



Climate Change in Arizona

Workshop Educates Media

Workshop participants pictured from left to right, front row: Marley Shebala, Ted Morris, Mike Crimmins; second row, Tony Davis, Shoshana Mayden, Brad Branan; third row, Stephanie Doster, Greg Garfin, Emily Gersema; back row, Paul Giblin

Nine Arizona journalists gathered at the University of Arizona on February 15, 2006 for a full-day immersion into the science of climate change. The conference, titled “On the Trail of Climate Change,” was the first in a series of workshops for Arizona media sponsored by UA’s Climate Assessment for the Southwest (CLIMAS) project and Arizona Cooperative Extension.

“Global warming is becoming big news in Arizona, with drought, record temperatures, and devastating wildfires all capturing headlines,” said workshop organizer Shoshana Mayden, a UA graduate student in Geography. “Our goal is to give journalists the scientific background to cover these issues, as well as linking them to sources to draw on for stories.”

Participants included not only reporters in Tucson, but also journalists from Phoenix, Sierra Vista and the Navajo Nation. They were Marley Shebala, the *Navajo Times*; Ted Morris, *Sierra Vista Herald*; Tony Davis, *Arizona Daily Star*; Brad Branan and Renee Downing, *Tucson Citizen*; Emily Gersema and Paul Giblin, *East Valley Tribune*; and Connie Tuttle, *Tucson Weekly*. The journalists were given a primer on the climate of the Southwest by Mike Crimmins, an extension specialist in Soil, Water and Environmental Science. They later delved into the science behind global warming, learning from CLIMAS program manager Gregg Garfin about greenhouse gases, climate modeling, and climate change projections for Arizona. Both Crimmins and Garfin helped organize the workshop. Stephanie Doster, of the Institute for the Study of Planet Earth, also participated.

Water was a central topic, with Garfin’s presentation emphasizing that rising temperatures in the Southwest will lead to earlier snowmelt and increased evaporation in winters—both with implications for water supplies. A roundtable session gave participants a chance to ask questions about drought and water issues with three UA faculty: Bonnie Colby, Agricultural and Resource Economics; Kathy Jacobs, Arizona Water Institute; and Dave Meko, Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research.

Journalists got the opportunity to interact with scientific data through a number of hands-on activities. A web module demonstrated how climate change may already be increasing winter minimum temperatures at several locations around the state. A visit to the UA Laboratory for Tree-Ring Research showed participants how the varying annual bands of trees hold clues to the climate of the past. The day culminated with a demonstration of the online vegetation monitoring tool Arizona RangeView by extension agent Barron Orr and a team from the UA Office of Arid Lands Studies.

Feedback from participants was very positive, with all indicating the information provided will be useful for future stories. Mayden developed the workshop as part of the UA-NASA Space Grant Graduate Fellowship program. NOAA’s (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) Climate Program Office and Arizona Cooperative Extension provided additional funding. Materials from the meeting can be found at www.ispe.arizona.edu/events/climate_trail/workshop1.html. ☒