



The definition of what drought is and what drought is not has profound implications for the environment and all segments of society, yet it may be different for each. Many attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive and meaningful definition. A generic definition provides a starting point: Drought is a persistent and abnormal moisture deficiency having adverse impacts on vegetation, animals, or people.

spread across various departments and agencies—are directly or indirectly related to drought.

Witnesses at our hearings and written comments submitted independently often criticized this *ad hoc* federal approach to drought. We heard that the federal government should provide a central point of contact where people can find out about programs to assist them in planning and mitigation. We heard too that a pooling of nonfederal and federal experience and the establishment of nonfederal/federal partnerships will go far to develop the tools needed to formulate drought preparedness strategies, including incorporation of environmental concerns. We were strongly advised that incentives, rather than regulations, and models that can be adapted to local conditions, rather than “one-size-fits-all” prescriptions, will result in more positive outcomes.

Information and Research Support

Preparedness. This country has developed the capability to produce a wealth of basic weather, water, soil moisture, snow amount, and climate observations. Many people told us that without such information, they do not have the basis to prepare for drought.

Across the nation, federal monitoring and prediction programs join Regional Climate Centers,

state climatologists, universities, and private institutions to develop the information needed for effective drought preparedness. These programs provide data to private weather services and other enterprises, which may opt to devise detailed predictions tailored to individual needs. Some private services, for example, are using remote-sensing technology to show farmers areas of crop stress so that the farmers can make more efficient irrigation decisions.

We learned, however, that drought information and data are not available for many rural areas across the country, are often complex, and, for the most part, are not presented in a standardized format. Such data can also be difficult to find and interpret. This is especially true for individuals, small businesses, and some communities and tribes that do not have ongoing relationships with drought management entities. Many people stated there is a need for such information nationwide and for an accessible “gateway” (point of contact) where standardized, comprehensible current information and historical data are available.



The Commission was informed of various proactive drought mitigation activities developed at the local level. In Los Angeles, “Second Nature: Adapting LA’s Landscape for Sustainable Living” is a program run by the nonprofit TreePeople organization. The program involves young people in urban landscape retrofits such as planting trees and also works with citizens and businesses to install technology for capturing storm water and adjusting runoff patterns for residences and commercial buildings. Andy Lipkis, Executive Director of TreePeople, is pictured here with young friends.