

UPPER PLATTE RIVER DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN REVISIONS SINCE DECEMBER 2024

August 7, 2025



USBR Review – November 14, 2024

1

Clarify drought
monitoring
protocols and
responsibilities

2

Prioritize
mitigation
actions

3

Clarify response
actions –
priority and
timing

4

Clarify
implementation
responsibilities

Plan Revision Goals

Address	Address USBR comments to meet WaterSMART requirements
Reorganize	Reorganize Plan contents for better functionality
Distinguish	Distinguish between basin-wide and NRD activities
Rework	Rework drought monitoring protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge & incorporate differences in surface water supply
Prioritize	Prioritize mitigation and response actions
Solidify	Solidify communication plan

Plan Organization



The Executive Summary will become the Plan Implementation section. The Plan Implementation section summarizes all action items throughout the plan.



All action items are in the first subsection of each section (1.1, 2.1, etc.).



Supplemental content moved to appendices.

Basin-Wide vs. NRD Activities

Where applicable throughout the plan, reiterate that the Basin-Wide IMP is the overarching plan under which the basin-wide drought plan and NRD drought plans reside.

The primary basin-wide activities are drought monitoring and communication.

Implementation of drought mitigation and response projects will primarily occur at the NRD level.

Drought Monitoring Updates



New trigger language – “advisory” and “alert”



