The theme of the National Weather Service 2005-2010 Strategic Plan, “Working Together to Save Lives,” is also the perfect description for the recent Integrated Warning Team (IWT) workshops held in the Central Region last year. The first IWT workshop was held in Kansas City, Missouri in January 2009, and the second was held near Omaha, Nebraska in September. Each workshop brought together 80-100 participants primarily from three entities identified as the lead players in the overall severe weather warning process: the NWS, Emergency Management community, and Broadcast Meteorology community.

Operating effectively and efficiently during severe weather requires that all of the players must be committed to the highest level of teamwork. Imagine a warm, humid late spring evening, and during the pre-dawn hours Mother Nature unleashes a powerful and damaging line of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. In that instance, NWS forecasters use their expertise to predict the hazard and issue timely warnings, maintaining good communication with Emergency Managers, as they alert the public to the best of their abilities. Communication from the Broadcasters to the public is equally important since the Broadcast Meteorologists on TV are able to reach the majority of the population.

There were two such severe weather episodes during 2008 that closely resembled the above scenario; one in the Kansas City area and another in the Omaha area. From these events, lessons were learned, and those involved became motivated to build stronger working relationships with their colleagues during severe weather events.

NOAA took the lead, and assembled the IWT workshops with great success, resulting in a much stronger Integrated Warning Team identity. The three IWT entities built bridges, knocked down cultural walls, and became solidified as a group of people who want to do all they can to save lives during dangerous weather. A critical component to the IWT workshops was the inclusion of experts in “societal impacts meteorology.” Social science themes, such as improving communication, were integrated into the topics of the workshop. The social science experts also helped make the connection between the individual roles that the Team members play and the resulting lives that are saved.

The IWT workshops are an example of how NOAA is accomplishing its mission. Based on the feedback gained and the action items that have already been completed, future IWT workshops are set to realize similar successes, paving the way for a safer society.
Climate Engagement: Regional Team Activities in 2009

Climate activities are ongoing throughout the agency while NOAA continues to work towards creating a formal climate service office. The Central Regional Collaboration Team had several opportunities throughout 2009 to focus on climate engagement.

On June 1-2, more than 100 climate communicators met in the NOAA Science Center in Silver Spring, Maryland to explore new technologies and share ideas for delivery of climate information. As part of a NOAA mini-grant from the Executive Committee on Engagement, the ClimateWatch Editorial Workshop included participants from science-technology centers, museums, academia, and tribal communities. The event, designed to improve communication skills through the use of storytelling, resulted in new partnerships between NOAA and many participants to collaborate on ClimateWatch stories, one component of the Climate Service Portal.

The NOAA Central Regional Collaboration Team served as a partner sponsor for the June 29-30 International Climate Stewardship Solutions Conference, held in Bismarck, North Dakota. The event was focused on proactive and constructive approaches to climate challenges. The conference highlighted examples of strategies, policies, and technologies from other countries that have been effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving real benefits in key economic sectors. Speakers represented both international and national interests and governments, including John Hoeven, Governor of North Dakota and Li Haiyan, Counselor for Economic Affairs and Chief Representative, China’s National Development and Reform Commission. The conference featured presentations related to current work in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Australia, China, and the United States.

On September 9-10, the NOAA Central Region Collaboration Team hosted a Regional Climate Services Planning Meeting for Agriculture in Champaign, Illinois. The Team partnered with Illinois/Indiana Sea Grant and the Midwestern Regional Climate Center to gather key stakeholders and continue discussing the critical information needs for agricultural decision makers. NOAA and its partners are eager to understand the climate information priorities within the agricultural community and help determine where effort and support should go to address the gaps. The meeting was a follow on from the “Corn and Climate Workshop,” which began this discussion in September 2008 and resulted in several short- and long-term actions related to regional climate services.

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Central Region Team Member Doug Kluck presented to legislators at the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL) meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota on September 24th. The NCEL is a voluntary group of some 800 members across the U.S. that cares deeply about the environment. Invited by the Great Plains Institute and NCEL, Doug spoke on climate change impacts to agriculture in the Midwest and NOAA’s climate service engagement efforts in the region. The audience of over 50 included legislators from all the states along the Mississippi River. A main area of concern was the Mississippi River and the environment within and along it, as well as Gulf of Mexico hypoxia.

