

NIDIS TRIBAL DROUGHT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) has worked with Tribal Nations on drought issues since its inception. In order to ensure the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in the implementation of regional Drought Early Warning Systems (DEWS), NIDIS launched a Tribal Drought Engagement initiative in 2019 in collaboration with the Masters of the Environment Program at the University of Colorado Boulder. The project strengthened relationships with tribal resource managers across the Missouri River Basin and Midwest DEWS to effectively deliver timely and relevant drought information.

The NIDIS [Tribal Drought Engagement Strategy](#) included one year of consultations with tribal resource managers. These consultations identified critical engagement gaps and actions that could be taken to address them. The Strategy offers Guiding Principles of Engagement (below) that capture important approaches NIDIS wants to embody in partnerships with Tribal Nations. It also includes key outcomes and activities to be implemented to improve drought monitoring, forecasting, and resilience for Tribal Nations.

Guiding Principles of Tribal Engagement

It is important to NIDIS to develop trust and a shared vision for improving drought preparedness in our partnerships with Tribal Nations. The following Principles of Engagement were developed following robust dialogue with more than 22 tribal natural resource managers and leaders across the Midwest and Missouri River Basin regions.

Principle 1: Respecting Tribal Sovereignty

We acknowledge that Tribes are sovereign nations and indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination. We also uphold the Federal Trust Responsibility to ensure meaningful government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations.

Principle 2: Ensuring Trust and Reciprocity

Establishing the trust and respect of tribal resource managers and leaders is the cornerstone of this Strategy. The notion of reciprocity is central to Native American society and culture, and we are committed to practicing this native social norm with our tribal partners.

Principle 3: Ensuring DEWS are Culturally Appropriate and Useful for Tribal Nations

We encourage the integration of Native American knowledge and values, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), into NIDIS drought programs. We respect traditional drought resilience strategies that have been practiced by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. We are also working to ensure the use of appropriate language to strengthen our relationships with our tribal partners.

Current and Upcoming Tribal Engagement Activities

With the Strategy as a guide, NIDIS has implemented and plans to implement several tribal engagement activities with its tribal partners over the next few years.

- **NIDIS Tribal Engagement Coordinator**

NIDIS hired its first Tribal Engagement Coordinator in 2021. The Coordinator works with tribal partners, as well as agencies and organizations that are working on drought and climate issues with Tribal Nations, to assess needs and provide support for drought early warning.

- **Coping with Drought: Building Tribal Drought Resilience Grant Program**

In FY22, NIDIS dedicated \$1.5 million to a Coping with Drought: Building Tribal Drought Resilience grant competition. The competition solicited proposals on implementation activities from existing tribal resource management plans. It also required that the project be led or co-led by a member of a Tribal Nation.

- **Northern Plains & Missouri River Basin Tribal Drought Webinar Series**

In collaboration with the North Central Climate Adaptation Science Center, NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information Regional Climate Services, and the USDA Northern Plains Climate Hub, NIDIS hosted a drought-focused webinar series in 2021 to provide resources to tribal resource managers in the Northern Plains facing drought conditions. Given its success as well as drought development and intensification, the webinar series was expanded in scope and resumed in Spring 2022.



- **Tribal Input Into the 2020-2021 U.S. Northern Plains-Canadian Prairies Drought Assessment**

NIDIS is leading the effort to compile an assessment report on the 2020-2021 drought in the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies. The report will incorporate valuable tribal perspectives on the drought. Furthermore, there are two Indigenous co-authors of the report.

- **Drought.gov Tribal Resources and Listening Sessions**

NIDIS will hold listening sessions with tribal partners to learn how the U.S. Drought Portal, Drought.gov, can serve Tribal Nations better. These sessions will be conducted on a regional scale, in acknowledgment that tribes' needs are unique depending on where their lands are located.



Image: Lower Little Peoples Creek with dried up pools and cattle. Source: Dennis Longknife

Learn more:

Website: drought.gov/tribal/ Twitter: [@DroughtGov](https://twitter.com/DroughtGov) Facebook: facebook.com/droughtgov