

About the Council

December 1998

Background

The Western Drought Coordination Council (Council) is an intergovernmental forum that focuses on drought preparedness in the Western United States. Drought is a pervasive social, economic, and environmental issue that touches every aspect of life in affected areas. Help is available for individuals, water suppliers and communities, but negotiating the maze of relief programs available from different agencies and organizations is difficult, especially under the pressures of an ongoing drought. Drought experiences in the West and Southwest in 1996 highlighted the need for long-term, region-wide drought planning and for streamlined access to government services.

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) responded to those needs in early 1997 when it spearheaded formation of the Council through a Memorandum of Understanding with representatives of federal, tribal and local governments. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) serves as the lead federal agency, and a Steering Group implements the Council's work plan. The Steering Group oversees four working groups: Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction; Preparedness and Mitigation; Response; and Communications. The working groups are staffed by volunteer professionals from federal, state, local and tribal entities.

Council Members

Gary E. Johnson, Governor of New Mexico, Council Co-Chair
Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Council Co-Chair
Rupert Alden, San Carlos Apache Tribal Council
Michael Armstrong, Associate Director, Federal Emergency Management
Agency
John Baker, Commissioner, Texas Natural Resources Conservation
Commission
Charles H. Blackwell, Chickasaw Ambassador to the United States,
Chickasaw Nation
Ronald W. Cattany, Deputy Director, Colorado Department of Natural
Resources
Ron Christensen, Supervisor, Gila County, National Association of Counties
William M. Daley, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Michael L. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Civil Works, U.S. Department
of the Army
Bernard Kulik, Associate Administrator, Small Business Administration
Eluid L. Martinez, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department
of the Interior
Ron Speakthunder, Fort Belknap Community Council

Council Goals

The Council's purpose is to reduce the effects of future droughts in the western United States. Specifically, its goals are to:

- foster better intergovernmental coordination and communication on drought planning;
- help state, local and tribal governments develop drought preparedness and mitigation plans;
- contribute to an efficient drought monitoring and information delivery system so that decision makers learn about low water supplies and drought prospects as soon as possible; and
- heighten awareness of drought management issues and promote efficient use of water.

Council Products

The products of the Council's first year make significant contributions to the information available to individuals and organizations planning for, responding to, or recovering from drought.

- In October 1997, the Council started publishing *Western Climate and Water Status*, a quarterly report that funnels information on water supply, snowfall and other climate-related issues from scientists and technicians to policy-makers (<http://enso.unl.edu/wdcc/quarterly>).
- The Council has enhanced the Catalog of Federal Drought Assistance Programs, first compiled by FEMA, and republished it on the World Wide Web (<http://enso.unl.edu/wdcc/products/programs.pdf>).
- "How to Reduce Drought Risk," a vulnerability assessment guide for state, regional and community drought planners, was developed by the Council and is ready for field testing (<http://enso.unl.edu/wdcc/products/risk.pdf>).
- Drought-related information is made available through the Council web site (<http://enso.unl.edu/wdcc>).

For More Information

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