Simplified drought triggers

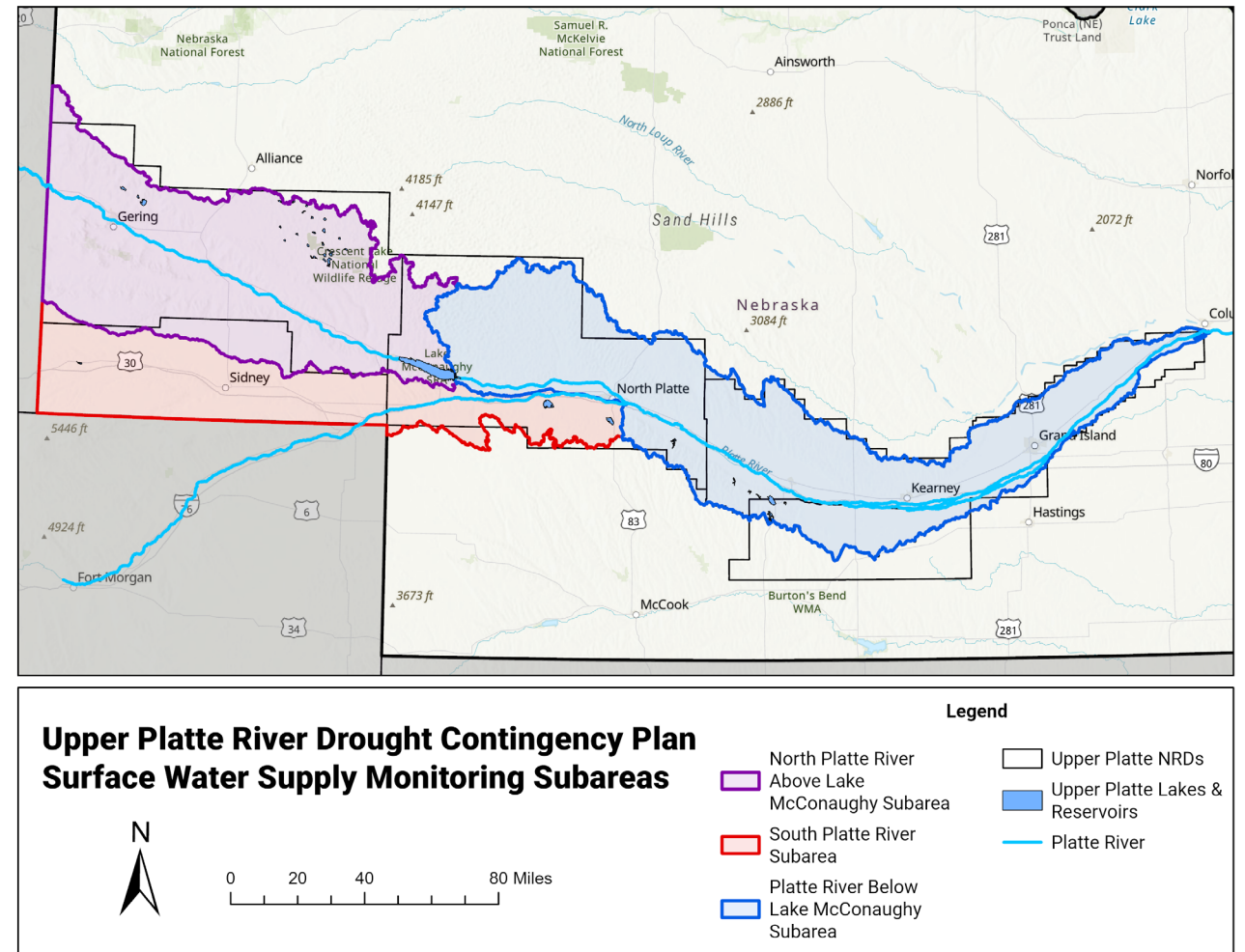


Added water supply subareas and associated triggers



Specified supplemental data for decision-making

Drought Monitoring – Surface Water Supply Subareas



Drought Monitoring – Triggers

Indicator - Drought	Advisory	Alert	Applicable Areas
US Drought Monitor	D0+D1 > 75% area OR D1 > 50% area	D2 or worse > 50% area	Basin-wide and all subareas
Evaporative Demand Drought Index (1-month)	ED0+ED1 > 75% area OR ED1 > 50% area	ED2 or worse > 50% area	Basin-wide and all subareas
Indicator – Water Supply	Advisory	Alert	Applicable Areas
BOR Forecasted North Platte Supply	Forecasted supply < 1.1 MAF (October, February, March)	Forecasted supply < 1.1 MAF (April, May, June)	North Platte River above Lake McConaughy
South Platte River at Julesburg	N/A	Mean daily discharge < 120 cfs (April 1 – October 15)	South Platte River to the North Platte River Confluence
Lake McConaughy Storage	>70% of average monthly storage (1991-2020 avg)	>60% of average monthly storage (1991-2020 avg)	Platte River Below Lake McConaughy

Drought Monitoring – Supplemental Data

- Snowpack – North Platte and South Platte percent of median SWE (USDA NRCS)
- Streamgages
 - North Platte River at WY-NE State Line (06674500)
 - South Platte River at Roscoe (06764880)
 - Platte River near Grand Island (06770500)
- Static groundwater levels & change (spring to spring)
- SPI & SPEI
- Grassland Productivity Forecast (Grass-Cast)
- Monthly and Seasonal Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks (CPC)
- Missouri River Drought Early Warning System (DEWS)

Mitigation and Response Actions

Revised, reframed, and recategorized actions

Clarified mitigation vs. response

Developed and applied prioritization criteria

Tied response actions to triggers

Identified primary implementation responsibilities

Mitigation & Response Action Prioritization Criteria

1

Highest: Fulfills
NRD & DWEE
statutory
responsibilities

2

Medium: Builds
upon existing
partnerships/
relationships

3

Lowest:
Develops new
partnerships/relat
ionships

Water Supply Actions

Actions to increase supplies will address shortages that cause non-compliance with interstate agreements and protect groundwater and surface water users dependent on streamflows, including hydropower and irrigation uses

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Groundwater recharge projects	Groundwater and streamflow supplies	Mitigation	1	n/a	NRDs in coordination with DWEE
Irrigation efficiency & water use monitoring	Groundwater and streamflow supplies	Mitigation	1	n/a	NRDs in coordination with DWEE
Conjunctive management & promoting surface water use	Surface water irrigation, conjunctive management, groundwater and streamflow supplies, crop yield reduction	Mitigation	1	n/a	Both
Coordinate & support development of municipal EAPs for water shortage	Decreased source water quantity, fire/emergency threats	Mitigation	2	n/a	NRDs

