

Obama Administration's National Drought Resilience Partnership to Help Communities Prepare for Drought

Supports President Obama's Climate Action Plan

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15, 2013—As part of President Obama's Climate Action Plan, the Obama Administration today announced an interagency National Drought Resilience Partnership to help communities better prepare for future droughts and reduce the impact of drought events on livelihoods and the economy. Responding to requests from communities, businesses, and farmers and ranchers, the National Drought Resilience Partnership will make it easier to access Federal drought resources, and will help link information such as monitoring, forecasts, outlooks, and early warnings with longer-term drought resilience strategies in critical sectors such as agriculture, municipal water systems, energy, recreation, tourism and manufacturing.

In its first year, the Partnership will focus on creating a new, web-based portal to ease access to Federal agency drought recovery resources, hosting more frequent regional drought outlook forums that provide access to experts and locally relevant information, supporting the coordination of a national soil moisture monitoring network to help improve monitoring and forecasting drought conditions, and identifying a single point of contact for the public. In collaboration with local, state and regional governments, the Partnership will also undertake a pilot project in a western area hard hit by drought to create a local-scale drought resilience plan that could be applied in other areas.

“Last year, the worst drought in generations devastated farms and ranches across the nation, and the Obama Administration took every possible measure to help,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “But our work isn't done and we can always better prepare for the future. Today's partnership will help rural residents, farmers, ranchers and business owners prepare for drought events like the one we experienced in 2012.” Vilsack also noted the importance of increased partnership to increase drought resilience at a time when climate change is projected to increase the intensity and the number of drought events that impact agriculture.

“The impacts of drought can be devastating to local communities and economies and don’t end with the onset of fall and winter,” said Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Acting Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). “This partnership builds upon NOAA’s climate programs and products, and recent improvement to our drought forecasts to provide our many stakeholders with the critical environmental intelligence they need for drought planning and preparedness activities. This is another step in our efforts to help build communities that are resilient to a variety of weather and climate related events.”

“Drought threatens our water and food supplies, parches our ecosystems, and enables deadly and costly wildfires,” said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “No community can take on drought alone, and this partnership will help ensure that the federal family is a strong partner in providing accessible information and helpful tools to communities to prepare for and mitigate the impacts.”

“A devastating impact of a changing climate is severe drought that hurts our families, farmers and ranchers,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. “The partnership announced today will help communities strengthen climate resilience efforts, including modernizing our water infrastructure and efficiently using our precious water resources, while also supporting the agricultural economy.”

"This Partnership will provide the coordination necessary within the Administration to prepare for drought. We have valuable information to share with communities and states, and we heard them when they asked for better communication,” said Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. “We are proud to be a part of this response and partnership. As climate change increases, agencies need to be ready with corresponding program actions that help communities respond to drought."

Climate change influences the frequency and intensity of events such as droughts, storms, floods, and wildfires, impacting communities nationwide. The National Drought Resilience Partnership follows President Obama’s November 1st Executive Order on “Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change,” a key step under his Climate Action Plan that created a Task

Force of state, local and tribal leaders to advise the Administration on steps the Federal Government can take to help communities increase preparedness, and committed Federal agencies to examining their programs and policies to make it easier for states and communities to build resilience against storms, droughts and other weather extremes. The Partnership also builds on existing federal efforts and the White House Rural Council's work to help communities, farmers, ranchers and producers stay resilient in the face of disaster.

Spearheaded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), members of the National Drought Resilience Partnership will coordinate the delivery of Federal Government policies, programs, information and tools designed to help communities plan for and respond to drought. Other partners in this effort include the Department of the Interior, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

About two-thirds of the continental United States was affected by drought in 2012, impacting water supply, tourism, transportation, and near shore fisheries, with an estimated \$30 billion in losses to the agriculture sector alone, and an additional \$1 billion in losses from wildfires. As part of White House Rural Council efforts, USDA chaired a National Disaster Recovery Framework effort to help communities respond to the 2012 drought, including hosting four regional listening forums to hear from communities directly. The National Integrated Drought Information System (NOAA/NIDIS), relying on its network of government agencies and organizations, conducted frequent national and regional drought outlooks around the country, and convened a National Drought Forum in partnership with Governors in Washington, DC in December 2012 to help provide new information and coordination to enhance the nation's drought readiness. The partnership announced today is one important outcome of these drought forums and continues the Obama Administration's commitment to helping communities get the drought assistance they need.

For more information on drought and the National Drought Resilience Partnership, please visit www.drought.gov.