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June & July 2015

CISA & CoCoRaHS Condition Monitoring Newsletter

Dear CoCoRaHS Observer,

We hope you're finding ways to stay cool and have a little fun this summer. Hot temperatures and lack of precipitation have caused many areas in the Carolinas to experience abnormal dryness. This newsletter features the latest update from the U.S. Drought Monitor and a great example of how photos can be used to increase our understanding of the information you provide in your reports. We also share the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2015 Atlantic Hurricane Outlook and offer some tips to help you prepare for for the next hurricane or tropical storm. Lastly, we show how to enhance your reports by highlighting the strengths of a report recently submitted to the CoCoRaHS website.

If you are new to condition monitoring, here are a few links to useful resources as you get started:

- Project information sheet
- Training slideshow
- Step-by-step instructions for submitting a condition monitoring report

These resources are also available on the project webpage: www.cisa.sc.edu/CoCoRaHS.html.

Thank you for supporting the CISA and CoCoRaHS Condition Monitoring Project!

Sincerely,

The CISA Team - Amanda, David, Janae, Katie, Kirsten,

In This Issue

Quick Links

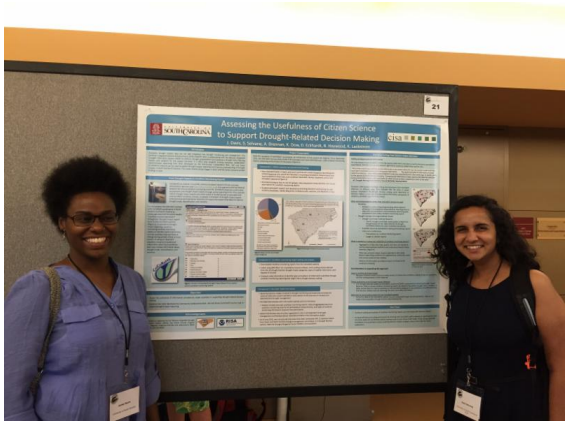
Kirstin and Sumi

Carolinas Integrated Sciences and Assessments

Summer Events Update

Condition Monitoring Project Presented at the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management

From June 13th-18th, professionals and researchers from around the world met in Charleston, SC to learn about social science research in natural resource management. At this conference, CISA team members, Sumi and Janae presented a poster they created describing the overall project and some of our initial findings from decision maker interviews.



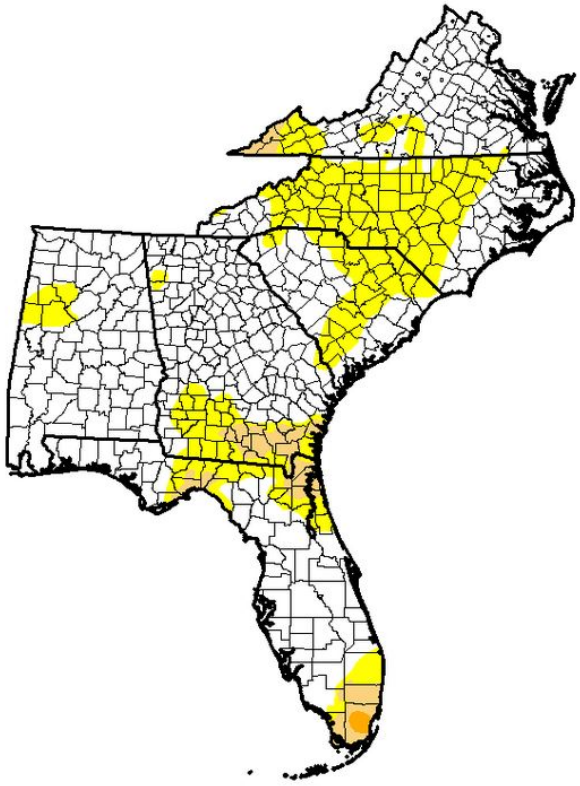
Upcoming Events - July Conference Call

We will host another conference call with observers in July. During our discussion, veteran observers will share their experiences with condition monitoring and precipitation reporting. If you have experiences to share or topics you would like to address, please send us an email at cisa@sc.edu. Look out for an update in the next few weeks with more information about the.

Drought Update for the Carolinas

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) map published on June 16, 2015 shows many areas categorized as Abnormally Dry (D0) in the Carolinas. The USDM authors note that abnormally high temperatures and patchy areas of rainfall have contributed to increasing dryness.

Since this update, the South Carolina Drought Response Committee met via conference call on Friday, June 19 to discuss conditions around the state. The drought status of 28 counties was upgraded to "incipient" drought. A news release about the call indicates that some of these counties have received less than four inches of rainfall during the past thirty days. The North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Committee expanded the area experiencing "abnormally dry" conditions in their state. The website update includes a request that residents in these areas monitor their water supply sources and prepare for impending drought conditions if current conditions persist.



