

Meteorologists and the Media

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URL: <http://zisonline.com/meteorologists-and-the-media/>

(ZIZ News) – Meteorologists and other officials from around the region are, this week, learning how to work with the media to spread useful information to the general public.

BBC World News Anchor, David Eades has been training the professionals at a workshop at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort.

He told ZIZ News why the course is necessary.

“I think one of the biggest challenges for scientists generally, Meteorologists among them, is how do you get your information, your message over to people who don’t necessarily understand the subject in the way that you do; that’s most of us, basically,” Eades stated. “So I think the importance of looking at how you come over in the media is working out what is clear, what is simple, good illustrations, good examples, so that all of us understand what the questions are and what the answers are,” he added.

Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Adrian Trotman said the session forms part of a series of meetings to train meteorologists to speak on long term climate issues as opposed to short term weather forecasts.

“Our Meteorologists from the region are well trained in weather forecasting, however, over the last three years, there’s been a greater effort to train our region’s Met Services including CIMH in climate forecasting where we look at that three to six month time-scale,” Trotman added, noting that it’s a different skill that utilises different software to that of weather forecaster.

The workshop comes ahead of the opening session of the 2015 Dry Season – Caribbean Regional Climate Outlook Forum (CARICOF) Meeting which takes place Thursday, November 26 at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort.

Regional Officials Meet in St. Kitts-Nevis for CariCOF

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News Outlet: ZIZ Broadcasting Corporation (St. Kitts and Nevis)

URL: <http://zisonline.com/regional-officials-meet-in-st-kitts-nevis-for-caricof/>

(ZIZ News) – Climate change and the upcoming dry season are the main points of discussion during a two-day forum being held at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort.

The 2015 Dry Season – Caribbean Regional Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) meeting brings together representatives from climate sensitive sectors to discuss the next season's forecast and how it will impact their interests.

During the opening session, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Infrastructure, Brenda Boncamper said the event is timely. In noting the importance of addressing the issue of climate outlook she said, "I am hopeful that this meeting will build synergies among our Caribbean islands: adding that "CariCOF has assured that with each training workshop, more forecast products will be delivered to its stakeholders."

One of the main items on the agenda is the delivery of the six month forecast for the region.

Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Adrian Trotman told ZIZ News that that plan is important because "The forecast often has implications."

"The sectors after that group together and discuss what are the implications of the forecast for them and then they discuss with us how they should respond to the potential situation of the next three to six months," he explained.

Lester Arnold, Project Coordinator at the OECS Commission, noted that it was necessary to work with the CIMH on this initiative as climate variability has had significant impact throughout the region.

"We've seen the need for the partnership with CIMH because climate change is real. It is here to stay and it's not going away. Climate variability is also creating a bit of havoc on some of the island states as we've seen this year with regards to the drought. This is the second time in the history of Potworks Dam in Antigua that it has gone dry," he said.

"We've also seen the highest temperatures on record for the last 50 years and things of that sort so definitely we can say that climate variability is causing some trouble," he continued.

The climate sensitive sectors represented at the meeting include tourism, agriculture, health, and energy.

According to organisers, the forum provides seasonal climate forecasts and interpretations and are therefore critical in the development of early warning systems for the region.

Drought watch! Experts forecast more dry weather for the Caribbean

Date: November 27, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Observer (Jamaica)

URL: <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Drought-watch-19240652>

BASSETERRE, St Kitts (CMC) — Regional forecasters attending the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) are predicting that Caribbean countries from the Leeward Islands south to the Guianas can expect below average rainfall from December to February.

"The majority of the region will be under a drought watch. This includes from the Leewards right down to Trinidad," Elmo Burke, senior meteorological officer, at St Kitts Air & Sea Ports Authority told the two-day conference, which looks at the prediction for the upcoming dry season.

"Most of the Guianas will be under a drought watch, as well as Hispaniola," he said, adding that predictions are that Puerto Rico will be under a drought emergency.

"So, they are going to have to take some extreme measures to mitigate and prepare for this drought up to May 2016," Burke said, but noted that Caribbean countries west of Puerto Rico, including Belize, can expect above normal rainfall.

He told the audience, composed mainly of forecasters, water resource managers and agriculture stakeholders, the steps that can be taken to combat the situation.

"Water services need to continue to implement drought management plans and intensify that, because what we are realising, the bulk of the region will be experiencing some kind of drought... warning, or emergency, in the case of Puerto Rico," he told the event, which is organised by the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH).

