

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS

Fact Sheet No. 13a

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Kansas Water Office

Background

Kansas has a two-pronged approach to drought. Being prepared is the first step. This involves developing programs and taking actions before drought develops that help cope with the impacts once drought occurs. The second step is response. Keys here are drought monitoring to know when and where to respond and a coordinated response mechanism resulting in the provision of timely, effective assistance.

At the national level, bills introduced in Congress in 2003 would establish a comprehensive national drought policy that would move the nation toward a proactive, preparedness approach to drought similar to that already in place for other natural disasters.

State and Local Actions

In recent decades, Kansas state agencies, in partnership with public water suppliers and other local entities, have taken many steps to reduce drought impacts. Several of these steps are described here.

Drought Vulnerable Public Water Suppliers – The Kansas Water Office has identified drought vulnerable public water suppliers as a means of targeting assistance to them and otherwise encouraging them to address their vulnerability. Drought vulnerable suppliers were considered to be those most likely to first be adversely affected by drought. In 2000, 133 public water suppliers were considered drought vulnerable due to one or more of the following limitations: basic source, single well source, treatment capacity, distribution system or contractual.

Municipal Water Conservation Plans – In 1990, the Kansas Water Authority approved guidelines for preparation of municipal water conservation plans that included actions to be

taken during drought or other emergency conditions. Preparation of conservation plans is mandatory under some circumstances. The State provides planning assistance through a grant to the Kansas Rural Water Association. Conservation plans are approved by the Kansas Water Office or the Division of Water Resources, Kansas Department of Agriculture; 454 Kansas public water suppliers have approved plans.

Related plans include public water supplier emergency plans approved by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and local emergency operations plans approved by the Adjutant General's Department, Kansas Division of Emergency Management.

Water Marketing and Water Assurance Programs – Starting in the 1970s, Kansas has purchased water supply storage in 13 Corps of Engineers reservoirs, primarily in the eastern part of the State. Raw water from this storage is available for sale to municipal or industrial water users through the Kansas Water Marketing Program. These federal reservoirs provide a dependable source of water supply during drought. Uncommitted storage is available for short-term purchase during drought through a streamlined contract approval process.

The Kansas Water Assurance Program also utilizes water supply storage in Corps of Engineers reservoirs by releasing water during periods of low streamflow. These releases help ensure that water assurance district members have adequate streamflow at existing water right diversion points.

Three water assurance districts were formed in the 1990s. These are located in the Kansas River, the Marais des Cygnes River and the Cottonwood-Neosho River Basins. Both programs are administered by the Kansas Water Office.

Multipurpose Small Lakes Program – Under the Multipurpose Small Lakes Program, the State pays for adding water supply storage to meet future needs in planned flood control structures where the Kansas Water Office has determined that additional water supply is needed within the next 20 years and no local sponsor is ready to pay the cost. Future users repay the State's cost. The State does not pay for water supply that will be used immediately. Ten multipurpose small lake projects have been completed since 1989. As with the federal reservoirs, these lakes provide a dependable source of water supply during drought.

Public Wholesale Water Supply Districts – Twenty-four public wholesale water supply districts have been organized in Kansas since 1977, of which 15 are active or under development. Membership in active or developing districts totals 138 public water suppliers. Some wholesale district members receive all of their water from their district, while others rely upon it as a supplemental or back-up source of supply. These districts commonly utilize Kansas Water Marketing Program contracts or multipurpose small lakes as their raw water source, thereby reducing member's drought vulnerability.

Minimum Desirable Streamflow – Minimum desirable streamflows have been set for 23 Kansas streams to preserve in-stream water uses. These uses include: water quality, fish and wildlife, general aesthetics, domestic uses and protection of existing water rights. Kansas law directs the Chief Engineer, Division of Water Resources to withhold from appropriation the amount of water needed to sustain these flow levels. Minimum desirable

streamflows do not have priority over water rights filed prior to April 12, 1984, nor are they expected to be maintained through all drought conditions. The Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources administers minimum desirable streamflows.

Public Water System Capacity Development – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Capacity Development Program seeks to help public water systems achieve and maintain compliance with drinking water standards. Technical, financial and managerial aspects of system operations are included. A board/council training program (KanCap) has been developed and will be available starting in autumn 2004. Coping with drought is part of this training.

Additional Information

The Kansas Water Office web site (<http://www.kwo.org/>) contains current information on drought conditions in Kansas, including county drought stage designations declared by the Governor. The *Kansas Drought Report* is also available here as is a related Fact Sheet: *Drought Response*.

Additional program information (Reports & Publications → Red Book) is also available on the KWO web site as are links to drought information maintained by the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Kansas State University Research & Extension, the Kansas Biological Survey, the U.S. Geological Survey and others.

Please call the Kansas Water Office at 785-296-3185 for additional information.