

river basin snow water equivalent, and pasture and range conditions from different agencies are integrated to create the final map. Electronic distribution of early drafts of the map to field experts throughout the country provides excellent ground truth for the patterns and severity of drought illustrated on the map each week.

USDM classifies droughts on a scale from one to four (D1–D4), with D4 reflecting an exceptional drought event such as a 1 in 50-year event. A fifth category, D0, indicates an abnormally dry area. The USDM map and narrative identify general drought areas, labelling droughts by intensity from least to most intense. D0 areas are either heading into drought or recovering from drought but still experiencing lingering impacts.

USDM also shows which sectors are presently experiencing direct and indirect impacts, using the labels A (agriculture: crops, livestock, pasture and grasslands), and H (hydrological) and/or W (water supplies). For example, an area shaded and labelled as D2 (A) is in general experiencing severe drought conditions that are affecting the agricultural sector

more significantly than the water supply sector. The map authors are careful not to bring an area into or out of drought too quickly, recognizing the slow-onset characteristics of drought, the long recovery process and the potential for lingering impacts.

The methodology associated with USDM has now been applied to the production of the North American Drought Monitor (NADM), a collaborative project between the United States, Mexico and Canada. The partnership began in 2002 in an attempt to map drought severity and spatial patterns across the North American continent. Figure 8 illustrates the NADM for May 2006. Multiple indices and indicators are used to map drought conditions, similar to the procedure used to generate the USDM. Responsibility for this product is shared between NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, the US Department of Agriculture and the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in the United States; the National Water Commission in Mexico; and Environment Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This product is prepared on a monthly basis and is an excellent example of international drought monitoring cooperation.

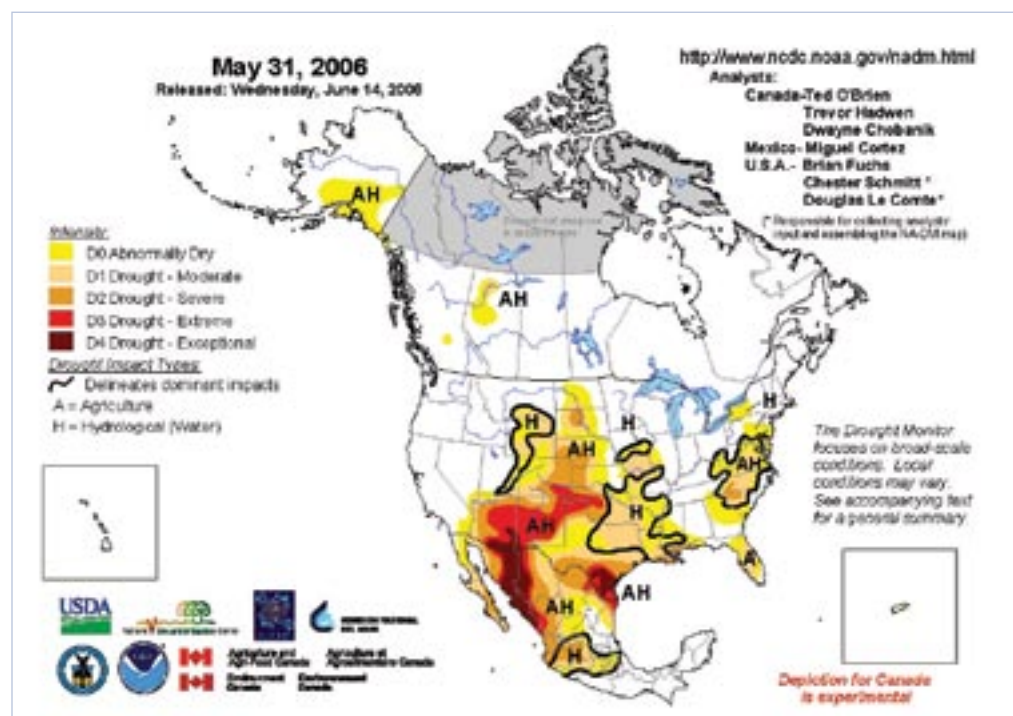


Figure 8. North American Drought Monitor, May 2006. (Source: North American Drought Monitor, <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/monitoring/drought/nadm/index.html>)