US Drought Monitor Map released
Thursday, June 18, 2015

**Maps created by the U.S. Drought Monitor are typically published every Thursday morning by 8:30 am.*

A Backyard Story

Each month the CISA team asks observers to send in photos that capture the conditions in their areas. Photographs help us visualize the information you provide in the condition monitoring reports. For example, Ed Barrows submitted a great photo of his backyard on the morning of May 7th, which shows us what he describes in his report from May 8th.

In the condition monitoring report Ed writes: "The ground is beginning to dry out and firm up. You no longer will get mud on your shoes from walking in the low-lying areas of the yard. The creek is still and clear with many tadpoles and small fish in it. The Canada geese, mallard ducks and the blue heron are daily visitors to our yard. The bird feeders continue to

attract a wide variety of birds. We had our first sighting of the season of a humming bird this week. The grass in the lawn continues a vigorous growth and as usual, the weeds are doing well. Trees are all leafed out."

Ed's report does a great job of providing a variety of information. He helps us understand soil moisture by describing the mud in his backyard and water quality through his observations of the creek. He also goes into detail on several species of birds and their feeding activity. Lastly, Ed comments about the grass and trees in his backyard which informs us that plant growth has not been disrupted. Looking back at his photo, we can see what he sees.

From the perspective in the photo, we have a great vantage point of the surrounding areas. We see some slight change between the photo taken on the 7th and the condition monitoring report submitted on the 8th. In his submission of the photo Ed writes, "You can see the stream and pond in the background... You can see some color in the pond and algae in the distance." However, by the 8th, the color in pond dissipates. Ed reports that "The creek is still and clear".

Additionally, the healthy plant growth remains constant in the photo and in the written report from the following day. Ed describes his photo: "The trees are all leafed out and the grass is green... The tree on the other side of the creek just to the left of the rain gauge is a four year old long leaf pine which is growing slowly but appears healthy." Looking at the photo, we can really see all the vibrant and lush vegetation in Ed's backyard. The photo helps demonstrate the healthy plant

conditions noted in Ed's condition monitoring report. Thanks Ed!

Send Us Your Photos of Weather Impacts!

Feel free to send in more photos. It is nice to match certain elements from the photo with the conditions you report on a regular basis!

Summer is a dynamic time of year in the Carolinas. Warmer temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns lead to a variety of conditions. Try to send photos that capture dry conditions that you might experience, like wilting plants, low water levels, or extreme thermometer readings. Also, many of you are beginning to harvest the first crops from your gardens while others have delayed field preparation and planting due to wet conditions. You might also be looking for ways to stay cool in the summer heat. Why not photograph these happenings? Your photos help us to visualize the information you share through your reports. They are a great supplement to the written reports you submit through the CoCoRaHS website.

Unfortunately, CoCoRaHS does not provide a way to upload the photos online, so all photos should be e-mailed to the CISA team directly. Photos along with credits and related reports will be used in our blog, website and newsletter.

PHOTO SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:
Please e-mail your photos to cisa@sc.edu. Don't forget to include your name, the location and date the photo was taken, and a brief description of the weather or weather impacts that the photo captures.

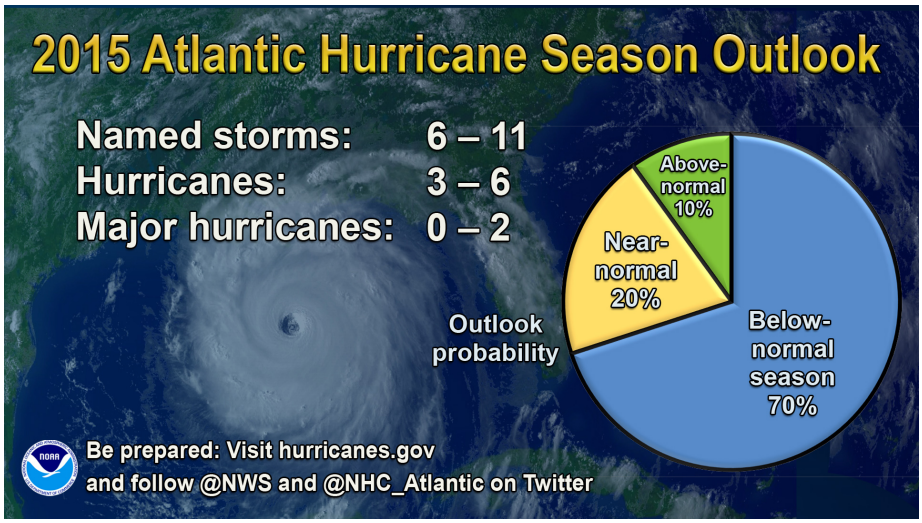
We look forward to seeing how weather affects your home, neighborhood and community!

