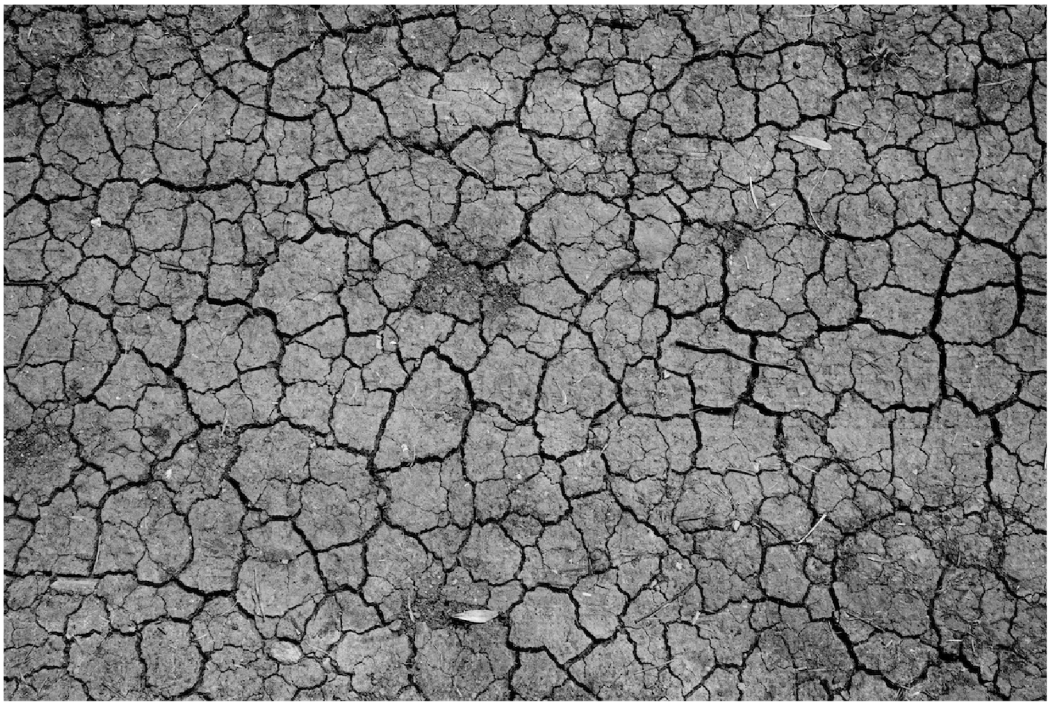
- # Illlinois State Climatologist co-author on National Academies of Science drought report

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WATER SURVEY



Illinois State Climatologist Trent Ford (https://stateclimatologist.isws.illinois.edu/) is among the co-authors on a National Academies of Science report (https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/u-s-needs-new-drought-assessment-

framework-as-droughts-become-more-severe-and-unpredictable) advocating for a new framework for understanding drought.

In the report, the authors urge federal agencies, researchers, and policymakers to adopt "a new framework that distinguishes between short-term operational needs, such as drought monitoring and emergency response, and long-term planning for water management, infrastructure, and climate adaptation."

Droughts and their patterns across the country are changing, "becoming more intense and unpredictable," the authors write. Changing climate and environmental conditions, such as increasing water consumption and higher evaporation from reservoirs, create problems for analyzing droughts, Ford explained.

"Here in Illinois this looks like heavier rainfall that causes less efficient soil recharge, hotter summers that increase evaporation rates, and more frequent rapid-onset droughts, especially in the late summer and early fall," Ford said. "This report offers a framework for better monitoring, assessing, and limiting drought problems in light of these changes."

The report includes examples from Illinois, including changing water supply in places like Decatur and Joliet, Ford said.

"Although the western U.S. has serious drought problems, it was important to the committee to represent the entire U.S., including examples and perspectives from the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast," he noted. "These perspectives from regions that are typically thought of as 'water rich' are really important because these regions, despite often having abundant water, are increasingly struggling with water supply due to changes in both climate and human water demand."

He continued, "We see this in places like the Chicago suburbs as population and both residential and industrial water demands have increased in recent decades. Drought is therefore still an important issue — and increasingly so — despite Illinois experiencing an increasing trend in rainfall."

The report is the start of a conversation, Ford said, that involves a wide range of stakeholders, including federal, state, and local governments; scientists; policy makers; and the private sector.

"I think this is a critical component," he added, "because problems created by something as complex as drought require an all-hands-on-deck approach to solving."

The full report (https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/DELS-WSTB-24-02/about) *is available on the National Academies of Science website.*

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