



**POSITION
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
regarding**

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS, PREDICTION AND EARLY WARNING PROGRAMS

**Lawrence, Kansas
October 23, 2024**

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 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), from 1980-2023, there have been 31 drought events costing over \$1B/event with total economic losses of \$352.9B due to drought, or an average of \$11.4B/event, also leading to an average of 103 deaths/year, with drought contributing to another \$142.4B in wildfire losses, and 12 deaths/year, and NCEI noting a rise in vulnerability to drought and wildfire in the western statesⁱ; 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 115-25ⁱⁱ; 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 NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and other efforts designed to improve our forecasting and response capabilities.

Revised and Readopted
(*See Position No. 474, September 16, 2021, No. 429,
October 26, 2018, No. 386, October 9, 2015, and No. 346, October 12, 2012*)

ⁱ <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2023-historic-year-us-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters>

ⁱⁱ <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/27408>