Building Infrastructure Resilience for Rural Water Utilities

The National Resources Conservation Service has launched a new initiative to provide tools for rural water utilities to begin to assess risk and build resilience. The initiative provides an opportunity for rural water utilities to work with the NRCS to develop and implement plans that help protect water supplies from droughts and severe storms. Building resilience is an important step in protecting water supplies from droughts and severe storms. Water shortages, inundation from floodwaters, and infrastructure failures are some of the challenges facing water utilities, particularly those serving rural communities. Building infrastructure resilience for rural water utilities is a cost-effective method to help ensure the long-term viability of water systems.

Resiliency tools

The Water Utility Resilience Information System (WURIS) is a web-based tool that facilitates the assessment of risks while identifying and tracking resiliency projects. Through workshops and training sessions, water managers are being equipped with the necessary tools to develop and update comprehensive drought plans and implement long-term solutions for their communities.

Program details

Until March 2020, NRCS is accepting applications from rural water utilities with 10 or more full-time employees. The deadline to apply is 20 March 2020. Water utilities may choose to participate in any of the following engagements:

- **Assessment:** NRCS will assess the resilience of each utility’s water systems and develop comprehensive drought plans.
- **Implementation:** NRCS will provide technical and business development assistance to agricultural producers and municipalities to identify and implement drought resilience projects.
- **Partnership:** NRCS will establish a partnership with local governments, universities, and community groups to address drought impacts.
- **Participation:** NRCS will participate in workshops and training sessions to provide water utilities with the necessary tools to develop and update comprehensive drought plans.

Funding opportunities

- NRCS will provide financial assistance to develop and implement drought plans.
- NRCS will provide funding for resiliency projects.
- NRCS will provide technical assistance to water utilities.

Program benefits

- Improved water system resilience.
- Increased water supply security.
- Reduced risk of water shortages.
- Increased water system stability.

Interested parties

- Rural water utilities with 10 or more full-time employees.
- Local governments.
- Universities.
- Community groups.

Application process

Applications are due 20 March 2020. For more information, visit the NRCS website.

Additional resources

- NRCS Resilience website.
- WURIS website.

Contacts

- NRCS State Water Quality Program Manager
- NRCS Water Resources Conservation District
- NRCS Field Office

USDA Climate Hub: Idaho

The Idaho Climate Hub is focused on preparing agricultural communities for climate change and providing information, resources, and tools to help them adapt. The hub is one of nine regional hubs funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide regional information on climate change impacts, adaptation strategies, and climate variability. The Idaho Climate Hub is part of the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and partners with various organizations to develop and deliver climate change information to the agricultural community.

Climate impacts

Climate change is already affecting agriculture in Idaho, with warmer temperatures and changing precipitation patterns. The impacts of climate change include

- **Drought:** Idaho is prone to drought, which can affect crops, livestock, and water supplies. Drought impacts vary across the state, with the southern and central regions experiencing more frequent and severe droughts. The Idaho Drought Status Committee monitors drought conditions throughout the state.

- **Floods:** Idaho is also prone to flooding, which can cause significant damage to crops, infrastructure, and water systems. The Idaho Floodplain Management Association provides information and resources on floodplain management.

- **Heat waves:** Heat waves can have a negative impact on crops and livestock. The Idaho Heat Wave Response Plan provides guidance on responding to heat waves.

- **Wildfires:** Idaho is prone to wildfires, which can cause significant damage to forests and homes. The Idaho Interagency Fire Center provides information on wildfire management.

- **Invasive species:** Climate change can affect the distribution and spread of invasive species, which can have negative impacts on agriculture and natural resources. The Idaho Invasive Species Council provides information and resources on invasive species management.

- **Agricultural production:** Climate change can affect agricultural productivity, with warmer temperatures and changing precipitation patterns leading to changes in crop yields and livestock productivity. The Idaho Ag Weather Network provides information on weather conditions and their impact on agriculture.

- **Water supply:** Climate change can affect water supplies, with warmer temperatures and changing precipitation patterns leading to changes in water availability and quality. The Idaho Water Quality Workshop provides information on water quality issues.

- **Health:** Climate change can affect human health, with warming temperatures increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses. The Idaho Climate Health Collaborative provides information on climate change and health.

Program priorities

The Idaho Climate Hub has several program priorities, including

- **Research:** Supporting research on climate change impacts and adaptation strategies.
- **Education:** Providing education and outreach on climate change and adaptation.
- **Adaptation:** Developing and promoting adaptation strategies to help agricultural communities prepare for climate change.
- **Partnerships:** Building partnerships with organizations and communities to deliver climate change information.

Program benefits

- Increased climate change awareness.
- Improved adaptation strategies.
- Increased resilience.

Interested parties

- Agricultural communities.
- Researchers.
- Educators.
- Policy makers.
- Industry associations.

Application process

Applications are due 20 March 2020. For more information, visit the Idaho Climate Hub website.

Additional resources

- Idaho Climate Hub website.
- Idaho Ag Weather Network.
- Idaho Interagency Fire Center.
- Idaho Invasive Species Council.
- Idaho Climate Health Collaborative.
- Idaho Drought Status Committee.
- Idaho Floodplain Management Association.
- Idaho Water Quality Workshop.

Contacts

- Idaho Climate Hub Coordinator
- Idaho Climate Hub Fire Program Manager
- Idaho Climate Hub Water Quality Program Manager
- Idaho Climate Hub Agriculture Program Manager