



# The NHWC Transmission

April 2018

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## Getting Levee Sponsors on Board with Risk Communication - Los Angeles District Conducts Workshops

Joe Goldstein, Stacy Langsdale – USACE

As part of the transformation to a risk-informed organization, to ensure communities are safer, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) relies on its Levee Sponsors (local agencies that are responsible for levee operations and maintenance) to communicate the risks associated with levees to those who could be affected. After the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received levee safety risk communication training last year, it decided local sponsors could benefit from similar training.

During the summer and fall of 2017, Los Angeles District USACE Levee Safety staff interviewed all 20 of its levee sponsors and then conducted three regional training workshops for them. The Los Angeles District received support through the USACE Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and The Participation Company provided contract support, workshop facilitation, and risk communication expertise.

The Los Angeles District has more than 120 levee systems in its portfolio, with nearly 2.5 million people living behind them. The District has operation and maintenance responsibility for approximately 20 percent of these levees, but the vast majority are operated and maintained by the local sponsors.

A series of three workshops across the region was offered to all 20 levee sponsors to (1) increase awareness of the USACE Levee Safety Program’s new expectations of sponsors regarding risk communication; (2) provide some foundational skills training in risk communication; and (3) help sponsors begin their effort through providing examples and activities to start developing their own communication plans.

Prior to designing these workshops, all sponsors were interviewed to assess their relationship with USACE and their concerns about communicating levee risk. What SPL heard provided significant input into the workshop design. Here are a few of their major concerns and how SPL addressed them:



Levee Safety Communication Team. Shown L-R: Joe Goldstein, USACE-Los Angeles District; Debra Duerr, The Participation Company (TPC); Stacy Langsdale, USACE-IWR; Jody Fischer, USACE-Los Angeles District; Nora Campbell, USIECR; and John Godec, TPC (USACE Photo)

**SPONSORS:** We are not New Orleans. Our risk is different. [In Arizona], our levees are in good condition and are low risk. Why is this necessary?

**RESPONSE:** In our workshop opening presentation, we included stories of past flood disasters in their region to show that major events can still happen in their area. Telling a story that resonates with the local community is invaluable when communicating with folks who may be unaware of their flood risks.

**SPONSORS:** *What are you asking us to do? How is this different from our current efforts talking about flood risk? We have several types of flood risk – we shouldn't talk about levees separately.*

**RESPONSE:** For sponsors already doing flood awareness outreach, we encouraged them to just add a component on levees. Additionally, the workshop agenda included time for selected sponsors to share successful flood awareness outreach activities, to give the other workshop attendees ideas and resources, and to provide a sense of the scale of the effort.

The workshops were broken into 4 main components:

- 1) An informal USACE presentation that described the intent of the levee risk communication efforts and addressed the sponsor concerns from the interviews.
- 2) Risk Communication Training 101. This part of the workshop provided the sponsors with basic principles and understanding of how to effectively communicate flood risks to their communities. Message development was a key aspect for this part of the workshop.
- 3) Highlighting the existing public outreach that the sponsors are doing. This topic included peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and lessons learned from our sponsors and gave them an opportunity to learn from each other.

- 4) The last part of the day was a breakout session that allowed the sponsors to work individually with their agency participants to focus on a specific issue or concern that they foresee when communicating the levee flood risks to their communities.

Active hurricane response prevented FEMA from participating. Instead, we provided handouts and contact information for the topics that overlapped with other agencies. We also coordinated with FEMA in advance and included some of their material as it pertained to public outreach.



Participants at Levee Safety Communication Workshop, Orange County, November 7, 2017 (USACE Photo)

Overall Los Angeles District was pleased with the workshops. Within a couple weeks of the Arizona workshop, the Town Manager of Clifton, Arizona released a video with on point flood risk messaging. [Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxVxTk0okfQ&feature=youtu.be>]

Also, the Customer Service Program Manager from San Diego shared that the workshop affirmed that his approaches to outreach were on the right track, and left the workshop motivated to build on his successes and add discussion on levees.

However, the long-term impact is yet to be seen. Sponsors may take initiative on their own, but may need periodic encouragement or additional support from the Los Angeles District to keep talking about levee risks as an on-going activity. 🌊



