

**POSITION  
of the  
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL  
regarding  
DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS, PREDICTION AND EARLY WARNING PROGRAMS  
Manhattan, Kansas  
October 9, 2015**

**WHEREAS**, the Western States Water Council is a policy advisory body representing eighteen states, and has long been involved in western water conservation, development, protection, and management issues, and western states have a long history of promoting drought preparedness, planning and response programs, in cooperation with federal agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, in the West, water is often scarce even in “wet” years and drought is a recurring threat to our environment, economy and way of life – affecting not only the West, but also the Nation; and

**WHEREAS**, three of the top five national natural disasters, in terms of economic losses, have been droughts, and the current exceptional drought in California and extreme to severe conditions along the West Coast and elsewhere highlight the need for greater attention to developing more comprehensive and coordinated drought prediction, preparedness, planning and response programs at all levels; and

**WHEREAS**, the Western Governors’ Association has taken a lead role in identifying needs and best management practices through an ongoing series of forums, webinars and reports; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for maintaining and improving existing monitoring networks that help provide drought early warning signals, as well as for tracking the impacts of drought; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a continuing need for developing new monitoring technologies, such as remote sensing, that provide more timely data on water availability and better spatial coverage for assessing drought impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, early drought warning systems facilitate early drought assessment and mitigation efforts to minimize drought impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for continuing federal research to develop new predictive capability for precipitation at intraseasonal to interannual time scales – such as research on the influence of other ocean-atmosphere interactions on the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), the only factor now providing some limited understanding of precipitation and temperature prediction; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a continuing need for a permanent federal role in coordination of research programs related to drought early warning and prediction;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Western States Water Council urge the Administration and the Congress to support federal programs including but not limited to the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other programs designed to improve our forecasting and response capabilities.