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Introduction

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) was established to "Enable the nation to move from a reactive to a more proactive approach to managing drought risks and impacts" (NIDIS, 2006). The governance structure for implementing this federal drought initiative is shown in Figure 1 (right).

Among other NIDIS responsibilities, the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) is assisting in the development of the Engaging Preparedness Communities (EPC) Working Group (Figure 1, highlighted in red). In its beginning stages, the role of this working group is to facilitate the interaction between the wide variety of managers that deal with drought issues, including state engineers, Drought Task Force members, producers, agri-businesspersons, municipal water managers, and many others.

Goals

The goals of the NDMC's efforts within the EPC are to:

- 1) Establish a two-way connection between the drought coordinators around the country and the scientists and policy makers through the Engaging Preparedness Communities technical working group.
- 2) Expand the network of drought coordinators by using the U.S. Drought Portal to create virtual communities through which members can communicate and share drought resources and information.
- 3) Facilitate communication regarding stakeholder-identified planning efforts, such as resources, assessment, strategies to cope with uncertainty, coordinating across boundaries, and sustainability (NIDIS Workshop Report, 2008).

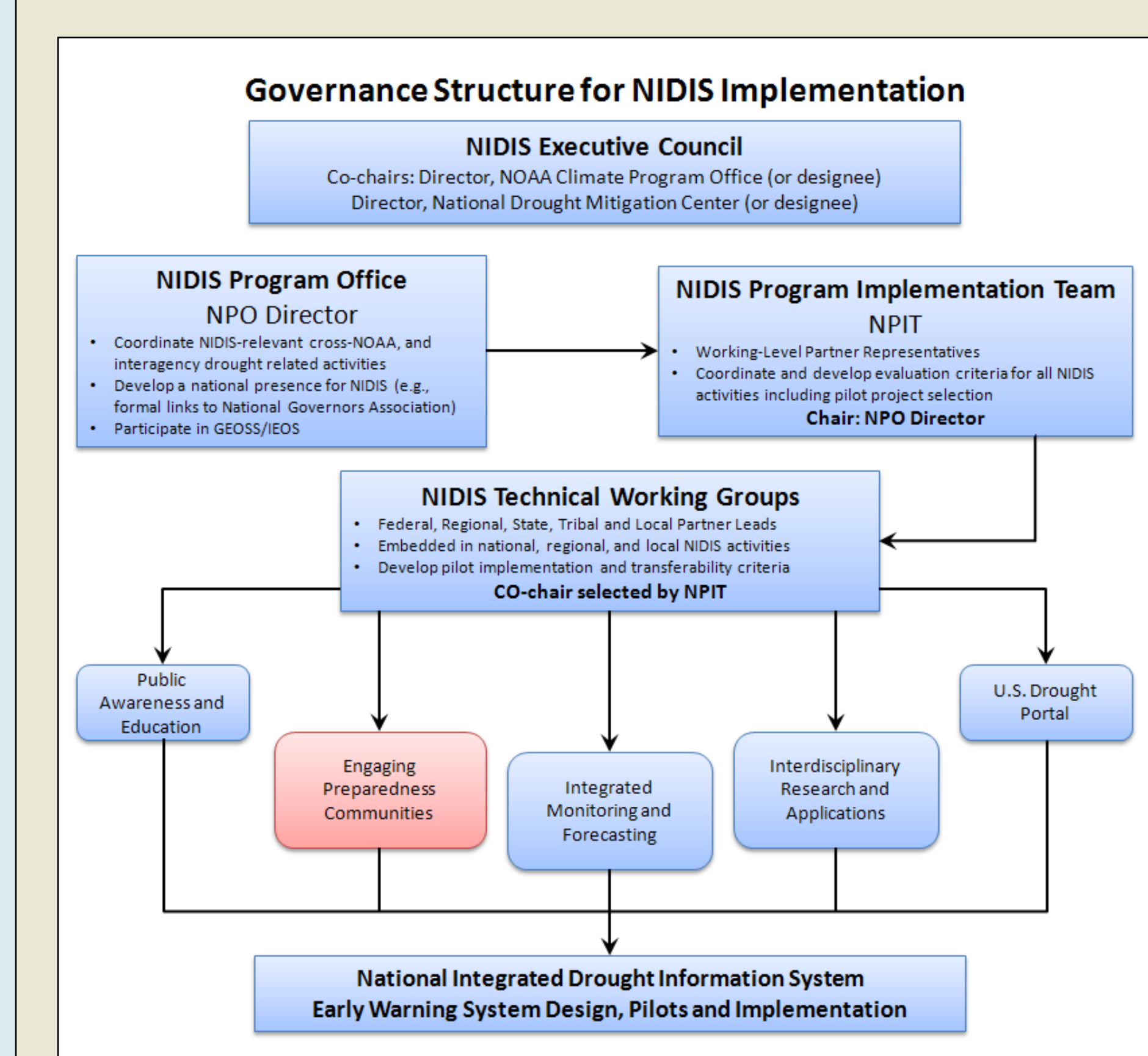


Figure 1: NIDIS Governance Structure (NIDIS Implementation Plan, 2007).