"Our water services across the region have to continue to monitor their reservoirs as well as the ground water levels."

He told representatives at the biannual conference underway here, that forecasters are recommending that water authorities continue to sensitise the public about the drought situation across the region.

Burke also said water resource managers should continue to sensitise the public about water wastage laws and their penalties.

Adrian Trotman, an agrometeorologist at CMIH, told the conference that El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has some significant potential for the region.

He said the region has already been experiencing the impact of El Nino from early this year, in the form of reduced rainfall and its implications, particularly low water availability.

ENSO is an irregularly periodical climate change caused by variations in sea surface temperatures over the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, affecting much of the tropics and subtropics.

"I know that in many parts of the Caribbean measures had to be taken to restrict water usage in many ways. And the thing about it, when this was being done in many parts of the Caribbean, we were approaching the start of our wet season, which, from earlier in the year, we were suggesting would have been delayed in many parts of the Caribbean. It turned out very much to be that way.

We also suggested back then that there was the likelihood of an early end to the wet season. We are approaching that end.

"So we have a wet season, though when it started yielded less than we are accustomed to, less than we expect, following on the second half of a dry season which was really dry. And, oh my goodness, what do we say we are entering again? We are entering the dry season," Trotman said.

Regional forecasters and other officials say that the uncharacteristic weather being experienced across the region results from climate change.

"Climate change is real. It is here to stay and it is not going away. Climate variability is also creating a bit of havoc on some of the island states," said Lester Arnold, coordinator of the Reducing Risks to Human and Natural Assets Resulting from Climate Change (RRACC) Project at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission.

"This is the second time in the history of Potworks Dam in Antigua that it has gone dry. We've also seen the highest temperatures on record for the last 50 years. So, therefore, we can say that climate variability is causing some trouble."

Arnold said RRACC Project plans to hold three workshops in three OECS countries, including Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts Nevis, which he said are among the most water-stressed countries in the world.

The RRACC Project has erected hydro met stations at some OECS states and recently began the installation of early flood warning systems in Nevis.

Arnold, however, said some of the equipment installed is being vandalised.

"I think all of us need to play a part in preaching the message that these stations are for the good of all populations of the member states. Without these instruments, we will not be able to gather the information and warn persons of an impending flood. So, we need to revisit the way we educate persons to bring the message across that vandalism of these stations will not be tolerated."

He said some members of the public believe the equipment is for surveillance activities, hence the negative reaction to them.

"We have heard it in some areas, the guys will say 'Well, you all are coming to spy on us'. And we all know the reason, which I am not going to get into now," Arnold said, adding, "but we need to revisit how we communicate about the protection of the equipment."

Caribbean Climate Outlook Addresses Drought Conditions in Caribbean

Date: November 28, 2015

News Outlet: SKNVibes (St. Kitts and Nevis)

URL: <http://www.sknvibes.com/news/newsdetails.cfm/94212>

Basseterre, St. Kitts, November 28, 2015 (SKNIS): The 2015 Dry Season Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) began at the St. Kitts Marriott on Thursday, November 26.

The forum which is the second of its kind hosted by the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) is geared at discussing the implications of the Caribbean's 2015 Dry Season forecasts and outlooks for stakeholder groups while focusing on the current drought conditions in the Caribbean.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Posts, Urban Development and Transportation, Brenda Boncamper, explained that with the formulation of CariCOF came "technology that places the region in a position where we are now equipped to respond to many climate events that confront us, for instance droughts, floods and tropical cyclones which continue to pose serious risks for our region."

Permanent Secretary Boncamper explained that the Federation has been facing the realities of climate change in the form of severe drought conditions.

"We here in the Federation of St. Kitts and [Nevis](#) anticipated serious rainfall but were instead faced with a water crisis due to below average rainfall. Our water services department has been experiencing a very difficult 2015, a reality we have not experienced in 30 years," she said.

The permanent secretary asserted that forums such as these are important as "the Caribbean is filled with sharp and brilliant minds." She said that "it is heartening to know that we can rely on our own to educate, facilitate, and update us on pertinent matters that affect our very existence.

The Drought Continues, While the Hurricane Season Ends...

