

2026 Western Drought Media Briefings

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

Intermountain West and California/Nevada Drought Early Warning Systems (DEWS)

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. MT

The 2026 Western Drought Media Briefings will assemble media professionals and drought experts for two regional briefings on drought conditions and response efforts in the Western United States.

To ensure media have accurate, up-to-date data to cover these critical environmental stories, NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), alongside partners across levels of government and economic sectors, will host two regional virtual media briefings. The briefings will provide the latest information on current drought, heat, and fire conditions and forecasts, as well as the serious impacts to diverse sectors of the economy and communities throughout the West. Perspectives from those on the ground who are responding to drought conditions will be shared.

1. Introductions (10 min)

Kick off with opening remarks and a review of the goals of the media briefing. Logistics for the virtual platform (WebEx) will also be reviewed, and the first panel will be introduced.

- Veva Deheza, Executive Director, NOAA/OAR/CPO/NIDIS
- Dr. Timothy Petty, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy NOAA Administrator
- Edward Clark, Director, NOAA/NWS National Water Center and Deputy Director, NWS Office of Water Prediction

2. Drought and Wildfire Conditions and Forecasted Outlooks (45 min)

Presenters will deliver an overview of current drought and fire conditions across the region, and the forecasted monthly and seasonal outlooks. Speakers will provide a historical context for the drought to include influences on current conditions and outlooks. Presentations will be followed by Q&A.

- Current Drought Conditions: Daniel McEvoy, Desert Research Institute
- NOAA Monthly and Seasonal Drought Outlooks: Brad Pugh, NOAA/NWS Climate Prediction Center
- ENSO and Monsoon Outlooks: Michael Crimmins, University of Arizona

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- Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlooks: Kathleen Clough, Desert Research Institute
- Q&A (10 min)

3. Drought Impacts and Regional Perspectives (30 min)

Across the Intermountain West, as well as California and Nevada, impacts of drought are being felt in communities and diverse sectors of our economy. Presenters from multiple sectors and communities will speak about the drought-related impacts they are experiencing.

Moderator: Seth Shanahan, Southern Nevada Water Authority

- Agricultural Sector: Brad Rippey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Chief Economist
- Water Supply Sector: Steve Pope, General Manager, Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association
- Recreation and Tourism Sector: David Costlow, Executive Director, Colorado River Outfitters Association
- Q&A (10 min)

4. Conclusion (5 min)

Concluding remarks will be provided on drought information and response resources.

- Amanda Sheffield, CIRES/NIDIS Regional Drought Information Coordinator