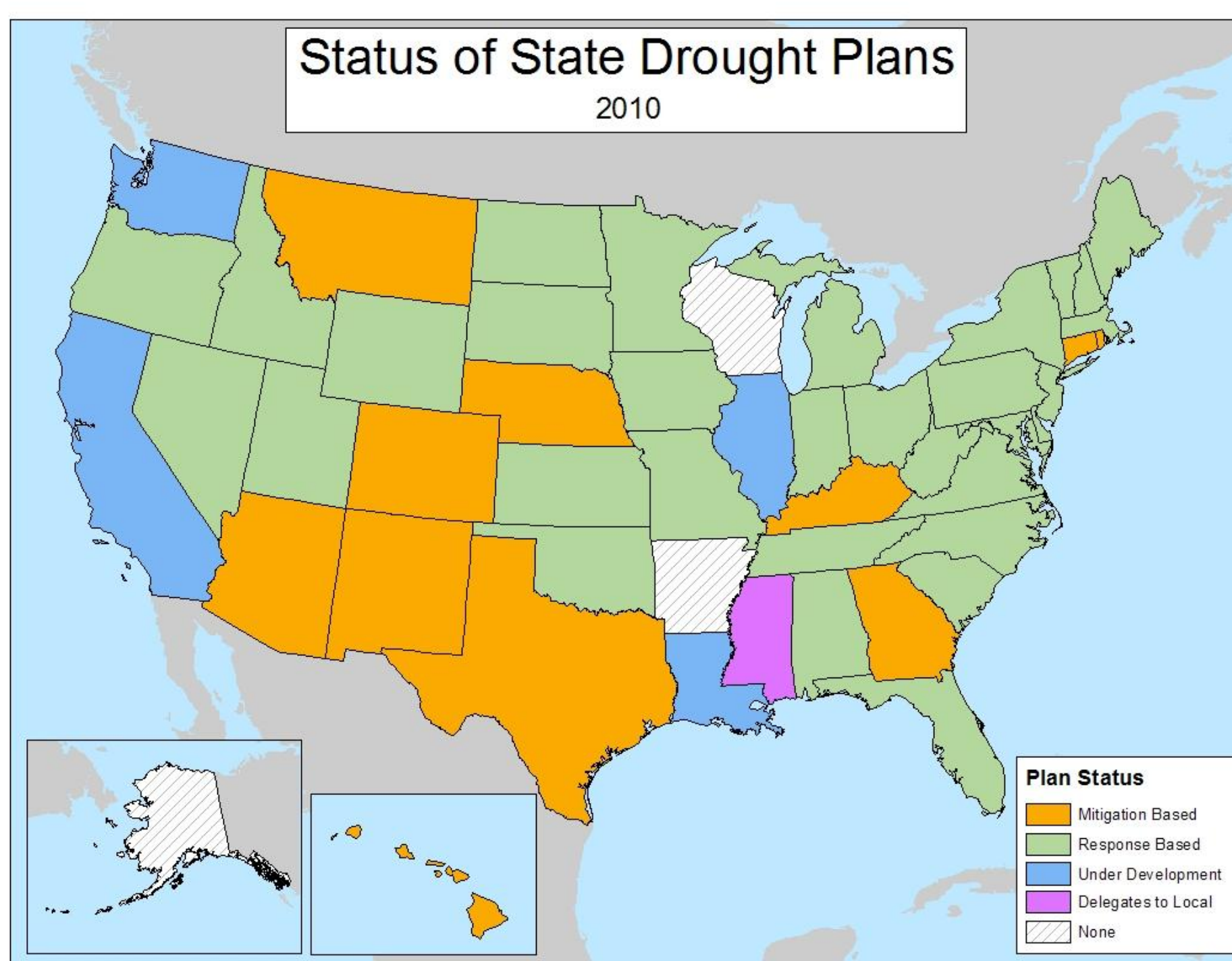


Figure 2: Status of state drought plans as of 2010.

