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1,100 people and revealed the other side of the “extreme weather” coin of climate change: soil compaction caused by drought means that, as the wets get wetter, the ground has

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While these cases provide examples of the physical

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certainly not the only such instances. There are countless other drought impacts across the globe. There is no

single “template” approach to drought management. Still, the exchange of strategies across barriers of nationality and language is crucial. Conversations with international decision makers and experts from Israel, Australia, and Chile provided the [California Water Commission](#) insight into the ways that other countries have reacted to extended drought conditions—through both supply and demand

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approach is necessary to address drought impacts

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theme: drought crisis can be a catalyst for spurring meaningful and lasting change.

Collaborative Basin Management in Australia

Australia’s Millennium Drought started with low rainfall

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lasted through the end of the decade. The duration and magnitude of the drought was much worse than urban areas had anticipated. This led to a series of responses. Curtailments were used as a stopgap while other measures were enacted: demand management in urban areas, development of alternative water supply through water recycling and reuse and construction of desalination plants, and new conveyance pipelines to facilitate water transfers between catchments, complementing Australia’s robust water market. To augment public understanding and spur behavior change, the government created clear triggers for public water use restrictions based on drought impacts rather than precipitation levels.

The Millennium Drought was most severe in Southern

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Darling Basin faced serious environmental decline, which

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Authority. This authority was tasked with planning and

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The megadrought in South America—now in its 13th year—has pressed Chile's privatized water market to its limit and raises serious questions about the power of a portfolio approach, particularly in rural areas, which lack water for domestic use. Source: Adobe Stock

Policy Reform Efforts in Chile

major water security challenges and uncertainties. Their existing institutional framework involves a privatized water market and rising social concerns over equity in the face of water scarcity. Although water is considered a public good in Chile, it is managed by private utilities that are seen as exploitative—particularly in rural areas, which lack water for domestic use.

A recent water law, passed in 2022, prioritized water distribution for human consumption and ecological purposes and required basin level management. However, the implementation of the new water law is yet to be determined. A recently proposed and ultimately rejected constitutional reform sought to modernize water governance and declare water as an inalienable human right. Overhauling existing governance systems can be and underlines the necessity of taking swift action at the right time.

A Hotter, Drier American West

countries were able to utilize drought crises to advance major water management improvements through

planning, governance, pricing, and policy reform. Australia and Israel demonstrate the power of a portfolio approach, have shown success by starting with the easiest solutions that will give the biggest return on investment. Ensuring good governance and sound planning, shaping cultural views of water, and investing in innovative technology should not be underestimated as key considerations for drought management and response. Combining the methods and lessons learned from international cases can serve the American West as it seeks to endure periodic droughts—while also adapting to the hotter and drier conditions caused by climate change.

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