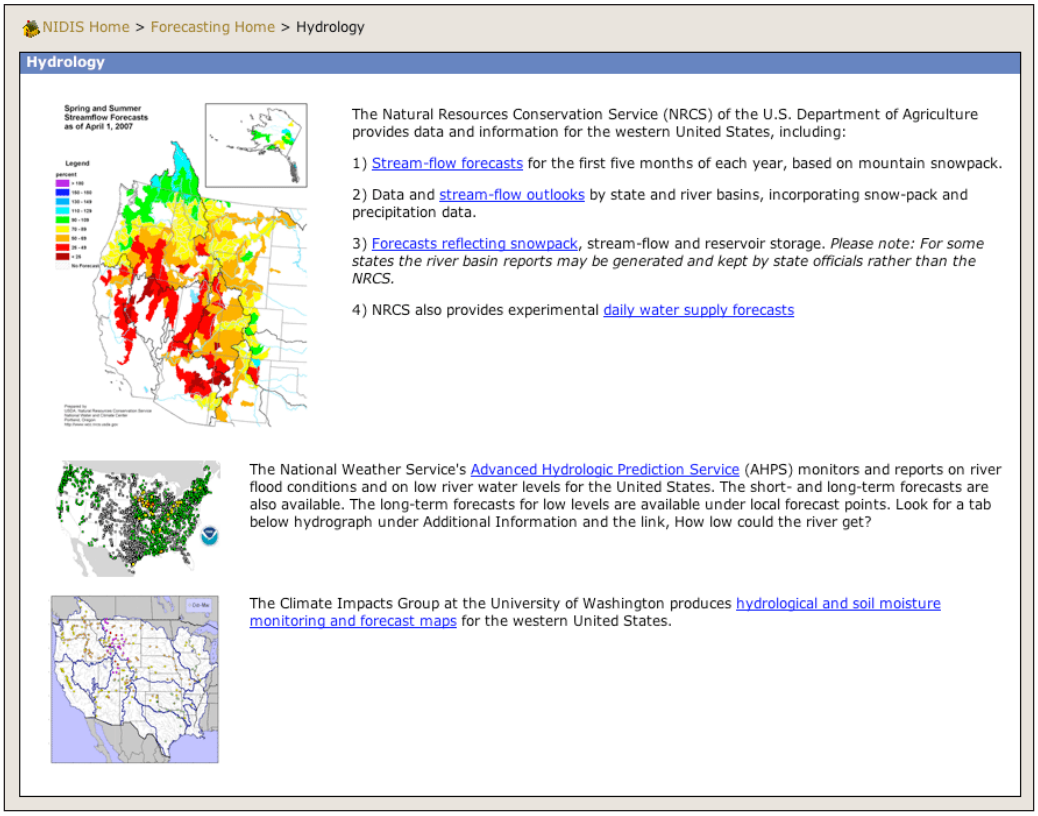

Figure 15b. Snapshot of "hydrology" webpage located under the "Forecasting" tab on the homepage. Each subtopic heading features one or more products and links, allowing users to view and compare data and products from a variety of agencies.

and level of drought knowledge For example, under the "Current Drought" homepage tab, sub topic headings include drought indicators, hydrological monitoring, remote sensing, wildfire, paleoclimatic data, water quality, and local, state, and regional resources. Each topic and the majority of sub topic headings feature one or more national drought products such as the Palmer Drought Severity Index (Current Drought section) or the NRCS streamflow forecasts (Forecasting section) (Figure 15b).

Future Development

In coming months, members of the Drought Portal working group will continue to add content including GIS applications and database development, and expand customization options for individual users. The Drought Portal working group encourages user feedback regarding the utility, content and format. You can submit feedback by clicking on "Contact Us" link located at the top right corner of the homepage for email information.

NIDIS

The development of the Drought Portal fulfills a milestone goal for NIDIS and is a key step in centralizing early warning detection, response, and prevention efforts. NIDIS was created to improve the nation's capacity to manage drought risk, provide tools and information needed to assess potential impacts, and to better respond to and mitigate the effects of drought. NIDIS is comprised of an Executive Council, Program Office, and Implementation Team that oversees five technical working groups: Public Awareness and Education, Engaging Preparedness Communities, Integrated Monitoring and Forecasting, Interdisciplinary Research and Applications, and the Drought Portal. The five technical working groups consist of representatives from a variety of federal, state, and tribal agencies selected to provide diversity in geography, expertise, and/or affiliation. WWA affiliate, Roger Pulwarty, is acting Director of the NIDIS Program Office. For more information about NIDIS, including organization, current research, and future goals, go to the Drought Portal homepage and click under "What is NIDIS?" or download the NIDIS Implementation Plan pdf (see On the Web box).

On the Web

- USDP available at URL: http://www.drought.gov.
- NIDIS Implementation Plan pdf available at URL: http://www.drought.gov/pdf/NIDIS-IPFinal-June07.pdf.