

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 10-12  
OCTOBER 19, 2017  
Operations and Services  
DROUGHT SERVICES***

**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** This directive supersedes NWSPD 10-12, "*Drought Services*," dated August 27, 2007. Changes made to reflect NWS Headquarters reorganization effective April 1, 2015.

1. This directive governs the NWS's provision of drought services to its partners and other users. As the Nation grows, more segments of society are becoming increasingly vulnerable to drought. All kinds of drought are of concern to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) and its partners and users, including meteorological drought, agricultural drought, and hydrologic drought. (See Attachment 1). Timely and accurate drought information spanning the present out to months in the future is becoming more critical to decision making processes which affect all citizens.
2. The objectives of the NWS Drought Services Program are to provide drought information and forecasts to protect life and property and enhance the Nation's economic well-being.
3. This directive establishes the following authorities and responsibilities:
  - a. The Analyze, Forecast, and Support Office (AFSO) will:
    - i. Establish national policies and procedures for the provision of consistent NWS drought services.
    - ii. Conduct meteorological, hydrologic, climate, training, and performance and awareness programs and provide stewardship of the observing system, to support drought operations and services.
    - iii. Consolidate, analyze, and oversee national performance and effectiveness indicators of drought services.
    - iv. Provide outreach to national users to promote drought services.
    - v. Ensure NWS products and services contribute to National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) efforts and goals.
  - b. NWS regional headquarters will:
    - i. Ensure Weather Forecast Offices (WFO) and River Forecast Centers (RFC) are organized, trained, and equipped to fulfill the Drought Services Program obligations within their region.

- ii. Provide drought-related requirements to AFSSO.
  - iii. Develop supplements to procedural directives for the Drought Services Program.
  - iv. Provide technical and operational support to WFOs and RFCs.
  - v. Oversee drought services outreach efforts.
  - vi. Evaluate performance and effectiveness of drought services within their region.
  - vii. Ensure WFOs and RFCs comply with Drought Services Program directives and regional supplements.
- c. The National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) will:
- i. Provide meteorological forecast guidance serving as input to the drought forecasting process for all time scales.
  - ii. Prepare graphical and digital products for the Nation which integrate hydrometeorological information produced by WFOs and RFCs.
- d. RFCs will:
- i. Conduct hydrologic modeling and forecast operations for rivers, reservoirs, and lakes in large, multi-state areas of responsibility.
  - ii. Produce extended-range hydrologic information and forecast products, such as water supply forecasts, which are used in NWS drought products.
- e. WFOs will:
- i. Participate in NWS drought analysis, monitoring, and prediction activities.
  - ii. Provide drought outlook products for their local service areas as well as various routine climate products which can be used in assessing drought severity.
  - iii. Serve as local interface with partners and other users for drought information.
4. This policy directive is supported by the glossary of terms in Attachment 1. Instructional directives are listed under References in Attachment 1.

Signed

Louis W. Uccellini  
Assistant Administrator for Weather Services

10/5/2017

Date

**Attachment 1**

**REFERENCES AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

*References*

[Instruction 10-1201 WFO Drought Products Specification](#)  
[Instruction 10-1202 National Drought Products](#)

*Glossary of Terms*

**Agricultural Drought** - An adverse crop response which is usually associated with limited soil moisture and/or the inability of plants to meet the potential transpiration demands of the atmosphere.

**Drought Services Program** - The collective activities undertaken by NWS headquarters, regional headquarters, and field offices (i.e., RFCs, WFOs, and the NCEP) to support and provide drought-related services in the form of forecasts, outlooks, and associated products for the Nation.

**Hydrologic Drought** - A prolonged period of below-normal precipitation causing deficiencies in water supply, as measured by below-normal stream flow, lake and reservoir levels, groundwater levels, and depleted deep soil moisture content.

**Meteorological Drought** - An excessive degree of dryness over a period of time in comparison to some “normal” or average amount. There are many criteria for meteorological drought.

Note: Another type of drought that is often mentioned is socioeconomic drought, which encompasses impacts that may or may not be associated with those listed previously.