## 2019 Conference Planning Committee Now Forming for the 13th NHWC Conference

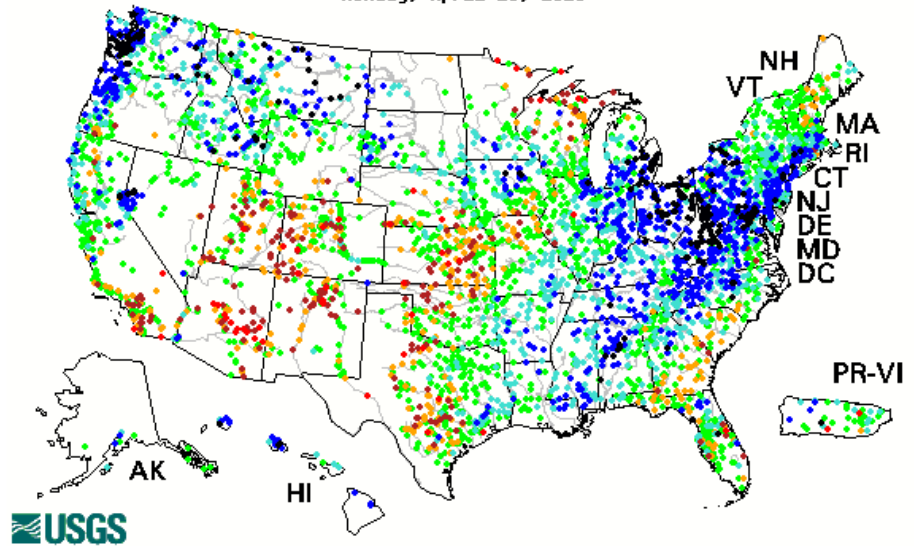


The NHWC is now forming the Conference Planning Committee. Assistance will be needed to coordinate and execute all facets of the conference, including agenda design, attendee registration, social activities, and exhibitors. If you are interested in this highly rewarding experience, please contact Brad Heilwagen, 2019 NHWC Conference Chair at:

[nhwc2019conference@hydrologicwarning.org](mailto:nhwc2019conference@hydrologicwarning.org)

# Hydrologic Conditions in the United States Through April 10, 2018

Monday, April 16, 2018

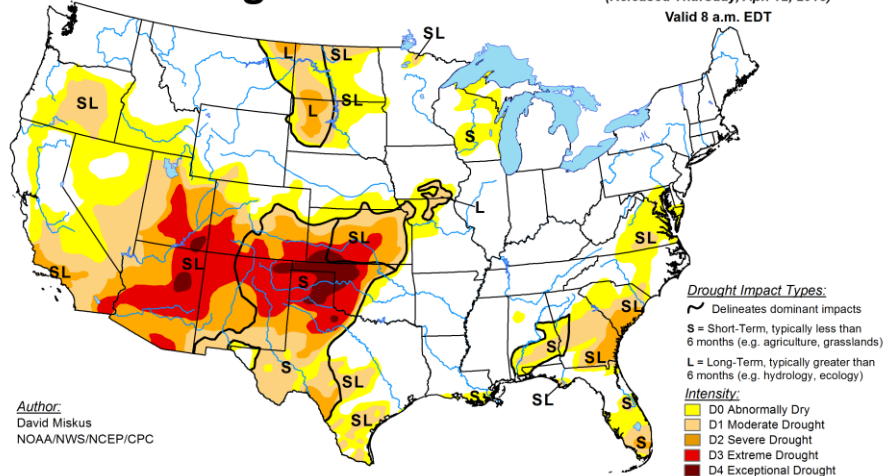


Explanation - Percentile classes						
	●	●	●	●	●	●
Low	<10	10-24	25-75	76-90	>90	High
	Much below normal	Below normal	Normal	Above normal	Much above normal	

Latest stream flow conditions in the United States. (courtesy USGS)

## U.S. Drought Monitor

April 10, 2018  
(Released Thursday, Apr. 12, 2018)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Author:  
David Miskus  
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

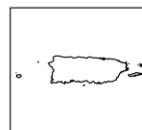
### Drought Impact Types:

- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

### Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Latest drought conditions in the United States.  
(courtesy National Drought Mitigation Center)

## May Newsletter Articles Focus: Modeling & Analysis

The NHWC is requesting articles that focus on practices, technologies and tools used to model, predict and analyze hydro-meteorological events and to support decision making for emergency response and floodplain management.

Submit your article to:

[editor@hydrologicwarning.org](mailto:editor@hydrologicwarning.org)

May 4<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for inclusion in the May issue.

## Future Newsletter Articles Focus

To give you more time to prepare articles, below is the article focus schedule for the next four months:

**May - Modeling/Analysis**  
**Jun - Data Collection**  
**Jul - Hydrology**  
**Aug - Hazard  
Communication &  
Public Awareness**

## NHWC Calendar

June 17-20, 2019 – The NHWC 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Training Conference and Exposition, Louisville, Kentucky

## General Interest Calendar

April 17-20, 2018 – [The ALERT User's Group Training Conference and Exposition](#), Ventura, California



June 4-7, 2018 – [2018 ASCE Environment and Water Resources Institute International Congress](#), Minneapolis, Minnesota

June 17-21, 2018 – [ASFPM 2018 Annual Conference](#), Phoenix, Arizona

*(See the [event calendar](#) on the NHWC website for more information.)*

## Parting Shot

New Pinal County, Arizona ALERT Station Installed 4/11/2018  
Lower Aravaipa Creek ([Station 1373](#))



Photo by Tyler Azeltine, JE Fuller/Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc.

## National Hydrologic Warning Council

*Providing Timely, Quality Hydrologic Information to Protect Lives,  
Property, and the Environment*

<http://www.hydrologicwarning.org>