Drought Resilient Agriculture

Decrease the demand for water

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Promote crop variety and seed spacing	Crop yield reduction	Response /Both*	2	Drought advisory (fall/winter)	NRDs
Livestock protection, shade, and water	Livestock feed/water shortage	Response	2	Drought alert	NRDs
Irrigation scheduling	Groundwater/aquifer depletion	Response	1	Drought alert	NRDs
Erosion conservation measures	Erosion, soil health	Mitigation	1	n/a	NRDs

Drought Resilient Habitat

Promote ecosystem function & health

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Promote drought resilient habitat	Ecosystem function, biodiversity, T&E critical habitat	Mitigation	2	n/a	DWEE
Promote riparian buffer zones	Terrestrial and aquatic habitat, surface water quality	Mitigation	2	n/a	NRDs
Controlled (prescribed) burns	Fire threat	Mitigation	1	n/a	NRDs
Lake dredging and aquatic habitat restoration	Aquatic habitat, ecotourism	Mitigation	2	n/a	NRDs
Watershed water quality management	Aquatic recreation, game/fish disease, ecotourism	Mitigation	3	n/a	DWEE & NRDs
Drought resilient recreational facilities	Aquatic recreation, ecotourism	Mitigation	2	n/a	DWEE

Domestic Water Use

Protecting public & domestic water infrastructure

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Municipal infrastructure monitoring & maintenance	Decreased source water quantity, infrastructure stress and maintenance	Mitigation	1	n/a	DWEE & NRDs
Water supply for rural fire departments/districts	Infrastructure stress and maintenance, fire threat	Both	2	Drought alert	NRDs
Emergency potable water	Fire/emergency threats, public health (drinking water)	Response	2	Drought alert	NRDs

Outreach Activities

Connecting the public with resources

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Outreach – available drought-related financial assistance	Public services, economic development	Response	2	Drought alert	DWEE & NRDs
Outreach – lawn irrigation efficiency, scheduling, and reduction	Decreased source water quantity	Response	2	Drought advisory	DWEE & NRDs

Other Drought Management Actions

Action	Vulnerabilities Addressed	Type	Priority	Trigger	Implementation Responsibility
Groundwater quantity & quality monitoring	Decreased source water quantity & quality, public health (drinking water)	Both	1	Drought advisory & alert	NRDs
Promote wildfire suppression & fire weather awareness	Fire threat	Response	2	Drought alert	DWEE & NRDs
Fish and game regulations during drought	Game/fish disease, aquatic recreation	Response	2	Drought alert	DWEE coordination w/ NGPC
Promote air quality monitoring	Public health	Response	3	Drought advisory & alert	DWEE
Participate in/assist with disaster relief	Mental health, public services, economic development	Response	2	Drought alert	NRDs

Communication Plan Updates



Solidified basin-wide communication framework



Developed public outreach process



Identified opportunities for stakeholder engagement & emergency response communication

Basin-Wide Communication

Bimonthly POAC meetings

- Review current drought conditions
- Discuss mitigation and response activities – ongoing & planned
- Determine communication needs

Drought dashboard

- Public-facing, automated drought monitoring

Stakeholder Engagement

- Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR)
 - Used as supporting evidence in the development of the weekly US Drought Monitor
 - People are encouraged to submit CMOR reports *year-round* to capture wet, dry, and normal conditions
 - The US Drought Monitor is used by the USDA to trigger disaster declarations and eligibility for low-interest loans and assistance programs
 - Website:
<https://droughtimpacts.unl.edu/tools/conditionmonitoringobservations.aspx>

Outreach Process



Assess triggers

What is the current drought status of the basin and each subarea?



Review supplemental data

What are the primary impacts?



Determine audience

Who is being impacted?



Determine partners/collaborators (as needed)

Who is the best entity to engage with the target audience?
(e.g., NARD, UNL, other State agencies, Farm Bureau)



Determine message

What does the audience need to know?
What messaging already exists that could be promoted?



Determine media

What is the best way to reach the target audience?



Finalize and publish message

Next Steps



Finalize Plan edits through September



Submit to USBR for review by October 1



Aiming for Plan completion by December 31, 2025

QUESTIONS?

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