

Frequently Asked Questions

National Drought Resilience Partnership

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Q. What is the National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A. The National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP, or the Partnership) is a partnership made up of Federal departments and agencies that have roles or responsibilities in planning for and/or responding to drought. The purpose of the Partnership is to harness and coordinate distinct efforts by individual agencies already underway to assist in building resilience to drought on the ground. Two distinct roles are envisioned: one, as a policy coordinating body, and two, as an entity to align Federal agencies around their individual roles in drought planning and risk mitigation. This will help the Federal government to deliver Federal expertise and resources to facilitate community preparedness and strengthen the Nation’s resilience to drought.

Q. Which Federal agencies are involved in the National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A: The Federal agencies/departments involved in the Partnership are:

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of the Interior (DOI)
- Department of Commerce — National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Assistant Secretary of the Army – Civil Works (ASA-CW)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Q. Why do we need a National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A. The drought in 2012 affected nearly two-thirds of the country and resulted in nearly \$30 billion in agricultural impacts alone. Impacts were also felt by communities through losses due to reduced water and energy resources, recreation revenue, increased wildfires, and dust-borne diseases, among others. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the length and severity of droughts in many regions of the United States. There will also be long-term reductions in water availability in some parts of the United States. The need for a Partnership as a policy coordinating body and as a mechanism to facilitate access to Federal programs was identified from feedback we gained during public listening sessions conducted during the drought of 2012 and the National Drought Forum in late 2012.

Q. Who is calling for a National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A. There have been many requests for a more cohesive “front door” to engage the Federal government for both drought assistance and preparedness planning. These requests have come from participants of the [2012 National Drought Forum \(NDF\)](#), as well as from Congress, governors and states, businesses, and local communities. For example, during the NDF listening sessions, Federal agencies heard from a variety of interests on the role that improved Federal coordination could play in addressing the needs of States, Tribes, businesses and communities facing drought(s). The Partnership is designed to improve our understanding and coordination of existing capabilities and networks, to better support decisions that improve drought preparedness and risk management over the long-term.

Q. How does the National Drought Resilience Partnership relate to the President’s Climate Action Plan?

A. The Partnership is one of many specific actions identified under the President’s Climate Action Plan to help the nation prepare for the impacts of climate change. While droughts are natural weather phenomena, we also recognize that climate change has already begun to exacerbate the severity and duration of severe weather in some regions of the United States. Major events with economic and environmental impacts, such as the 2012 drought and its long-term effects, offer lessons on planning and practices for anticipating, managing, and reducing future risks.

Additionally, President Obama signed an Executive Order on November 1, 2013 entitled “Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change.” This Executive Order established a Resilience Council composed of many Federal agencies that will develop and recommend Federal actions related to climate preparedness and resilience, as well as support similar action at State, Tribal, and local levels of government. The Partnership is an early model of the type of coordination efforts that the Executive Order seeks to promote. Drought planning is a natural entry point for the kind of information that many stakeholders need, and therefore the Partnership is uniquely positioned to contribute recommendations to the Resilience Council.

Q. Does the National Drought Resilience Partnership envision or plan to propose any changes to the involvement of the Federal government in water rights or allocations?

A. No. The Partnership is a vehicle for better collaboration within the Federal government and between the Federal government, States, Tribes, and local communities. The sovereign rights of states for the allocation of water within their boundaries remains a fundamental principle as we move forward.

Q. What is the relationship between the National Drought Resilience Partnership and the National Disaster Recovery Framework?

A. The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) is a guide that enables effective recovery support to disaster-impacted States, Tribes, territorial and local jurisdictions, and provides a flexible structure to support coordination of the Federal government’s response to disasters—both Stafford and Non-Stafford Act alike. In 2012, with USDA as the coordinating agency, the NDRF was used to highlight Federal programs and resources in support of recovery from the drought. While long-term interagency coordination of issues will continue, the current NDRF drought efforts have concluded (as finalized in the September 2013 NDRF Report, “Federal Drought Recovery Coordination and Approaches for Interagency Collaboration”). This marks an important transition to the Partnership, which will carry forward these preparedness and resilience recommendations identified through the NDRF and other related processes.

Q. What is the relationship between the National Drought Resilience Partnership and the National Integrated Drought Information System?

A. The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) was created by law in 2006 to “enable the Nation to move from a reactive to a more proactive approach to managing drought risks and impacts.” An effective drought early warning system is at the heart of this effort and requires sustained activities such as collection and integration of key indicators of drought severity and impacts, and the production of timely information that reflects local, regional and state differences. NIDIS relies on its network of Federal, State, local and tribal agency partners, academic researchers, and other stakeholders to coordinate and provide integrated outlooks of drought impacts and regional drought early warning information for specific regions, states and watershed.

The Partnership will work toward a seamless link between drought risk assessment and drought risk planning and management. It completes the Nation’s drought resilience portfolio by building on the NDRF, NIDIS coordination and information, and other water-related information and tools, (e.g. USGS Water Census, EPA Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness tool), but with more emphasis on improving drought planning and risk management to secure long-term economic investments, protect natural resources, and increase efficiencies in government drought-related service delivery. Moreover, the Federal members of the NIDIS Executive Committee will work closely with the Implementation

Working Group of the Partnership to provide ongoing communication and collaboration across participating Federal agencies.

Q. The Federal government provides a lot of drought assistance already. What is NEW about the National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A. The top-line items of the Partnership are that it is:

- Easier - The Partnership makes it **easier** for stakeholders to navigate what Federal resources are available and access information about these Federal resources by providing a single point of contact. This contact will be able to connect stakeholders to Federal agencies and resources through the National Drought Implementation Working Group, NIDIS and others.
- More proactive – the emphasis of the Partnership is on **preparing** for drought (planning and risk management) rather than **responding** to drought.
- Policy coordination – The Partnership aims to help communities become more resilient by improving Federal coordination through more effective government coordination.

