



**POSITION  
of the  
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL  
regarding  
DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS, PREDICTION AND EARLY WARNING PROGRAMS  
Deadwood, South Dakota  
September 16, 2021**

**WHEREAS**, the Western States Water Council is a policy advisory body representing eighteen states, and has long been involved in western water conservation, development, protection, and management issues, and western states have a long history of promoting drought preparedness, planning and response programs, in cooperation with federal agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, in the West, water is often scarce even in “wet” years and drought is a recurring threat to our environment, economy and way of life – affecting not only the West, but also the Nation; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), from 1980-2020, there have been 28 drought events costing over \$1B/event with total economic losses of \$258.9B due to drought, or an average of \$9.2B/event, also leading to an average of 95 deaths/year, with drought contributing to another \$102.3B in wildfire losses, and 10 deaths/year, and NCEI noting a rise in vulnerability to drought and wildfire in the western states<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, continuing exceptional, extreme and severe drought conditions afflict the West and elsewhere, highlighting the need for greater attention to developing more comprehensive and coordinated drought prediction, preparedness, planning and response programs at all levels; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for maintaining and improving existing monitoring networks that help provide drought early warning signals, as well as for tracking the impacts of drought; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a continuing need for developing new monitoring technologies, such as remote sensing, that provide more timely data on water availability and better spatial coverage for assessing drought impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, early drought warning systems facilitate early drought assessment and mitigation efforts to minimize drought impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for continuing federal research to develop new predictive capability for precipitation at subseasonal to seasonal time scales as described in the report to Congress prepared by NOAA pursuant to Title II of PL 115-25; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a continuing need for a permanent federal role in coordination of research programs related to drought early warning and prediction; and

**WHEREAS**, the collection and monitoring of basic data on streamflow, snow pack, groundwater levels, and weather and climate data are essential to understanding water availability and interpreting the early signs of drought.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Western States Water Council urges the Administration and the Congress to support federal programs including but not limited to the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other efforts designed to improve our forecasting and response capabilities.

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<sup>i</sup> [2020 U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in historical context | NOAA Climate.gov](#)