Tips for Preparing for the 2015 Hurricane Season

In the Atlantic, hurricane season starts June 1st and goes through November 30th every year. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center releases an annual hurricane season outlook. The 2015 outlook predicts that hurricane and tropical storm activity will be below-normal.

Hurricanes and tropical storms require warmer than average waters in addition to wind and pressure to form. However, this year, wind and pressure patterns have been disrupted by El Niño. Additionally, current sea surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic may not be warm enough to sustain the

formation of a hurricane. NOAA forecasters will continue to monitor these conditions, and they will release an updated forecast for the remainder of the season in August.



2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season Forecast

Regardless of the below-normal seasonal forecast, if you live in or visit areas that might be at risk for a potential hurricane or tropical storm, particularly any communities along the Atlantic or Gulf Coast, you should be prepared. Even one storm can cause significant damage. For example, although not a hurricane during landfall, Tropical Storm Sandy in 2012 caused significant flooding both in communities along the coast via storm surge and farther inland from extreme precipitation. Hurricanes have greater wind speeds than tropical storms or depressions, and as a result, may also cause wind damage either from extreme winds or tornadoes.

Understanding what risks you face is the first step in preparing for a hurricane. Usually, emergency managers issue evacuation warnings based on the potential storm surge in an area. You should also work with your family to create evacuation and communication plans and an emergency preparedness kit. More general information about hurricane preparedness can be found at the National Hurricane Center, American Red Cross, and from Ready.gov. Both the American Red Cross and FEMA also have preparedness and hurricane apps for cellphones and tablets. For local information on preparedness and evacuation plans in your town or other areas that you might visit during summer vacation, check with local emergency managers, who may be a part of the police or fire departments in many cities and counties.

Condition Monitoring Star of the Month

Beginning this month, we are switching things up. Instead of posting a Condition Monitoring Star of the Week on our blog, we will feature a Condition Monitoring Star of the Month in our monthly newsletters. Instead of sharing several examples of condition monitoring reports, we will highlight one observer's report and explain what makes it beneficial to drought decision makers.

Our Condition Monitoring Star of the Month for June was posted on June 21st by DJ Moran in Craven County, NC. We chose this report because of the variety of detailed information it provides about current precipitation patterns and how they have impacted the observer's household, local roadways, commercial crops, insects, recreation, energy usage, and animals. We especially appreciate how DJ includes observations of weather and weather impacts at her home and beyond. The effects of weather on local communities are not often discussed in most reports submitted by observers, however this information is invaluable for understanding local conditions. Lastly, we want to recognize DJ for her commitment to submitting a condition monitoring report every week. Even when conditions are normal or haven't changed much, she continues to let us know what's happening (or not) in her community.

Not all reports you submit will cover the range of information presented here. However, we encourage you to look for the many ways weather impacts your home, neighborhood, community, city, county and state. This report offers some great examples of impacts you can look for in your area. Thank you DJ for your excellent reporting and dedication!

June 21, 2015
HOT temperatures have been the impact of this past week. With "in the shade temps" near 100 degrees every day, the heat index warnings just kept being issued - and appear that this will trend over the next week as well. For our direct area fell short of even one inch (.70) for the week. With hit-or-miss afternoon showers, nearby areas received either considerably more or less. Drying is becoming a concern with the combined westerly winds generally between 6 -12 mph. Watering of vegetables and ornamentals is necessary due more to the wind, than the lack of precipitation. Roadside drainage ditches have lost any standing water (in this immediate area). Soy bean seedlings benefitted from rain, but now are facing extreme heat with little precipitation. Struggling would be my observation.

Insects and bugs are becoming evident, especially near anything that was artificially watered. Mosquitoes are worse

this year - at this time - than they have been in past years. Honey bees (we are keepers) are doing all right; continue to have current brood / have plenty of nectar on their colonies - but are slow to turn it into honey / cap it off. Honey crop is still expected - but now about one month later than normal - effected by a loss of forage in late March and early April due to late freezes.

Outdoor Public activities continue with good attendance - especially if they were planned for early morning or evening events. Energy usage is no doubt high - surges and outages are occurring randomly. Swimming pool water temperatures are no longer refreshing - over 90 degrees. Another rabid (raccoon) animal within the county this week. Hummers are slowing on the feeders - heat and the trumpet honeysuckle is blooming. Other birds feeding at feeders - but generally in the early am or late evening. Our tap water is not "cold" any longer - in fact, I intend to take a reading this week just out of curiosity. River levels are (again driven by wind) generally a bit on the low side it seems (we are boaters).

See a List of Condition Monitoring Reports on the CoCoRaHS website to view more reports from fellow observers.

Feel free to contact us with any questions.

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