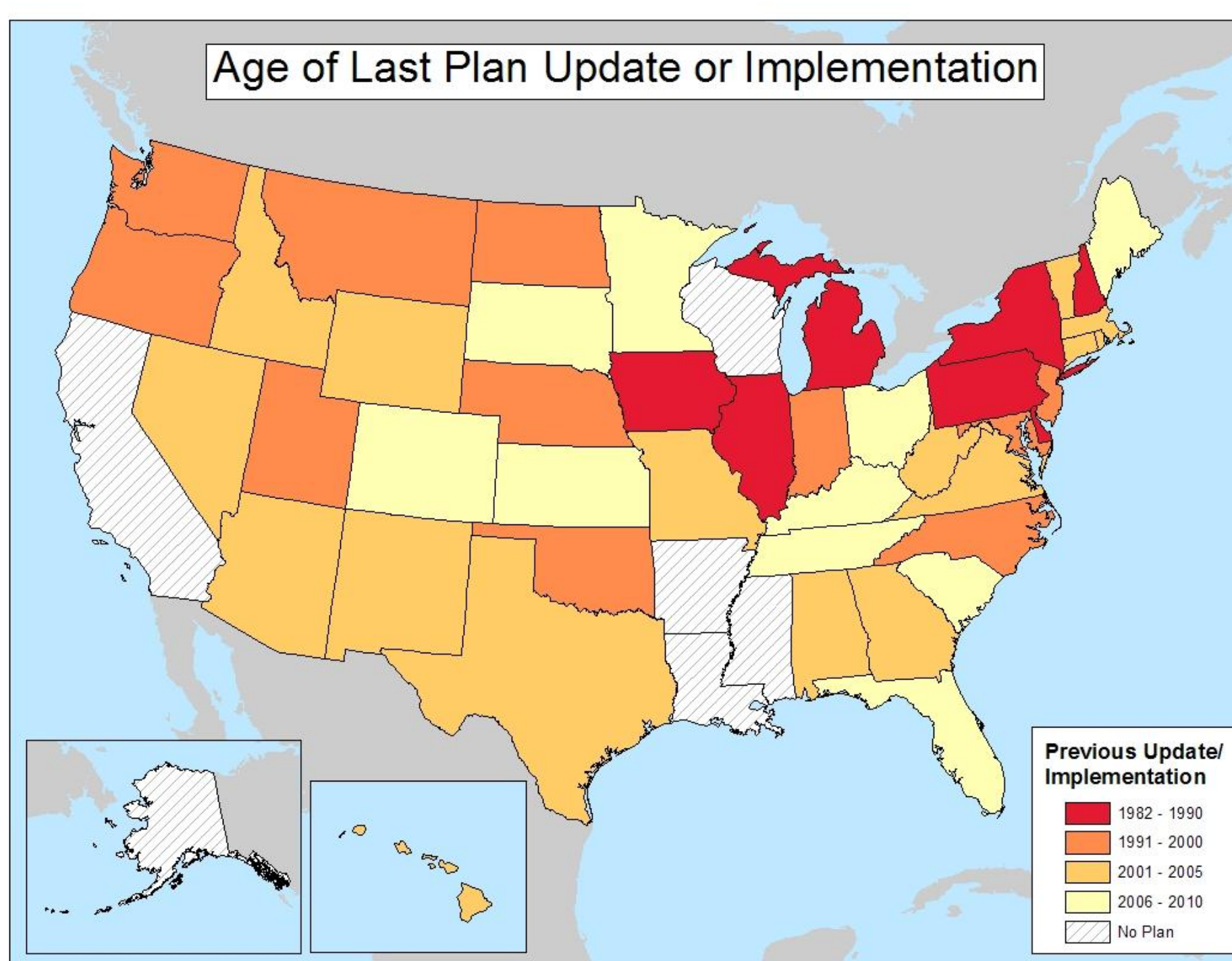


Figure 3: Age of last drought plan update or implementation.

Methods

To establish a drought coordinator network, the Engaging Preparedness Communities Working Group will:

- 1) Determine the current status of drought planning (Figure 2, left) in the U.S. by creating a database of all available state drought plan information, including:
 - Agency of state drought contact
 - Type of drought plan
 - Age of last plan update or implementation (Figure 3, left)
 - Plan components (e.g. triggers, indicators, communication)
- 2) Establish communication with state and local drought contacts by deploying a series of short surveys, following the plan outlined in Figure 4 (below, left). The surveys are designed to:
 - Determine the organizational structure and the frequency and methods of communication for a drought coordinator network
 - Identify additional stakeholders at the local level
 - Garner additional information and knowledge for the state drought plan database
 - Identify talking points for follow-up web engagement forums
- 3) Expand communication within the network through a sequence of web engagement forums and an annual drought stakeholder meeting aimed at both gathering and disseminating information (see Figure 5 below, right for timeline).
 - A web engagement forum (WEF) will follow each of the surveys described in (2). These WEFs will use a variety of web-based public participation methods to enable collaboration and communication between drought coordinators on a more frequent basis than time and travel budgets may allow. Topics for the WEFs will be driven by stakeholders through their participation in surveys and other drought stakeholder activities.
 - An annual stakeholder workshop will be held which will allow for face-to-face interaction and discussions among stakeholders on a wide variety of drought-related topics. For more information, please see the **Workshop Information** section (right).
