

OPENING STATEMENT
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U.S. HOUSE SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY HEARING
*“Drought Forecasting, Monitoring, and Decision-making: A Review of the National Integrated
Drought Information System”*

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman for scheduling this hearing and for this legislation to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System or NIDIS.

As most of you know, every local and national media outlet has reported in the past week or two a map showing over half of the continental United States experiencing severe drought conditions. The Federal Government has declared one-third of the nation’s counties — 1,297 of them across 29 states as federal disaster areas as a result of the drought.

In my own home State of Texas, the reduced precipitation in addition to high temperatures have caused extreme wildfire conditions, water restrictions, a decline in tourism, reduced crop yields, and many other harmful effects. Texas has experiencing over the past year one of its most historic droughts, but thankfully last week we received a much needed and timely rainfall.

However, unlike disasters such as tornadoes and hurricanes, droughts do not have a clear beginning or end, but rather precipitation slowly declines and our reservoirs and soil becomes increasingly drier. When this happens everything from beef prices to the cost of many consumer products leave its mark on family budgets. The droughts strangle our economy and especially our agricultural economy.

While we continuously prepare for natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, we need to continue to do more to mitigate and reduce the effects of drought.

The NOAA NIDIS program has only been in existence for six years but this program has provided important seasonal and long-term drought information that has aided countless communities to make decisions to prepare for and mitigate drought.

The federal investment in drought research and mitigation is only useful when decision-makers are continuously able to obtain and utilize the information. Fostering and supporting a research environment and framework that focuses on risk assessment, modeling, forecasting, monitoring, and management is the core of comprehensive drought information system.

And in order for us to truly be comprehensive in any of our research and mitigation plans for these extreme weather events, we must not continue to bury our heads in the sand when it comes to the larger conversation of the changing climate. You can call it global warming, climate change, whatever, but there is no doubt that our climate is changing.

Climatologists all over this country are making the link between these catastrophic events and a warming planet. Yes, to all those that say but we don't know that this is true, you are correct, we do not know. But that is the purpose of science and research. We must provide the resources and framework to our scientist to research what is going on so that we are better prepared to respond not just react.

Reauthorizing NIDIS is an important step and I commend the Chairman for this, but this is only one step. And it baffles me that we gather today primarily on one accord to support this one particular climate service when my colleagues on the other side has attempted to stifle every other weather and climate product, service, and research it could in every federal agency possible. I just don't get it.

We are here today to primarily hear from our witnesses about NIDIS and I am intrigued to learn their opinions about NIDIS and how it can continue to be most effective as well as what improvements we can make and additional research we may need to comprehensively respond to our inevitably changing climate.

Again thank you for joining us here today and I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.