



**Memorandum of Understanding
Between the Western Governors' Association
and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**



**WESTERN
GOVERNORS'
ASSOCIATION**

**Collaboration on Drought, Flooding, and Wildfire Preparedness:
Sharing Information and Building Resilience in Planning for Extreme Events**

*June 9, 2014
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

Background and Purpose

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the members of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) (together, "the Parties") believe good policymaking to address the impacts of drought, flooding, and extreme weather events requires high quality data, information, and analysis. As drought has become increasingly persistent and severe in the Western states – and as large floods have caused devastation in Western communities – the economic and social impacts are particularly damaging.

Challenges to meeting the economic and environmental needs for an adequate, reliable, and good quality water supply are anticipated to increase, making accurate and complete information on water and weather trends all the more vital for decision-makers. These challenges exist across the West, from the Great Plains to the Intermountain West to the coastal, estuarine and marine environments of the Pacific states and islands.

One way to reduce the impacts of extreme events such as drought, floods, and wildfire is the enhancement of resilience. As defined in this agreement, resilience is the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events. Enhanced resilience allows better anticipation of disasters and better planning to reduce disaster losses.

NOAA's mission is to provide service through science and stewardship needed to build healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of environmental changes and extremes. NOAA strives to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, and to share that knowledge with others.

The WGA represents the Governors of 19 Western states and three U.S. Flag Pacific Islands. The Governors recognize the significant impacts of drought and other extreme events on our environment, infrastructure, economies, and communities, and they are committed to developing better data, information, and analysis, as well as new management strategies to address those challenges.

In December 2013, the Western Governors adopted policy resolution 14-03, *Water Resource Management in the West*, which highlights the importance of planning resources for drought and other extreme events. Additionally, the Governors use the resolution to encourage federal agencies

to partner with states in the collection, coordination, and effective dissemination of drought-related data, information, and analysis. In March 2014, with the strong support of the Western Governors, NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) was reauthorized, thus ensuring viable and effective implementation of regional drought early warning systems in the West, and providing a proactive approach to addressing drought. NIDIS promotes a coordinated and integrated approach to coping with future drought, including improved forecasting and monitoring, drought preparedness and planning, and efficient delivery of drought programs.

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to improve the development, coordination and dissemination of drought and extreme weather data, information, and analysis – as well as preparedness and planning tools and innovations – in order to support the resource management decisions of Western states. This partnership will support and strengthen the Western states' preparedness and response to significant weather and climate variability, including multi-year droughts, prolonged fire seasons, and devastating floods. In addition, the MOU will foster a dialogue through which the parties can identify future actions to improve coordination between the WGA and NOAA.

Objectives and Actions

- 1) The Parties will investigate the interrelationship between drought and wildfire to identify the data, information, and analysis needs – as well as management strategies – that may help Governors and decision-makers better address the impacts associated with these dual disasters.
- 2) The Parties will explore ways to ensure that collection and sharing of crucial drought, flooding, and extreme weather-related data, impact statistics, and information are improved and sustained. Focal areas may include soil moisture monitoring in the Missouri River Basin and water supply needs assessments, including snowpack monitoring, in the Mountain West and coastal watersheds. This aspect of the MOU calls for close coordination with other federal agencies that have monitoring and analysis responsibilities. The Parties' goal in this endeavor is to work collaboratively towards the provision of early warning capabilities for drought, wildfire, and floods, to inform and facilitate proactive risk-reduction decisions.
- 3) The Parties will conduct a survey of the existing state and territory Drought Task Forces appointed by Governors to (a) identify data gaps as well as potentially useful data, information, and analyses and (b) compare and contrast the approaches of the Task Forces in order to help states and territories learn from one another and better communicate across state boundaries and enhance implementation of drought plans.

Implementation

The objectives and actions described above are consistent with the Governors' policy resolution 14-03 and NOAA's mission. The Parties will identify the appropriate staff from the states, territories and NOAA to execute the activities described above. The Parties will actively recruit other federal

and non-federal partners to contribute to this effort, particularly with respect to identifying other key sectors that require better data, information, and resources to prepare for climate variability and change.

NOAA's authority to carry out the activities contemplated by this agreement is 15 U.S.C. § 313.

When appropriate, specific projects or activities undertaken by the Parties under this MOU will be carried out pursuant to Implementing Agreements, subject to the availability of appropriations. Such Agreements will specify the responsibilities of the Parties, the expected resource commitments, legal authority citations, a description of any financial arrangements, programmatic points of contact, and other relevant information. Other public and private partners may be included by the Parties in such Agreements, as appropriate.

This agreement does not authorize the transfer of funds. The parties will bear their own costs in carrying out the activities contemplated by this agreement.

Settlement of Disputes

Any dispute concerning interpretation or implementation of the MOU will be resolved through discussion by the Parties. Should disagreements arise on the interpretation of the provisions of this agreement or amendments and/or revisions thereto, that cannot be resolved at the operating level, the areas(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing by each party and presented to the other party for consideration. If agreement or interpretation is not reached within 30 days, the parties shall forward the written presentation of the disagreement to respective higher officials for appropriate resolution.

Effective Date, Duration, Amendment and Termination

This MOU will be effective on the date appearing below and will remain in effect for three (3) years from that date.

This MOU may be amended by mutual consent of the Parties. The Parties may terminate this MOU upon mutual consent or by one Party providing the other Party prior notice.

Agreed to this 9th day of June 2014,



John Hickenlooper
Governor of Colorado
WGA Chairman

Brian Sandoval
Governor of Nevada
WGA Vice Chairman



Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan
Administrator
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration