



distressed area may submit a written request for assistance. But Corps assistance is considered only when nonfederal interests have exhausted reasonable means for securing necessary water supplies (within the limits of their financial resources), including assistance from other federal agencies. And Corps assistance is always considered to be supplemental to state and local efforts. For example, Corps assistance is not used to provide drought emergency water where a livestock owner has other options such as loans, selling all or part of a herd even at deflated prices, and relocating animals to an area where water is available. As another example, Corps assistance can be provided to construct wells, but the Corps' costs for construction must be repaid. In addition, Corps assistance can be provided to transport water for consumption. The Corps covers the cost of transporting the water, but the cost of purchasing and storing the water is the nonfederal interest's responsibility. This water-hauling program, which seems to offer assistance at first glance, is actually a program of last resort under the current law, with very restrictive eligibility criteria.

The 1966 Flood Control Act allows the Corps to contract with states, municipalities, private entities, or individuals for surplus water that may be available in any reservoir under the control of the Department of the Army. Withdrawals are for domestic and industrial uses. The preferred approach in providing such surplus water is for a state or subdivision of a state to enter into a contract with the Secretary of the Army and agree to act as wholesaler for all of the water requirements of individual users. This places the state or local government in a position to help their citizens during difficult times and minimizes the potential for problems that could arise if the Secretary of the Army had to determine who is entitled to shares of surplus water based on assessments of local needs. All such withdrawals require a fee for the service provided, even in the case of a declared national disaster area.

The Stafford Act and its implementation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency is an effective, proven model for organizing and providing emergency assistance during most catastrophic natural disasters. One of the factors that makes this program successful is that the Agency can draw monies from an annual appropriated fund to pay for disaster assistance. The Agency can provide disaster unemployment assistance, truck in water, and assist in replacing or building infrastructure such as wells or pipelines for water transfers. The Stafford Act authorizes only measures to protect health and safety, however, and has rarely been used to respond to drought-caused emergencies. In addition, it takes a presidential declaration of disaster before Stafford Act authority can be activated. Not all drought events will be declared disasters at the presidential level, although they may well have adverse impacts.

Need to Coordinate Drought-related Programs

As shown in much of the preceding discussion, the array of state, federal, and other drought-related programs can be intimidating and frustrating for those who would like access to the services the programs offer, but who do not deal with government agencies on a regular basis. At another level, the multitude of federal programs can also cause problems for state, county, and tribal governments that may be very used to governmental transactions but still have to deal individually with separate federal agencies for any number of drought-related issues.

Service delivery networks exist for many drought-related programs at all levels of government. However, we heard that they are not well integrated, and the people who need information about the programs are not always well served. People told us there is no central point of contact concerning all federal programs and that even within the same federal department, there may be many drought-related programs and no single contact point to advise people about what