National Drought Policy Commission (NDPC)

Ray Motha
U.S. Droughts

- Droughts of varying degrees of severity and magnitude occur repeatedly in all climatic regimes of the United States.
- Dust Bowl Years of the 1930’s
- Drought Years of the 1950s
- Severe Droughts of 1980 and 1988
Western Drought Coordination Council
After the 1995-1996 drought, Governor Gary Johnson of New Mexico sponsored a Western Governors' Association (WGA) resolution calling for a more comprehensive, integrated response to drought emergencies.

The implementation of this resolution led to the preparation of the report, *The Western Governors' Association Drought Action Plan*. 
Western Drought Coordination Council

- At the same time, President Clinton directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to prepare a federal report on recommendations to improve the response to drought emergencies.
Western Drought Coordination Council

- The FEMA report and the WGA Drought Action Plan both concluded that the response to future droughts needed to better integrate **preparedness, mitigation and response programs** of all levels of government (federal, state, tribal, and local).

- To that end, these two initiatives led to the partnership that became the **Western Drought Coordination Council (WDCC)**.
Western Drought Coordination Council (WDCC)

- WDCC’s mission was to develop and implement drought measures that promote economic and environmental sustainability.
National Drought Policy Commission (NDPC)
National Drought Policy Commission (Federal)

- Department of Agriculture - chair
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Interior
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Small Business Administration
National Drought Policy Commission (Non-federal)

- National Association of Counties – vice-chair
- National Association of Governors
- U.S. Conference of Mayors
- National Emergency Management Association
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Urban/Rural Water Representatives
- Tribal Nations
- Farm Credit Associations
- Agricultural Producers
National Drought Policy Commission

Specific Working Groups
• Agriculture
• Municipal and Industrial Water
• Local Government, Community and Business
• Environmental Issues
• Monitoring and Prediction
Background

Significant background information was available for the NDPC from

• *The Western Governors' Association Drought Action Plan report*;
• *The FEMA report*; and,
• *The Western Drought Coordination Council*
Past Response to Drought

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- 30 states had drought plans, mostly oriented to relief.
- **Regional, local and tribal plans were fragmented and often relied on federal response.**
No Coordinated Response

- State, local and tribal governments dealt separately with each federal agency, generally in a crisis management response.
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- **Despite its major role in responding to drought, no single federal agency was in a lead or coordinating position to manage response actions.**
A Call To Action

- Recognition of the urgent need for a comprehensive drought strategy, involving the combined efforts of federal, regional, state, local, and tribal resources.
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- Recognition of the urgent need for a comprehensive drought strategy, involving the combined efforts of federal, regional, state, local, and tribal resources.

- Recognition of the urgent need for proactive drought planning activities rather than reactive emergency response measures.
National Drought Policy Act

To achieve these objectives,

• Develop a national drought policy with preparedness as its foundation.
National Drought Policy Act

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- Outline a course of action that includes a preparedness initiative to help reduce the economic hardships caused by drought.
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- Outline a course of action that includes a preparedness initiative to help reduce the economic hardships caused by drought.
- Prepare a final report for the President and Congress in two years, outlining a specific plan of action.
National Drought Policy Commission

- Recommending a paradigm shift in policy from “Relief” to “Readiness”.
National Drought Policy Commission

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- **Goal:** Reduce the impacts of drought on all segments of society.
National Drought Policy Commission

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- Goal: Reduce the impacts of drought on all segments of society.
- **Objective:** Preparedness must become the cornerstone of national drought policy.
Hearings were held around the country to find out what each economic segment required from a national drought plan.
National Drought Policy Commission

Hearings Identified Needs

- A National Drought Policy
- Better preparedness
- Better coordination
- Adequate climate information
- Improved crop insurance
- Streamlined emergency procedures
- Additional scientific research
Case Studies were examined (what worked)

- Advanced planning
- Proactive mitigation
- Innovative technology
- Cooperative and collaborative efforts among federal and non-federal entities
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

- Report submitted to the President and the Congress in May, 2000.
- Recommendations for a national drought plan.
Available Options:
1) STATUS QUO-
Continue to spend billions of dollars in response to drought without reducing the risk situation of the recipients; or,

2) NEW PARADIGM-
Reduce long term cost, reduce risk and maintain a safety net.
Favor preparedness over insurance, insurance over relief, and incentives over regulation.
POLICY STATEMENT

- Favor preparedness over insurance, insurance over relief, and incentives over regulation.

- Research priorities – potential to reduce drought impacts.
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

POLICY STATEMENT

• Favor preparedness over insurance, insurance over relief, and incentives over regulation.
• Research priorities – potential to reduce drought impacts.
• Coordinate, cooperate and collaborate on delivery of services.
Envisioned a federal/non-federal partnership to ensure that drought programs are better coordinated, that they are better integrated, and that their services are more efficient, effective, and driven by customer needs.
Preparedness is the key to a proactive policy.
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

General recommendations for consideration by the President and the Congress
General Recommendations

• Increased technical and financial assistance;
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

General Recommendations

• Expanded monitoring networks;
General Recommendations

• Crop insurance evaluation;
General Recommendations

- Improved safety net with streamlined procedures; and,
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

General Recommendations

• Establish a permanent National Drought Council
National Drought Policy Commission
Final Report

Goal 1

Key elements of effective national drought policy

- planning,
- implementation of plans,
- proactive mitigation measures,
- risk management,
- resource stewardship,
- environmental considerations, and
- public education
Goal 2

The President should direct and Congress should authorize and fund the following:

1. modernize and expand observation networks;
2. improve and expand the U.S. Drought Monitor;
3. develop new techniques to improve their accuracy of drought predictions/outlooks;
4. develop a comprehensive information gateway through expansion of the National Drought Mitigation Center for a drought information clearinghouse; and,
5. technology transfer of water conservation strategies and innovative water supply techniques as well as competitive drought-related research grant programs.
Goal 3

• Develop and incorporate comprehensive insurance and financial strategies into drought preparedness plans.
Goal 4

• Maintain a safety net of emergency relief that emphasizes sound stewardship of natural resources and self help.
Goal 5

• Coordinate drought programs and response effectively, efficiently, and in a customer-oriented manner.
Administration

- Establish USDA as the lead federal agency to start implementing actions within existing authorities and resources.

- Pursue development of memoranda of understanding among federal and non-federal entities to coordinate efforts.
Congress

• Pursue authorization to establish a permanent National Drought Council.
Congress

- Pursue authorization of needed authorities to establish a permanent National Drought Council.

- **Invest in a national drought preparedness strategy.**
National Drought Policy Act

- A bill to establish a permanent National Drought Policy was drafted by the National Governors Association and introduced for deliberation by the Congress.
- The Senate passed the bill in 2000
- The House was deliberating the bill, but went on recess before the fall election.
National Drought Policy Act

Three Keys to Successful Development of the National Drought Policy

• Collaboration: Common effort among agencies (both federal and non-federal) to work together to accomplish the necessary and desired goals;
• Coordination: Dedicated functioning of all entities for the common cause; and,
• Commitment: Individuals were entrusted with power and confidence to achieve results.
National Drought Policy Act

One Key to Failure of Implementation of the National Drought Policy

Shifting Winds of Support!

• The House went on recess before considering the final vote for the Drought bill.
• While there was strong support in Congress for the bill prior to the election, the 2000 election resulted in a major shift in control of Congress.
• As a result, the Drought bill was not brought back for a vote!