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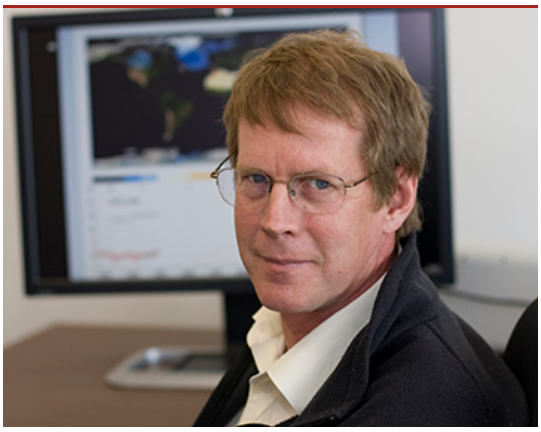
NCAR TEAMS WITH INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TO HELP LATIN AMERICA PREPARE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

June 25, 2009

BOULDER—The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) has teamed with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to launch a far-reaching program to help Latin American and Caribbean nations prepare for the impacts of global warming.

NCAR scientists and colleagues at U.S. universities will collaborate with scientists and policymakers in the region to assess risks from global warming and draw up response plans. They will also provide training in climate research.



Lawrence Buja. (©UCAR, photo by Carlye Calvin.) News media terms of use*

The Latin American region is vulnerable to such threats as hurricanes, flooding, landslides, shortages of drinking water and hydropower, and the spread of insect-borne diseases. These events can be aggravated by warming temperatures and associated changes in precipitation patterns.

"Millions of people in Latin America and the Caribbean are threatened by natural disasters that may worsen with climate change, including an increase in severe storms, reduced water from mountain glaciers, and the spread of diseases," says NCAR project manager Lawrence Buja, who is overseeing the program. "It's vital to begin preparing for these threats as soon as possible."

An important aspect of the international collaboration is sharing expertise in using climate and weather computer models, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies, and other tools to better understand current and future climate trends.

The IDB is funding the $1 million program as part of its efforts to help nations in the region increase their resiliency to anticipated impacts of climate change.

"The Latin American and Caribbean region is already suffering the effects of climate change," says Alfred Hans Grunwaldt, climate change specialist for IDB. "It is of utmost importance for IDB, as one of the main providers of financial resources for the region, to help countries tackle the effects of climate change and achieve long-term development goals."

THREE INITIAL PROJECTS

Over the next 18 months, NCAR will focus on a set of projects that includes

- studying the risks of hurricanes and intense rainfall in the region and identifying other weather-related events that may worsen with climate change
- helping the government of Peru assess potential climate change impacts on water irrigation and hydropower generation in its northwest region
- training local scientists in the use of computer models and other technology to study how climate change will affect the region in coming decades

NCAR and the IDB may identify additional projects after assessing the initial results.

"One of the most important goals is to help train scientists and other specialists in the region so they can predict the impacts of climate change and work with officials in their own countries to develop strategies to protect society," Buja says. "Even though many Latin American and Caribbean countries have lower greenhouse gas emissions than more industrialized nations, they unfortunately will not escape the impacts of a changing climate."

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