

National Drought Study

1980s

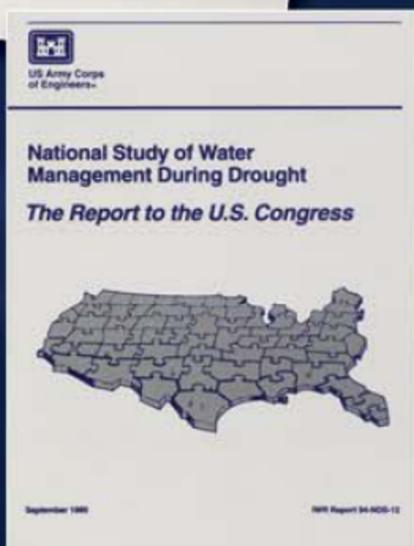
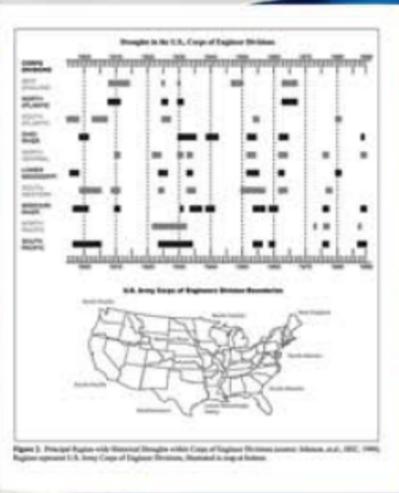
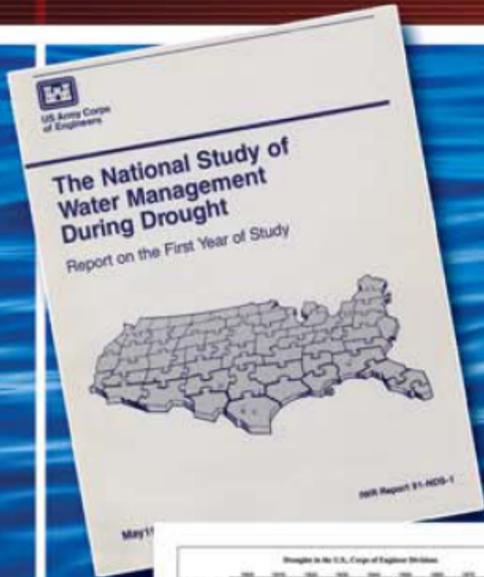
1980s

In 1988, a severe drought gripped much of the United States. This followed similar droughts in California and the southeastern U.S. in the mid 1980s. In response, Congress authorized the Corps to conduct a nationwide survey to find ways to improve water management during droughts. The result was the National Study of Water Management During Drought, known as the National Drought Study, with IWR as the lead agency.

The National Drought Study consisted of numerous field studies employing a collaborative approach between agencies and stakeholders. The hallmark of this approach was the use of shared vision models, which are collaboratively built computer simulation models. These models, developed by Dr. Richard Palmer of the University of Washington in the early 1990s, facilitate collaborative planning between stakeholders who develop and use the models to test different scenarios with water resources.

This collaborative planning approach was termed the DPS method. It was named for the Drought Preparedness Studies of the larger National Drought Study. The DPS method was based on the idea that stakeholders could work together to prepare for droughts, rather than only react to them. Field studies employing this method included the James River Drought Preparedness Study in Virginia, the Kanawha River Drought Preparedness Study in the Mid-Atlantic States, and the Cedar and Green Rivers Drought Preparedness Study in Washington State.

In addition to the local and regional water management plans that were developed, the National Drought Study produced *Managing Water for Drought* (pdf, 1.57 MB), the *Report to Congress* (pdf, 1.20 MB), and the *National Drought Atlas*. These documents summarized the study's methods and findings. Over time, the DPS method became Shared Vision Planning (SVP), which relies on the use of shared vision models and collaborative planning. This method has been applied to many water resources management issues and case studies, and it is the most important legacy of the National Drought Study.



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