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1. INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing recognition of the usefulness of climate information, both recorded and predicted. Climate change has historically captured many of the headlines, however, there is an increasing understanding that regional and local applications of climate information, in isolation and in conjunction with climate change, can be utilized for mitigation, risk management, adaptation, public health, water quality, recreation, ecosystem and endangered species protection and enhancement, and economic benefit.

2. IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

The challenge is to provide high quality, spatially and temporally relevant climate information of value to decisionmakers. The need for cohesive and collaborative interactions at national, regional and local levels is well documented (Redmond, 2002; NRC, 2001;). In order to effectively respond to these identified needs, a structured program is required to facilitate and enhance the climate communities ability to respond to decision makers' climate demands. One proposed mechanism for addressing these documented needs is the "Cores for Regional Collaboration"

3. CORES FOR REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Several meetings held over the course of the last two years have provided evidence that this approach is effective. The Climate Prediction Assessments Workshop, held in Alexandria, Virginia, in October 2002 was one such meeting. Members of the proposed "Cores for Regional Collaboration," or cores, will be based on identification of regional and local climate community members and providing a forum for each member to bring their climate issues to the table, whether it be a climate-sensitive research challenge, a transition to applications issue, available funding, data, or any climate-related subject matter. The climate community for each region will include state entities, federal research, federal operations, Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments programs (RISA), Regional Climate Centers, State Climatologists, county offices, private sector, extension services, academia, non-profit organizations, and NOAA. NOAA will provide oversight and management.

The cores' objective is multifold. The regional climate

communities, defined on the basis of climate-sensitive issues, will participate in the forums to share regional and local science and review consistencies across regions. Policy issues that include a climate component such as requirements for new policies for drought mitigation, will be identified based on the input of all players within regions. In addition, operational requirements and limitations could also be addressed and solutions and transition procedures could be identified. The forums will provide opportunities to establish collaborations for leveraging funding opportunities such as the NOAA Climate Transition Program (Horsfall and Hill, 2004, AMS paper 69447), and to communicate funding opportunities for other regional programs.

As most climate funding priorities are set on a national level, there is a need to identify the issues at the regional and local level and elevate recommendations to the national level.

The cores will encompass a three-step process. The first step is a requirement to gather information and regional needs through the forums, or regional conferences. The second step is developing a capacity for working in the research arena, identifying resources, transfer of research to operations, maintaining operations, and providing extension services to effectively deliver the fruits of the research. With a clearly defined path for product delivery, the third step is a feedback process to determine what improvements can be made to the process and the product. This feedback process will establish the continuance to the first step, or the forums.

The cores will be self-defining, but closely linked to the development of new RISAs. As new RISAs are established through conferences that bring together climate community members, the participants will be able to continue their interaction through the cores' regional conferences. Conferences planned in the near future include participation by members of the academic community, State Climatologists, and NOAA offices, especially regional and local National Weather Services offices.

4. SUMMARY

Cores for Regional Collaboration are proposed to provide a methodology for identification of regional and

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local climate issues and collaboration by members of the climate community to address these identified issues. Topics to be addressed include problem identification, development of solutions and methods of transitioning research to operations, identification of funding opportunities, and policy recommendations for more effective delivery of climate services for the nation.

5. REFERENCES

National Research Council, 2001; A Climate Services Vision: First Steps Toward the Future. National Academy Press.

Redmond, K.T., 2002, A Regional Climate Services Core for the Western United States: An Organizational Perspective, Extended Abstracts, AMS 2002.