Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 14, EGU2012-1556, 2012
EGU General Assembly 2012

Social perception of droughts in the mass media (southern Spain)

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In the Mediterranean environment, drought is one of the extreme phenomena that has most direct consequences and complexity. It also has a direct social impact through the mass media, whose analysis, typology and characterization should be a priority in strategies to plan and mitigate effects.
The appearance of droughts is slow, their occurrence is often not recognized until human activity and the environment have already been significantly affected, and drought effects persist for a long time after the drought has ended.
The spatial distribution of droughts is highly complex, and significant variation in drought conditions is common between different locations. This makes it difficult to identify similar regions, especially in areas of climate transition, where the atmospheric influences are complex. This is the situation in the Iberian Peninsula (particularly the south of the peninsula), which straddles both temperate and sub-tropical climates and in which precipitation is highly variable and spatial variability is substantial.
In this study we analyzed rainfall anomalies (Standardized Precipitation Index) over the last 50 years at 4 representative meteorological stations in southern Spain, two on the coast (Málaga and Algarrobo) and two at the headwaters of river basins regulated by dams (Antequera and Periana). The aims of the study were to: i) analyze the types of drought, and their frequency and intensity; and ii) establish the dynamics and evolution of the social perception of droughts in the context of global change, brought about by the communications media.
The results showed the SPI was a useful tool for identifying dry anomalies that may feature in our field of study of meteorological and hydrological drought, depending on its duration. Meteorological drought impact on the eco-geomorphological system is common and has had a particular development since the 80's. Hydrological droughts are those that have had the greatest effect on water reserves, particularly when they occur in the headwaters of the watershed covered by reservoirs. Their importance has increased since the 1980's.