Date: November 30, 2015

News Outlet: SKNVibes (St. Kitts and Nevis)

URL: <http://www.sknvibes.com/news/newsdetails.cfm/94236>

November 30th, 2015 -- In May of this year, international weather service forecasters predicted a below average 2015 hurricane season and re-instated that estimation just three months later in August. At that time the experts focused on growing El Niño conditions in the Pacific Ocean that were expected to create disruptive wind shear across the Atlantic to inhibit tropical system formation.

During the season, which ends today, Monday, 30th November, there were 12 Tropical Depressions, 11 Tropical Storms, 4 Hurricanes with 2 being categorised as "intense".

The two intense hurricanes of the season were Danny and Joaquin. Danny reached winds of 115 mph before dry air and strong winds tore it apart near Guadeloupe, before approaching St. Kitts-Nevis with some rain, minor flooding at higher elevations and moderate winds. We were lucky we said, no major damage to homes or infrastructure,... and then the drought continued. And water rationing followed, proving luck had nothing at all to do with it.

Senior Met Officer, Elmo Burke said, "For the past year, St. Kitts-Nevis would have been primarily impacted by troughs most of the year, while Tropical Waves and Storms Danny and Erica, occurred during the Atlantic Hurricane Season."

According to Burke, the latter part of the season saw impacts from frontal Troughs (which are systems that precede a cold front), creating instability in the atmosphere and leading to moderate shower activity, as a result.

"Other than that," says Burke, "the Season was dominated by the drought impact, which would have been driven by El Nino, culminating with below average rainfall." And the rationing continued.

For many, the upside of the 2015 season is that although many storms formed in the eastern Atlantic, they eventually dissipated after being torn apart by wind shear in the central and western Atlantic, before making any significant landfalls. According to Burke, "We have El Niño to thank for that."

Last week CariCOF convened their "Drought Outlook Forum" at the Marriott in St. Kitts, the second of its kind, hosted by the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH). The intent was to discuss and to analyse the implications of the Caribbean's 2015 Dry Season forecast amid outlooks for stakeholder groups (such as Tourism, Water Services, Agriculture et al), while focusing on the current drought conditions in the Caribbean.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Posts, Urban Development and Transportation, Mrs. Brenda Boncamper, has said that the formulation of CariCOF came with "technology that places the region in a position where we are now equipped to respond to many climate events that confront us, for instance droughts, floods and tropical cyclones which continue to pose serious risks for our region."

Mrs. Boncamper explained that instead of the traditional "wet" or "rainy season" St. Kitts and Nevis has had to face a serious water crisis due to below average rainfall. "Our water services department has been experiencing a very difficult 2015, a reality we have not experienced in 30 years," she said.

Adding to that, scientists are predicting that the drought will not cease until well into the first quarter of 2016, despite some moderate to heavy downpours of late. Some are even proposing that "Drought" may become the new "Normal" for future weather patterns within the region.

The National Disaster Coordinator, Carl Herbert, has extended thanks to residents and the media for undertaking preparations, while remaining vigilant throughout the hurricane season and for disseminating critical information, respectively.

“As drought conditions continue, I urge residents not to waste water but to store this precious resource instead and to obey the instructions and appeals of the Water Services Department. During the next 5 months,” he said, “make time to examine and address the status of your property in preparation for the 2016 hurricane season.”

Antigua Surrounded by Sea but Catchments are Empty

Date: December 5, 2015

News Outlet: Inter-Press Service (Regional)

URL: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2015/12/antigua-surrounded-by-sea-but-catchments-are-empty/>

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua, Dec 5 2015 (IPS) - Antiguan Veronica Yearwood no longer panics when she hears that the rainfall forecast for the tiny Caribbean island is again lower than average rainfall.

Not because she is a hydrologist in the water department of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority. "We went passed that stage. We did panic, but we have now settled down to the reality that the drought is really going to be a very bad one; it's not going to end tomorrow," she told IPS.

"So we've decided to look at ways to mitigate, use what we have sufficiently," Yearwood said.

Antigua, a 108.5-square mile island of 80,000 people in the northern Caribbean, has been experiencing severe drought conditions for the past two years.

"All of our surface water catchments are bone dry. Our aquifers have shown a decline in the level of the water, and we've moved from 60 per cent desalination to 90 per cent desalination," Yearwood told IPS, adding that citizens are coping "as best as they can."

"We have rationing schedules," she said, adding that some residents of the island harvest and store rainwater.

