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Durham selected as 'climate hub' to help rural areas adapt

WASHINGTON (AP) — Aiming to help rural communities deal with climate change, the Obama administration is creating seven regional "climate hubs" that will serve as clearinghouses for information and outreach about extreme weather across the U.S.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack was to announce the new hubs Wednesday at the White House. The hubs fulfill one aspect of a broader climate change plan that President Barack Obama unveiled last year.

Based at existing Agriculture Department facilities, the hubs aim to help farmers and rural communities fight climate change and adapt to weather changes. The hubs will assess local climate risks, such as drought and wildfire, then develop plans for dealing with them, such as improved irrigation techniques.

Citing environmental changes such as longer fire seasons and intense droughts, the Agriculture Department said the hubs would help mitigate the unique implications that climate change poses for rural areas and the people who live there. The goal is to synchronize the federal government's preparation and resources with what other entities, such as universities, tribal communities and state governments, are doing to prepare for shifting temperatures.

The seven regional hubs will be housed in forest service stations or government research labs in Ames, Iowa; Durham, N.H.; Raleigh, N.C.; Fort Collins, Colo.; El Reno, Okla.; Corvallis, Ore.; and Las Cruces, N.M. Three smaller, additional "sub-hubs" will be created in Houghton, Mich.; Davis, Calif.; and Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.