



Drought Response Program

The Bureau of Reclamation's Drought Response Program supports a proactive approach to drought. It provides assistance to water users for a range of initiatives that build long-term resiliency including infrastructure improvements for increased water storage and distribution capabilities, water source diversification, decision-making tools for water management, and comprehensive planning to prepare for and respond to drought conditions.

Drought Contingency Planning

Reclamation provides financial assistance for applicants to develop a drought contingency plan or update an existing plan to meet the required elements described in the [Drought Response Program Framework](#).

Most drought contingency planning processes are structured to address the four following questions:

- How will we recognize the next drought in the early stages?
- How might hydrologic risks and uncertainties exacerbate/affect drought?
- How will drought affect us?
- How can we protect ourselves from the next drought?

The planning process is structured to help planners answer these questions and encourage an open and inclusive planning effort that employs a proactive approach to build long-term resiliency to drought.

For example, in 2022, Reclamation provided funding to the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association (UVWUA) to develop a drought contingency plan to evaluate new approaches for water shortage contingency plan actions, review the science related to early prediction of drought climate conditions, and develop a response framework for irrigation and municipal deliveries to employ during future drought conditions. UVWUA delivers over 500,000 acre-feet annually and provides irrigation water to over 83,000 acres of land in Montrose and Delta counties of Colorado. The drought contingency plan was developed through a Task Force made up of individuals representing municipal, agricultural, recreational, academic, state, and environmental interests.

Drought Resiliency Projects

Reclamation also funds projects that help communities prepare for and respond to drought. Typically, these types of projects are referred to as "mitigation actions" in a drought contingency plan. Eligible project types include:

- Infrastructure improvements, new conveyance systems, modifying surface water intakes, and recharge, treatment, and storage facilities.
- Decision support tools, including drought forecasting tools, and water measurement and monitoring equipment.

For example, in 2019 Reclamation provided funding to the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board, near Santa Barbara, California, to add pumping and piping infrastructure to Lake Cachuma to provide access to lower reservoir levels. The project allowed the Board access to an additional 20,500 acre-feet of water for



Lake Cachuma. Photo courtesy of BOR, 2023

delivery to approximately 200,000 residents on the south coast of Santa Barbara County. The project was completed in 2023.

Emergency Response Actions

In addition to the Drought Response Program funding opportunity, Reclamation undertakes emergency response actions to minimize losses and damages resulting from drought, relying on the authorities in Title I of the Drought Act. Emergency response actions are crisis driven actions in response to unanticipated circumstances. Eligible emergency response actions are limited to temporary construction activities and other actions authorized under Title I that do not involve construction of permanent facilities, including water purchases and use of Reclamation facilities to convey and store water. For more information of Emergency Response Action funding, reach out to your local Reclamation office or the program coordinator.

In 2022, Reclamation provided emergency funding to the State of Hawaii for the Kahikiuni Homestead Association in Maui County for costs associated with water hauling and renting storage tanks as a source of drinking water and fire suppression.

For more information please visit: www.usbr.gov/drought

Or contact Reclamation's Drought Coordinator: Shelbie Neff, at 303-445-2881 or sneff@usbr.gov