

Local Climatologist Attends Drought Conference
Oklahoma Climatological Survey
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NORMAN, OK - Climatologist Derek Arndt of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey (OCS) recently represented the state at a national workshop on drought in North America. The workshop, held in Asheville, North Carolina, April 25-27, focused on improving the U.S. Drought Monitor, a joint internet-based product of the National Weather Service, US Department of Agriculture, National Climate Data Center, and the National Drought Mitigation Center.

The Drought Monitor provides a weekly overview of where drought is emerging, lingering, or subsiding. Each week, one of a rotating panel of Drought Monitor authors brings together national weather data, computer model output, and feedback from drought experts at the state and local levels. The end result is an easy-to-read map showing current drought status on a national scale.

Arndt presented information regarding the current drought affecting western Oklahoma, and participated in discussions on improving the national product.

The Drought Monitor authors often benefit from OCS information that already provides rainfall information to Oklahomans. The OCS developed an internet site, the Oklahoma Drought Update, to deliver information to citizens and decision-makers in the state. Data from the Oklahoma Mesonet allows OCS to update the information automatically each day. In addition to Mesonet rainfall information, the Oklahoma Drought Update features Mesonet-based fire-management, smoke-management and drought index tools. "We invested some time into making the Oklahoma Drought Update, which is possible because of the timeliness and density of Mesonet data. Most of the time, the product does our advising for us," Arndt said. The Drought Monitor authors often consult this product when drafting their assessments for Oklahoma.

Even with the benefit of a unique system like the Oklahoma Mesonet, there are times when the Drought Monitor authors need to consult the Oklahoma Climatological Survey directly. "When the authors need a little more from us, I'm happy to help," Arndt said. "One of the things that makes their product a success is constant input from the state and local level. It's an example of how interagency cooperation can work."

The Oklahoma Drought Update can be found online through the OCS home page: <http://www.ocs.ou.edu/>

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