On November 12-13, 2009, the International Institute for Indigenous Resource Management, together with its tribal and institutional partners, hosted a Dialogue on Building Tribal Community Resilience to Adaptively Manage the Effects of Drought and Other Climate Changes in Indian Country. Central Region Coordinator, Bethany Hale, participated in the facilitated dialogue, which had several objectives. The dialogue brought together key representatives of various tribal audiences, educational institutions, government agencies and climate, drought, and risk experts to identify and examine the impacts of extended drought on tribal interests and identify approaches, systems, and institutions required to adapt to or recover from these impacts.

The Central Regional Collaboration Team has several climate engagement activities planned for 2010. Look for updates in future issues of E-Central News or contact NOAA.CentralRegion@noaa.gov for more information or questions.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:
Daphne Thompson

What is your position at NOAA?
I’m a meteorologist, and I’ve been the Educational Outreach Coordinator working with all 5 NOAA organizations at the National Weather Center for about four years. The majority of my job involves giving tours. Some days I’m talking to third graders, the next day senior citizens, or a special government group. It’s exciting. This job didn’t exist before I got it, so I was able to create and build what I wanted it to be.

What brought you to NOAA?
I’ve never worked for anyone else! I think it’s great. The people I work with have known me since I was seventeen, when I first began working for NOAA. I’m almost like their daughter; they’ve seen me grow up and have my own kids. I’ve known quite a few of them for most of my life.
Native Peoples Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop II

On November 18-21, over 350 native peoples and non-native partners gathered at the Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, Minnesota for the Native Peoples Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop II. The four day event was hosted by NASA and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (along with several other partners, including NOAA). It brought together Tribal College and University students and staff with Native peoples to actively play a role in climate change policy, assessment, and research. One highlight of the substantive agenda was a listening session with representatives from the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency. Specific contributions organized by the NOAA Central Team included:

- Supported attendance of nine individuals to serve as “experts” for each of the breakout sessions focused on climate change impacts. These experts included co-authors of the Global Climate Change Impacts in the U.S. Report, climate scientists, and staff from four of NOAA’s Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) programs.
- Provided copies of the “Highlights Report” (a 20 page summary of the Report) to workshop participants that provided science information to guide the breakout sessions.
- Delivered a presentation on the overall Report to a plenary session.
- Supported attendance of Minnesota Sea Grant staff. Both NOAA and Sea Grant had booths at the event and engaged many participants on their work and opportunities for future collaboration.
- Arranged for the attendance of Gary Collins, from the Indigenous Waters Network, who provided a presentation during a session on water resources. His presentation provided an overview of a NIDIS-sponsored June meeting on climate change, drought, and early warning on Western Native Lands.

On the final day of the workshop, participants finalized and signed a Declaration which captured Indigenous perspectives and solutions related to climate change for the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference. The Declaration is available at http://portal3.aihec.org/sites/NPNH/Pages/Default.aspx. Video of the workshop, speaker presentations and discussion notes will be available soon on this website as well.

GIS Day: November 18

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) movement is on in full force throughout NOAA, in the National Weather Service, and across the globe. Any time you check radar, click on a map to get a forecast, or get information such as watches, warnings, and advisories, you are using GIS.

In observance of GIS Day, November 18th, the NWS Central Region GIS Team created a newsletter, brochure and very comprehensive web page. Learn more about GIS and find resources to promote GIS by visiting: http://www.crh.noaa.gov/sgf/?n=gisday.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

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My father worked for Phillips 66 as a chemical engineer, so I guess I got my interest in science from him. I was born in Venezuela, then we moved to England, then South Texas, then the Texas Panhandle, where I mainly grew up. I experienced so many different kinds of weather there and enjoyed watching the big storms form. My mother was scared to death of severe weather and had us hiding in the basement all the time, but I started chasing storms as soon as I got to college. My husband is a lead forecaster for the Storm Prediction Center and we actually met while storm chasing.

What’s the weirdest thing that has happened at work?

One time I was giving a tour to a group from the Red Hat Society, the women who wear red hats and purple dresses. At the same time, there were some visiting meteorologists doing research, so the Red Hat Society started taking photos of them, and the meteorologists started taking pictures of the Red Hat Society. It was bizarre, these two groups of very different people taking photos of each other through the glass.

Do you have any hobbies?

I really enjoy reading mysteries; one of my favorites is the Harry Potter series. I enjoy cooking any kind of food. I also do perennial gardening, mostly concentrating on peonies.

If you’d like to get in touch directly with Daphne, send an email to Daphne.Thompson@noaa.gov. Email noaa.centralregion@noaa.gov and share your ideas on the next employee to feature.