



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

Drought in the United States/Science, Policy, and Selected Federal Authorities: Congressional Research Service Report

10/20/2026

The Congressional Research Service ("CRS") issued a report on October 6th titled:

Drought in the United States: Science, Policy, and Selected Federal Authorities ("Report").

See R46911.

The CRS describes its activities as serving Congress throughout the legislative process by providing comprehensive and reliable legislative research analysis that are timely, objective, authoritative, and confidential. It is a component of the Library of Congress.

The Report initially notes that drought occurs:

... to some extent almost every year in areas of the United States.

The Report describes droughts as consisting of:

... a deficiency of moisture that results in adverse effects, with some drought types developing over weeks or months and others developing more quickly (i.e., a flash drought).

The obvious problems generated by a drought include:

- Reducing available water supplies.
- Increasing water demands.
- Potential to affect economic and environmental conditions.

In terms of water quantity issues, the federal government is noted to generally defer to state primacy in surface and groundwater allocation. As a result, states and local entities typically lead efforts to prepare for drought and manage water resources during droughts. However, as the Report describes, multiple federal agencies contribute to efforts to predict, plan for, and respond to drought. Other federal efforts may include U.S. Department of Agriculture financial aid to lessen the impact of droughts and support water infrastructure investments.

Components of the Report include:

- Overview of Drought in the United States
- What Is Drought?
- Drought Trends

- Observed Trends
- Future Projections
- Drought Classification
- Drought Prediction for the United States
- Federal Drought Policy and Coordination
- Coordination
- Selected Federal Authorities
- Monitoring and Research
- USDA Drought Support Programs for Farmers and Ranchers
- Direct Payments
- Insurance
- Cost-Share Assistance
- Loans
- Conservation
- NOAA Drought Support Programs
- Drought and Federal Water Resource Facilities and Projects
- New and Expanded Water Storage Projects
- Drought Operations Manuals and Planning
- Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations
- Drought Flexibilities and the Endangered Species Act
- Support for Nonfederal Drought Planning and Projects
- Bureau of Reclamation Authorities
- USDA Programs and Authorities
- USACE Authorities
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Programs
- Selected Federal Drought Programs for Tribes
- Recent Supplemental Funding Responding to Drought
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act
- Inflation Reduction Act of 2022
- Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023
- Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2025
- Proposed Drought Authorities in the 119th Congress
- Coordination
- Monitoring and Research
- NOAA Drought Support Programs
- Reclamation Programs
- USACE Programs
- EPA Programs
- USDA Programs

A copy of the Report can be found [here](#).