"And in some cases, whenever the water is on, I need to top it up, so I top up my storage. That's basically how we survive. I tell my household we are in a severe drought so we have to ration and we have to conserve," she said.

"Two years we have been in a drought in Antigua. Most persons did not believe it, until now we are seeing the physical evidence of it.

"There is absolutely no water in the catchment. The farmers are crying. Some farmers who have never ever had the municipal water have been applying for the service. They have never seen it so bad before and this is the worst in my tenure that I have seen," said Yearwood, who has been a hydrologist for more than 30 years.

But the climate outlook for the Caribbean region for the six months ending May 2016 will bring no comfort to Antiguan and other Caribbean nationals who have also been battling drought conditions.

At the biannual Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) held here November 26-27, ahead of the dry season, which traditionally runs from December to May, forecasters said that most of the Caribbean is expected to have lower than average rainfall.

"For the upcoming dry season, we are expecting above normal temperatures for the entire region," Elmo Burke, senior meteorological officer at the St. Kitts Air and Seaports Authority told IPS on the sidelines of the CariCOF.

He says the northern islands of the Lesser Antilles chain all the way down to Trinidad, just off the South American mainland, are expected to have below normal rainfall.

Caribbean nations west of Puerto Rico, however, can expect above normal precipitation for the next three months.

"As it relates to the drought conditions, the majority of the island chain is expected to be under a drought warning," Burke said.

Certain parts of Puerto Rico will be under a drought emergency.

CariCOF brings together weather forecasters, water resource managers, and agriculture stakeholders among other professionals.

The nation in 2015 received just about 55 per cent of its average rainfall.

“At a time when we, here in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, anticipated significant rainfall, we were instead faced with a water crisis, due to below average rainfall,” Brenda Boncamper, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure told IPS.

“Our water services department has been experiencing a very difficult 2015, a reality we have not experienced in the Federation in over 30 years,” she added.

Burke says the effect of the less than average rainfall on St. Kitts is going to be pronounced in the dry season.

“Persons can expect more water rationing going into the dry season. Agriculture is going to be impacted also. You may eventually see the cost of some food products rise here because of shortage or reduction in yield also.”

Experts say that the entire region is experiencing a drought, including Dominica, where Tropical Storm Erika in August left damage and loss amounting to 95 per cent of GDP, according to government estimates.

The erratic weather, experts say, is directly linked to human induced climate change.

Boncamper agrees. “Clearly, we can see climate change at play here with its extreme weather and climate events. From all accounts, we can only expect more of this type of weather in 2016,” she told IPS.

Lester Arnold is coordinator of the Reducing Risks to Human and Natural Assets Resulting from Climate Change (RRACC) Project at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission.

“Climate change is real. It is here to stay and it is not going away,” he told IPS at the CariCOF.

“Climate variability also is creating a bit of a havoc on some of the island states, as we have seen for this year with regards to the drought. This is the second time in the history of Potworks Dam in Antigua (the island’s largest) that it has gone dry. We have also seen the highest temperature on record for the last 50 years or so.

“So I definitely can say that climate variability is causing some trouble,” Arnold says.

Caribbean leaders and negotiators will use real life experiences like those in Antigua, St. Kitts and Dominica to make to the international community at the world climate change talks in Paris next month, a case for a legally-binding agreement that will cap global temperature rise.

Experts say that human-induced global warming must be kept lower than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrialisation levels.

This, they say, is necessary to avert catastrophic climate events such as those being experienced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as those in the Caribbean, and other countries across the world.

Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, an archipelagic country in the south-eastern Caribbean, said the agreement coming out of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (COP21) must not be “something which states can opt into and opt out.”

“It is not discretionary, but legally binding,” Gonsalves said, adding that the deal must also include “monies which are legally binding for climate change adaptation and mitigation.”

“So targets which are set, which are legally-binding and we have a mechanism to monitor them,” he told IPS.

Gonsalves will face the electorate in general elections on December 9, but says that the talks are so important to his country and the region, that he would be on a flight to Paris on Dec. 10, one day before the talks are scheduled to end, if re-elected.

But whatever the outcome of the Paris talks, which Caribbean leaders say are too important to fail, forecasters say they are very confident that dry days are ahead for Caribbean nationals.

“We’ve always had droughts and the research has shown that the droughts have always occurred at a given period of time. But they’re severe and they come at a quicker interval than the used to, say from the 1950s to now,” Yearwood told IPS.