- 4) Maintain communication through stakeholder contributions to U.S. Drought Portal community resources (e.g., a series of best practice guidelines, lessons learned documents, and planning and assessment resources).

Workshop Information

Building A Sustainable Network of Drought Communities 2011 Workshop

Tentative Date: June 8-10, 2011
Location: Chicago, IL

Check drought.unl.edu or drought.gov regularly for updated information.

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Engaging Preparedness Communities (EPC) Working Group and the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) invite you to participate in a workshop to explore areas of engaging preparedness before, during, and after drought periods.

Drought and water management professionals are invited to attend this workshop in an effort to expand communication and increase collaboration across the nation with regards to other drought professionals.

The workshop will look at a variety of topics related to drought management, resources and planning.

Topics may include:

- Practice drought exercises
- Post drought assessments
- Drought monitoring products
- Participations
- Sustainability
- Other topics based on survey results from upcoming EPC surveys

This workshop is being tailored to attendees' needs and interests in regards to drought planning and mitigation. Before finalizing the agenda we want to know:

- What do you want to learn more about?
- How would you like to collaborate/communicate with other drought and water management professionals?
- How is a practice drought exercise done?
- And any other questions you may want to address pertaining to drought information. Please e-mail us your input at NIDIS-EPC@unl.edu.

The two and a half day workshop will be held in Chicago, Illinois in early June 2011 and is the first workshop of its type put on by the NIDIS EPC Working Group. It is meant to be interactive and informative while pulling the drought professionals' community closer together so that we can learn from one another.

Figure 4 (left): Flow of communication from the national down to the local level.

