



Sample Public Awareness Activities

- Public involvement before, during, and after the development of drought preparedness plans: The planning entity should seek broad community input and support for the planning effort. Participation should be actively solicited from a full spectrum of the local population—all age groups, all cultural and ethnic groups, and all economic levels.
- Public information: The public needs to have access to understandable, informative materials on all aspects of drought. Examples of such materials include: explanations of the causes of drought, its impacts, and the damage it causes; descriptions of the value and benefits of sound land stewardship to reduce the impacts of drought and protect the environment; clear instructions for appropriate responses to drought (water conservation, water reuse, and leak detection/elimination among others); and requirements of local ordinances or state law during droughts. This information should be provided in as many locations and as many formats as possible, including printed booklets or brochures, telephone hotlines, public service announcements, media events, computer web pages, and classroom presentations.

GOAL 2

Improve collaboration among scientists and managers to enhance the effectiveness of observation networks, monitoring, prediction, information delivery, and applied research and to foster public understanding of and preparedness for drought.

Our findings and conclusions point out the value of observation networks, monitoring, prediction, information gateways and delivery, and research to drought preparedness. The National Drought Council (see Recommendation 5.1) will coordinate a formal process—such as a drought data monitoring, prediction, and research “summit” of multi-disciplinary, geographically diverse representatives—to ascertain the needs and expectations of all interested parties as a first step toward prioritizing recommendations. Research priorities should address the impacts of drought on non-irrigated systems, aquatic ecosystems, wildlife, and other aspects of the natural environment, including the potential negative impacts of drought mitigation measures. Better coordination of governments and private entities in international drought monitoring, prediction, research, education, water conservation, and technology transfer is essential. The National Drought Council’s annual

reports will include a description of the information products most needed to reduce drought impacts (see Recommendation 5.4).

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Specific Recommendations

- 2.1 The President should appropriately direct and Congress, as necessary, should authorize and fund a viable plan to maintain, modernize, expand, and coordinate a system of observation networks that meets the needs of the public at large. The plan should include cooperation with states, development and improvement of baseline historical data sets, and recognition of the recommendations made by the National Drought Council. Priority should be placed on filling the gaps on tribal lands and in rural America. Examples of critical observation networks are in the box on the next page.