Q. How does the National Drought Resilience Partnership work?

A. The Partnership organizes seven Federal agencies in an effort to improve coordination of Federal policy for future droughts. The seven agencies have identified *policy* points of contact that will meet regularly (anticipate quarterly) to discuss policy matters. At the same time, the National Drought Implementation Working Group, consisting of *agency* points of contact, has formed to better organize and integrate monitoring and forecasting, risk assessment and drought planning and management. Taken together, this will make it easier for communities seeking drought information and assistance. For example, take a Mayor that is concerned about future water supply planning due to increased drought frequency. He or she can direct the city's utility to contact the Partnership (single POC) for help finding the best Federal agency or agencies to address these specific planning needs. The Partnership, through internal coordination, will then connect the water utility with the appropriate regional, state or local agency programs or entities on the ground. More specifically in this example, the Partnership could connect the water utility with the regional NIDIS contact for information on drought conditions, EPA for the latest on water quality or water quality infrastructure, as well as a Bureau of Reclamation regional drought coordinator to help with their water infrastructure concerns, thus making it easier for the community to get the help it seeks.

Q. Who within the National Drought Resilience Partnership do communities contact to get assistance?

A. The Partnership currently has a central Point of Contact (POC) that receives stakeholder questions and works with the other Partnership agencies and the NIDIS Executive Committee at a Federal level to coordinate responses. The POC also works with other agencies to direct stakeholders to the appropriate regional or local representative. Having a single POC for the Partnership helps streamline responses and cut through some of the difficulty in finding the right assistance. If you have questions or to get drought planning assistance for your community or business, please contact (202) 564-8086 or visit drought.gov for more details.

Q. How do States, Tribes, businesses and communities engage with the National Drought Resilience Partnership?

A. The Partnership will be hosting a number of regional drought forums over the coming months to engage communities. These forums will build upon efforts undertaken by and incorporate lessons learned from the NIDIS Drought Outlook forums that integrate the best information from various experts on current drought conditions and impacts, national climate trends, and water supply and wildfire conditions. A high priority will be given to those areas where drought early warning systems and indicators show that drought conditions are developing or intensifying.

Q. What near-term actions is the National Drought Resilience Partnership planning?

A. Key First Year Actions:

1. Federal Points of Contact: At the national level, Partnership agencies will identify single policy points of contact for drought to facilitate transparency regarding agency roles and responsibilities, connect available expertise, and help align Federal policy. Further, each agency will contribute to a National Drought Implementation Working Group for the Partnership that will work with the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Executive Committee and others to align Federal agencies around their individual roles in drought planning and risk mitigation.
2. Drought Preparedness and Water Resources Planning: The Partnership will undertake a pilot effort in a vulnerable watershed with Tribal, State, and local government representatives, key Federal agencies, and private sector representatives to develop a model plan or approach for building drought preparedness and resilience. The pilot will aid these various entities with long-term drought planning by connecting them with the appropriate Federal preparedness efforts as is necessary. It will also model the ability of diverse water users and interests to prepare and implement a community or watershed-based drought preparedness program. The pilot will identify obstacles to community drought preparedness and will provide the Partnership with feedback on its successes and areas that need improvement.
3. Interactive Clearinghouse: The Partnership will collaborate to organize a web based “front door” clearinghouse of Federal government drought recovery and assistance programs. The clearinghouse will link to other planning and preparedness resources and information (such as drought.gov) to support stakeholders in their efforts to manage future drought impacts. The clearinghouse portal will incorporate existing web portals to the extent practicable.
4. Increase Frequency and Regional Specificity of Drought Outlook Forums: The Partnership will contribute to the NIDIS Drought Outlook forums that integrate the best information from various experts on current drought conditions and impacts, national climate trends, and water supply and wildfire conditions. A high priority will be given to those areas where drought early warning systems and indicators show that drought conditions are developing or intensifying.
5. Coordinate a National Soil Moisture Network: The Partnership will participate in efforts underway to better organize ongoing soil moisture monitoring in support of decision-making for water supply and infrastructure, agriculture, fire risk management, and ecosystem health, to support Tribes, States, and local communities.

Q. Why do we need a pilot preparedness effort, and how will it work?

A. Coming out of the 2012 drought, Federal agencies heard from communities about the need for assistance in planning for drought mitigation and risk reduction. The Partnership will pilot this concept and test its efficacy on a watershed within the Central-Southern portion of the Great Plains region, as this region is still experiencing impacts from the 2012 drought and will therefore present a model ripe for drought preparedness assistance. The pilot will leverage existing programs to prepare for drought, and as a result will not require any new dedication of funds.

The pilot will facilitate collaboration among the varied water interests and, ultimately, identify appropriate and effective measures to enhance their preparedness and resilience to drought. This collective effort will be unique in its scope as it tests the ability for a community or watershed to

develop an inter-agency and inter-sector drought preparedness plan. The pilot will also present a portfolio of lessons learned for the Partnership and its stakeholders, as it will test the opportunities and identify the barriers and challenges to such an approach. EPA Region 8 will take lead in organizing the pilot over the coming months.

Q. How often will the National Drought Resilience Partnership meet?

A. Currently, all Federal agency members of the Partnership are scheduled to meet quarterly after the initial launch of the Partnership. It is anticipated that the Partnership members will be in more frequent contact as they coordinate drought assistance questions from regional members.