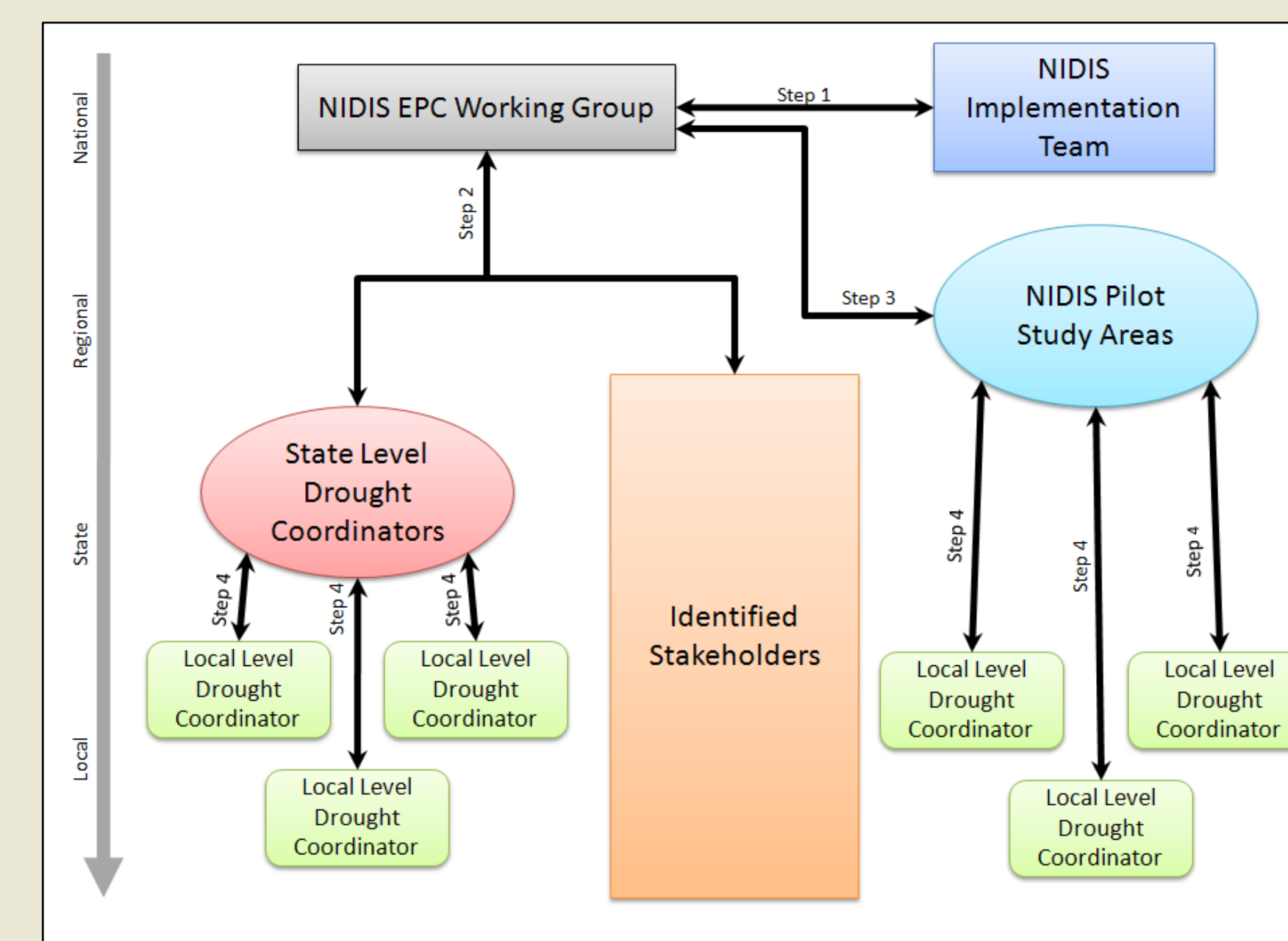
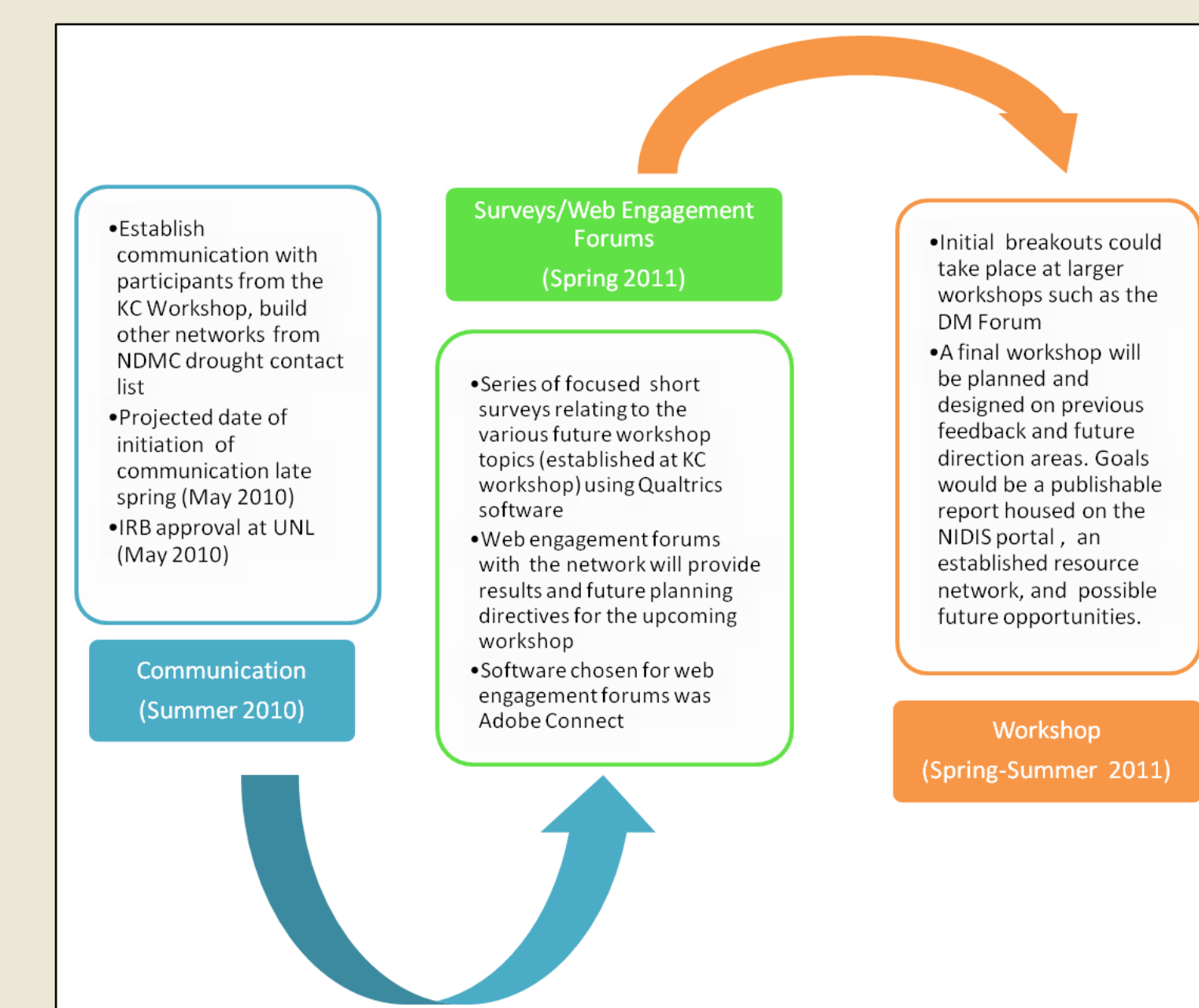


Figure 5 (right): Initial timeline for the NIDIS EPC Working Group.



To Participate

We are looking for additional stakeholders to participate in this very important NIDIS project. If you are interested in participating, please e-mail us. E-mail address: NIDIS-EPC@unl.edu

References

- NIDIS, 2006: U.S. Public Law 109-430. 109th Congress, 2nd sess., 20 Dec 2006. National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006.
- NIDIS Implementation Plan, 2007: available from <http://www.drought.gov/pdf/NIDIS-IPFinal-June07.pdf>. Accessed 18 Jan 2011.
- NIDIS Workshop Report, 2008: Status of Drought Early Warning Systems in the United States, 17-19 Jun 2008. Kansas City, Missouri. Report available from http://www.drought.gov/imageserver/NIDIS/workshops/kc/NIDIS_KCWorkshop_Final.pdf. Accessed 18 Jan 2011.