



SUMMARY

Drought will occur at some time every year in the United States. It can and does extend over long periods and large areas, and it brings hardship.

Each time drought occurs, many of the same issues are raised. Principally, how much damage was inflicted, on whom, and where? Who is going to pay for it? How can we prevent or at least reduce damages and their costs in the future?

In 1998, Congress passed the National Drought Policy Act. The Act stated that this nation would benefit from national drought policy based on preparedness and mitigation to reduce the need for emergency relief. It acknowledged that this country has no consistent, comprehensive policy driving the federal role to help reduce the impacts of drought. The Act also created the National Drought Policy Commission to advise Congress on how best to:

- ☀ Integrate federal drought laws and programs with ongoing state, local, and tribal programs into a comprehensive national policy to mitigate the impacts of and respond to drought.
- ☀ Improve public awareness of the need for drought mitigation.
- ☀ Achieve a coordinated approach to drought mitigation and response by governments and nongovernmental entities, including academic, private, and nonprofit interests.

Policy Statement

The Commission believes that national drought policy should use the resources of the federal government to support but not supplant nor interfere with state, tribal, regional, local, and individual efforts to reduce drought impacts. The guiding principles of national drought policy should be:

1. Favor preparedness over insurance, insurance over relief, and incentives over regulation.
2. Set research priorities based on the potential of the research results to reduce drought impacts.
3. Coordinate the delivery of federal services through cooperation and collaboration with nonfederal entities.

This policy requires a shift from the current emphasis on drought relief. It means we must adopt a forward-looking stance to reduce this nation's vulnerability to the impacts of drought. Preparedness—especially drought planning, plan implementation, and proactive mitigation—must become the cornerstone of national drought policy. This basic concept was the

The Commission contends that we can reduce this nation's vulnerability to the impacts of drought by making preparedness—especially drought planning, plan implementation, and proactive mitigation—the cornerstone of national drought policy.
