

Drought Talking Points

"Conserving water today for Arizona's tomorrow"

Arizona Drought Information

- "Drought" is different from "dry." Arizona is an arid state, even during years when precipitation is above average. Drought is a prolonged period of below-average precipitation severe enough to negatively impact the environment and human activities.
- Drought is a recurring natural hazard almost everywhere in the world. However, Arizona is especially sensitive to drought. Water is scarce here even during average years, and population growth continues to increase our demand for water.
- Unlike other natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornados, drought does not cause immediate, visible results. Its effects, however, can be just as devastating. Drought can impact domestic water supplies, ranching and farming production, vegetation, forest health and wildlife populations.

How "Bad" Is The Drought

- The current drought that began in the late 1990s is cause for concern and continues to stress Arizona's resources. The severity of the impact varies by location. Arizona has made huge investments in importing and storing water supplies for the major metropolitan areas, and those investments have substantially buffered the state from water shortages during the current drought. Impacts are more significant in the rural parts of the state, where alternative water supplies generally are limited and the economy is dependent on weather-sensitive activities, such as grazing, recreation, tourism and forestry.
- A Drought Emergency Proclamation has been in effect for Arizona since June 1999, due to persistent drought conditions and no projected near-term relief. This makes it possible for governmental entities to provide response and recovery assistance to drought stricken areas of the state. Due to the proclamation and subsequent Disaster Designation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in May 2006, farm operators experiencing production losses across the state are eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency.

Preparation and Reducing Risk

- We cannot control the atmosphere; we can control our behavior. Proper planning and preparedness can serve as a drought "buffer," reducing the severity of impacts.
- Conserving water now may avert more drastic and uncomfortable reductions in the future. The future of Arizona depends on the wise water management choices that we make today.
- Everyone has a role in drought mitigation. Arizonans can take steps now to reduce the impacts of drought:
 - Become more aware of your water use habits and determine where you can reasonably cut back. Wise water use has the added benefit of saving you money (visit *Tips and Tools to Save Water* at azwater.gov).
 - Get involved at the local level. Local groups are forming around the state to assess drought impacts and recommend local drought planning and response actions. Contact your county Cooperative Extension Office for more information (ag.arizona.edu/extension).
 - Talk to local and state officials, including your legislator, about drought. Let them know your local concerns and needs.

Coordination Efforts

- Local, state and federal agencies are working together to implement the *Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan*. The Arizona Department of Water Resources is coordinating drought monitoring, local preparedness and response efforts (visit the *Eye On Drought* at azwater.gov).