

# Major Changes to the National Drought Preparedness Act for the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress

**Lead Agency:** The Drought Council will now be housed under the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture. Additionally, the bill established “Lead Federal Coordinating Agencies” to oversee the responsibilities of water planning (Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation), drought monitoring (Commerce) and management of the Drought Assistance Fund (USDA).

**National Office of Drought Preparedness:** Under the bill, the National Office will fall under the jurisdiction of the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment. The Undersecretary for NRE has a national network already established which will enable him to assist states and local governments create and implement drought preparedness plans better than ever.

**Watersheds:** Under the bill, watershed groups, which have been formally recognized by the state(s) in which they are located, are now eligible to receive assistance in preparing and implementing drought preparedness plans. There is a requirement built into the bill that coordination between states is required in instances where a watershed transcends state or tribal boundaries.

**Membership of Council:** Under the bill, the Secretary of Commerce and Administrator of the EPA have been added to the Council’s membership. Additionally, the 4 governors serving on the Council are now appointed to represent the “geographic diversity of the Nation” rather than the FEMA regions as were in the last bill. There are 14 members of the Council (6 federal, 4 state government, 4 local government or interest-based).

**Management of Funds/Federal-non-Federal cost sharing agreement:** Funds utilized for the preparation of drought preparedness plans are to be managed by the States. Also, for the implementation of a drought preparedness plan, the local/State government is required to cover no less than 25 percent of the overall cost incurred to carry out the project (in-kind contributions can be included in this cost).