

Meeting of the CCSP Product 3.3 Committee on "Weather and Climate
Extremes in a Changing Climate"
Hilton Hotel, Chicago O'Hare Airport
January 9, 2007

Tuesday, January 9

Dr. Christopher Miller, Designated Federal Officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) Product Development Committee (CPDC) for Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3 (CPDC – S&A 3.3) called this second FACA meeting to order. The meeting proceeded in accordance with the published agenda (http://www.cpo.noaa.gov/index.jsp?pg= ./ccsp/33_meetings.jsp).

Public Comment

There was no request from the public to make a comment or statement during the official public comment period. Michael Kerrigan, who is associated with the Comer Science and Education Foundation, spoke later in the meeting about the climate science that Mr. Gary Comer supported during his lifetime, with its focus on abrupt climate change. Mr. Comer's daughter, Stephanie, has a continuing interest in promoting this type of research. Mr. Kerrigan is presently making contacts within the various federal agencies that sponsor climate science to understand the breadth of the federal effort and where research needs exist.

Discussion

Co-Chair Tom Karl reviewed the project schedule. He emphasized the importance of staying on schedule in completing the first draft and delivering it to NRC for review on Feb 15. Some authors expressed the desire for several extra weeks but the need to maintain schedule and the impact of slippages downstream (the Aspen Meeting that will respond to the NRC panel review of the first draft of the report) were reiterated.

The terminology to be used in the report was discussed by Susan Hassol. The need to avoid scientific jargon and to remember that the audience for the report will include many non-scientists who interpret words according to their common, not scientific, usage.

Substantial time was devoted to the discussion of the "Uncertainty" diagram and the issues involved with, on the one hand, conveying an honest picture of the degree of confidence in a statement while, on the other hand, not appearing to "waffle" or avoid saying anything

meaningful about important issues. Further work needs to be done shortly after the meeting to bring this to resolution.

The need to connect with user groups was emphasized repeatedly. The point was made that potential users should be contacted and that mechanisms such as the RISA network and the Regional Climate Centers should be employed. Other guidance included: (1) carefully craft key messages (2) place new findings in context and (3) address potential misunderstandings.

The need to ensure that the Preface and Executive Summary bring out the critical points in the study and to address pressing public issues was addressed. The current draft text for the ES was reviewed in detail and a number of changes were made. For example, the phrase "climate change" was considered more appropriate than "global warming". This review also (1) pointed out the need to insure that the points in the ES were adequately "anchored" to text in the chapters and (2) revealed the absence of potentially important subjects (e.g., Great Lakes/sea ice reduction with the implications for shoreline erosion) from the current material.

The point was made that almost any kind of climate change would have impacts and that most do not fit into the "extreme" category. The need to be careful in classifying events as extremes and the frequent difficulties in doing so was discussed along with the need for clarity and consistency with time-scales being considered in specific discussions. There is a tension between focusing on meteorological extremes and focusing on impacts. There are some "cumulative extreme events," like droughts, sea ice, snow cover, that should be addressed.

The need to be able to include reference citations in the report to support discussions was emphasized. The possible need for supplementary appendices was discussed; for highly technical topics, which cannot be covered in footnotes, a chapter CLA may propose the insertion of an appendix.

The desirability of including quantitative measures wherever possible (increase by how much, e.g. % increase/ degree C for hurricanes) was discussed. It was suggested that, in addition to information on the 2005 hurricane season, the 2004 hurricane season also should be referenced.

There was discussion about to what degree the modes of variability should be treated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. The group was asked to be cognizant of overlaps between chapters.

Meeting Adjourned at 4 pm.

Meeting Decisions and Actions

Post-meeting discussion will continue in order to resolve the issue with how best to convey "uncertainty" of results in the report.

Teleconferences will be scheduled as needed to expedite the work of the committee as it prepares the first draft of the report for NRC review.