Drought disaster from a rancher’s viewpoint is a box of challenges.

A “half full” or a “half empty” glass
A rancher must understand and admit that doing nothing multiplies the problem.

Planning makes the problem more palatable and manageable. It doesn’t solve the problem but makes you proactive not reactive.
Destocking is a difficult decision when you spend a lifetime putting a herd together that fits you and the environment. It’s like losing one of the family.
Destock to the core of the best cows.
Ship cows to a different location.
Feedlot
Buy Feed
Take care of the land. The land will take care of the cattle, and the cattle will take care of you.
Our grazing system is built with a drought plan in place. It is also the template for any other disaster that may occur. Trigger dates for any other type of disaster (hail, fire, etc.) would be the day that it occurs.

Plan A: Trigger dates of June 4 to July 4. It provides us the flexibility to destock beginning June 4. These populations receive consideration when destocking in Plan A.
- Fall cows
- Fall calves and yearlings
- Dry cows

Plan B: Trigger date of mid-July. These populations receive consideration when destocking in Plan B.
- Early wean old cows and poor genetic cows (bad eye, udders, etc)
- Custom grazed cows and heifers removed from ranch
Plan C: Trigger dates of late August-September. This population receives consideration for destocking in plan C. Wean the rest of calves early. We normally deliver calves October 15-20. Following weaning, return cows to pasture and rotate through winter pastures every 30 days.
2013 Drought Plan

A general rule of thumb in our area is a cow to every 20 acres in a normal year.

Best Case- Normal moisture
300 cows
200 yearling heifers

Worst Case- Extremely low moisture
50 cows
50 yearling heifers
Grass growth will be relative to moisture and timing of moisture.

Trigger Dates:
April 1- Inventory hay and how much moisture we’ve gotten.
May 1- Implement options
June 1- Make final stocking adjustments according to how much moisture you have.
Remain flexible to fit the environmental conditions, but stay proactive.