

# Drought Contingency Response Network: June 5th Arkansas Natural Resources Commission Report



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The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (“ANRC”) issued a June 5th document titled:

*Drought Contingency Response Network Report (“Report”)*

The *Report* was prepared in response to a 2014 Arkansas Water Plan Update recommendation that the ANRC:

... Develop a coordinated drought contingency response [N]etwork among state, regional, local, and agencies with constitutional and statutory water management duties; federal agencies, drinking water utilities, organizations, and institutions; and the private sector for alerting the public about impending droughts, sharing consistent messages and information, and providing information on voluntary conservation measures to reduce water use.

Droughts are often defined as a protracted period of deficient precipitation resulting in extensive damage to crops, resulting in loss of yield. However, the term “drought” can be categorized in different ways. For example, four basic approaches to measuring drought can include:

- Meteorological drought
- Agricultural drought
- Hydrological drought
- Socioeconomic drought

See Wilhite, D.A.; and M.H. Glantz 1985, *Understanding the Drought Phenomenon: The Role of Definitions. Water International 10(3): 111-120.*

In spite of an abundance in some areas of significant water resources, Arkansas currently, and in the past, has been subject to significant droughts. For example, Arkansas’s worst drought in the 20th century took place in 1930-31. Every county in Arkansas was stated to have been affected. Family food supplies were stated, as a result, to have been inadequate in many areas.

The ANRC Report states that in order to accomplish the previously referenced Arkansas Water Plan Update recommendation three goals were proposed. Such goals were stated to correspond with suggestions for drought mitigation planning by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. They include:

1. Identify and monitor drought indicators
2. Assess and communicate potential risks on drought stages to various sectors; and

3. Provide a coordinated, consistent message on mitigation and response measures to these drought stages.

Two workshops were held (November 2017 and March 2018) to address such goals. The workshop participants were stated to have come from a variety of governmental and non-governmental sectors. Their recommendations for how a coordinated response Network would function included:

- The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) is the lead agency in a drought emergency. The Network should follow the guidelines as recommended in the AR All-Hazards Mitigation Plan (HMP).
- ANRC is the lead agency for water resources management in Arkansas. ANRC should lead drought mitigation, response and communication efforts related to water resources as part of the HMP.
- ANRC should consider forming a Drought Council with ADEM, National Weather Service (NWS), Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the US Geological Survey (USGS) to assist in developing consistent, coordinated messages and mitigation and response efforts related to drought.
- Forming workgroups would assist the Drought Council in formulating and disseminating these messages. These work groups are: 1) Monitoring, Early Warning and Prediction; 2) Risk, Impact and Vulnerabilities; and 3) Mitigation and Response.
- Develop a coordinated Network for drought monitoring that incorporates data from local, regional, and state levels and use this data for risk analysis, impact and vulnerability assessments, and development of water use thresholds.
- Use this information to develop consistent and common language messages that can be easily understood by the public.
- Identify funding sources for both the Network moving forward and possible grant, loan, or cost-share programs for communities to implement mitigation actions.

The *Report* addresses topics such as:

- Purpose of Network
- Integration of Network
- Moving Forward
- Next Steps
- Network Resources
- Conclusions

A list of appendices summarizing the workshops and referencing the participant contact list and drought links and matrix is included.

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